

Erasmus Policy Statement

IES Fernando Wirtz Suárez, which was founded more than 90 years ago, is a Spanish high school that offers a wide range of studies, ranging from compulsory secondary education to Higher Vocational Training. Our international programmes are fundamentally designed to offer internships abroad to final year students in Higher Vocational Training Cycles. These international practices, compulsory according to their curriculum, are recognized as if they were done in local companies and allow them to obtain their Higher Technician qualification.

Our HEI Fernando Wirtz is committed to offer European Education Curricula for our higher education Vocational training students. Local companies demand graduates with fluent English and international experience to open their business to new markets and to offer better services.

Participating in the Erasmus Programme has been an integral part of our institutional strategy. Erasmus has helped to enhance the mobility of IES Fernando Wirtz students and staff, as well as the participation in European and international projects, with excellent results.

We are very proud of the great acceptance that our students have always had in the foreign companies and institutions in which they carry out their internships, to the point that many of them are directly hired at the end of them. Likewise, we have managed to retain a portfolio of companies that, with fidelity and great generosity, year after year turn to us to request that we send students to them.

The international perspective of our institution is being widely appreciated and, in many cases, it becomes one of the main factors in choosing our HEI as the best option to develop a vital project that includes studies, an international experience in Europe and, why not, the possibility of working and living in another country.

This policy really helps to make Europe smaller, brings countries closer together, removes borders and allows us to see that the Erasmus motto "changing lives, opening minds" is really true.

The objectives for IES Fernando Wirtz and its partnership are:

- To fulfil the existing demand, in the local companies, for qualified professionals in IT and other profiles with IT skills.
- To strengthen the learning and use of foreign languages, because these skills are very well appreciated by local companies, especially in A Coruña where there are a large number of companies developing international trade.
- To promote cooperation among the different higher vocational training areas within IES Fernando Wirtz partners in the EU.
- To complement the curriculum provided by our Institution with skills that local companies lack.

The objectives for the beneficiaries are:

- Approaching the working and social realities, within the EU nations, as a way to initiate a possible European professional pathway.
- Acquisition of the necessary English language skills that allow them to successfully develop their professional careers.
- Learning to adapt to a special work environment in a foreign country, as well as to enhance their personal values, stepping outside their comfort zone, especially by increasing their degree of autonomy, decision-making capacity, ability to face and solve problems, etc.

Our priorities for mobility are:

- Students are in our focus, so we only promote and accept mobilities that allow our students to improve their technical knowledge and their personal values. Thus, finding the best partners is not an option, it is an obligation.
- Quality in placements: ensuring language competence for beneficiaries, monitoring and tutoring of placements and logistic support through reliable intermediary organizations in the host country.
- Valuation of results: mobility increases the possibility of a student to get a job. Dissemination of all Erasmus activities will be done through local and regional media, our web page and also internally through marketing events.
- The creation of a Community made up by all the students from our HEI who enjoyed this experience. In fact, we do appreciate the effort and interest of many of our former beneficiaries in sharing their experiences with new candidates or, even better, in supporting new students travelling to cities where they live abroad.

The Erasmus University Charter and EPS will be published both on our internet and intranet web pages.

According to Spanish education legislation, placement in a company is compulsory on higher education vocational training courses. Placements must contain a set of reference activities to certify competences acquired by the student. This training module, named FCT (workplace training), lasts 384 hours and is automatically accredited by IES Fernando Wirtz on return.

IES Fernando Wirtz ensures equal and equitable access and opportunities to current and prospective participants from all backgrounds, paying particular attention to the inclusion of those with fewer opportunities.

The Erasmus+ mobilities offer and the criteria to select the potential beneficiaries are public and are posted on our web site on every call. At the same time every year all the students following Higher Vocational courses are personally informed in public meetings. We put the focus on the potential candidates (last year students) as well as on the first courses, giving them a leitmotif that pushes them to achieve the best academic results and an extra motivation to improve their language skills.

Beneficiaries are selected using measurable selection criteria: academic performance, personal maturity level, motivation, level of language (tested). Following the philosophy of non-

discrimination objectives, IES Fernando Wirtz will select beneficiaries from all students following higher education vocational training courses using family income as one of the selection criteria and also allocating some grants to disabled students.

