



# **Digital International Trainers (DIG.INT)**

*Internationalisation Plan CIS, GESTIONE DI IMPRESA*

*Work package 4*

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# 1. Introduction to the CIS Internationalization Plan

The **DIGINT project** (Digital International Trainers) is designed to support educational institutions and other organizations in enhancing their internationalization strategies through the use of digital tools and collaborative frameworks. The aim of the project is to provide a structured approach to developing, implementing, and improving internationalization plans within organizations. By leveraging tools such as the **benchmarking tool**, the **competence framework**, and the **report on internationalization achievements** (produced in October 2023), partners can assess their current standing and rework their strategies to better align with global standards and opportunities.

This document uses the Guidelines developed by the DIGINT project to describe CIS internationalization strategy in general terms, in a form that can be published in the project website as a reference for other VET providers interested in the tools and approaches proposed by the DIGINT project.

CIS - School for Business Management is the training and consultancy school of Unindustria Reggio Emilia, the Association of Industrialists that represents around 900 manufacturing companies involving approximately 41,000 workers.

Established in 1984, CIS is located in Reggio Emilia, a city of the Emilia-Romagna Region, that is one of the most industrialized areas in Italy. The main key sectors of Reggio Emilia's economy are food and agriculture, mechanics and mechatronics, education, ceramics, electronic, textile and green economy are also particularly developed. Moreover, Reggio Emilia enjoys a high level of employment and export rates, thanks to its flourishing network of small and medium-sized firms.

CIS is accredited by the Emilia-Romagna Region for the organization of training courses with public fundings. Therefore, CIS designs, organizes and provides training actions to match the competences of employees with the requirements of the green and digital transition, to re-skill or up-skill adults to join or rejoin the workforce, to support young people and adults in finding employment opportunities in close cooperation with Universities (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Bocconi University, Polytechnic University of Milan, Bologna Business School), companies, employment agencies, research centers, and local stakeholders.

CIS provides the following services:

- companies' training needs analysis;
- Higher VET Courses: post diploma & post-degree courses (EQF 4, EQF5, EQF6);
- tailor-made consultancy for companies;
- in-company & inter-company training;
- re-skilling and up-skilling digital programs;
- Master and Executive Courses (Business School);
- Development and management of EU funded projects with the aim of raising the quality of training in terms of innovation and internationalization.

CIS is the owner of