Teaching and administration staff enrolled in Erasmus activities will get a certification from educational authorities. IES Fernando Wirtz is also planning to sign agreements with similar higher education vocational training institutions in Europe to have students exchange for academic mobility within the frame of the Spanish Educational legislation.

We promote that all accommodation issues are made by the beneficiary as an important task to prepare their trip abroad, to know how that country/city works, to be forced to use the foreign language and to reinforce linguistic structures and vocabulary that they will use when they live there. All this allows us to guarantee the success of the mobility. However, when they find problems that they cannot cope with we help them to solve them using our own contacts from previous experiences. IES Fernando Wirtz also assist the mobile participants in their search for accommodation by, whenever necessary, contacting their counterparts at the receiving HEI / enterprise / organisation or by putting former mobile participants who are willing to help finding accommodation in touch with prospective students.

Sometimes quality of placements is ensured through the collaboration of an intermediary organization from the host country that matches students to local companies. This reliable model together with a personalized plan for the "on the job training" period, monitoring and managing of placements ensure their quality.

Prior to placements, work programmes are agreed on by IES Fernando Wirtz and the host company. They contain a scheduled subset of activities that the student has to perform during the placement to obtain the professional competence specified by the Workplace Training Module (FCT) according to Spanish educational legislation.

Prior to travel, beneficiaries follow a linguistic and cultural training course in Spain in order to ensure that outgoing mobile participants are well prepared for their activities abroad by undertaking activities to achieve the necessary level of linguistic proficiency and develop their intercultural competences.

We usually send CVs to the host company for review and, if it is possible, we always try to make our candidate go through an online interview with some members of the future staff in order to ensure the best possible match.

On arrival to the host country, they attend an intensive linguistic and cultural course (minimum one-week long). During this phase students hold interviews with the host company so that student and company profiles are best matched according to agreed work-program objectives.

Finally, they do internships in their assigned companies, monitored by a tutor from the company, by the coordinator of the intermediary organization, if applicable, and very closely supervised by a mentor at IES Fernando Wirtz, whose mission is to provide support, encouragement and information to the trainee on life and experience at the enterprise. Monitoring is done by email, telephone, videoconferencing, follow-up surveys and, even, on-

site visits to the workplace. If the work programme is not followed, the trainee will be immediately reassigned to another company. In any case, all students / staff abroad know who their personal assistant is at IES Fernando Wirtz and how to contact them while living abroad.

Once beneficiaries complete their placements, they are asked to fill out a satisfaction survey and a report on their practical activities. Their tutors at the host company certify whether or not the students achieved all the objectives described in the learning agreement signed at the beginning. If successful, 22 ETCS credits are automatically recognized, the FCT Module is accredited as "Pass" by IES Fernando Wirtz and a EUROPASS Mobility Certificate is issued.

A "Diploma Supplement" will be issued with the official higher technician qualification (see link <http://www.todofp.es/orientacion-profesional/itinerarios-formativos-profesionales/movilidad/que-es-el-suplemento-europass/titulos-loe.html>).

Last but not least, we have been developing Erasmus programs since 2008, many European countries have welcomed our students (Ireland, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Sweden, Germany ...), and currently more than 20 of our students are European workers and proud ambassadors of the IES Fernando Wirtz Suárez. At the same time, every time they return to A Coruña, they help us to encourage the use of Erasmus+ grants and infrastructure among our students as the best way to successfully enjoy an international experience.

Incoming mobile participants

Incoming students/staff will be integrated into the wider scholar community and in the Institution's everyday life. We will encourage them to act as ambassadors of the programme and share their mobility experience.

IES Fernando Wirtz will support incoming mobile participants throughout the accommodation search process, when required, as well as provide assistance related to obtaining insurance.

They will be provided with practical information about how to get around the city (bus lines and stops and, especially, the use of bicycles to be respectful of the environment), where the places of interest are, cultural initiatives, closest cities to visit and how to go there, as well as the shopping areas, leisure and sport facilities, etc .

They will receive the same academic treatment and the same quality of services as our own students. If necessary, they will have the appropriate language support.

Those students who came here for an internship will receive help in finding the most suitable company for them. In this case, at least a Spanish level B1 (B2 highly recommended) is required to guarantee a successful experience.

IES Fernando Wirtz will provide incoming mobile students and their sending institutions with transcripts of records containing a full, accurate and timely record of their achievements at the end of their mobility period.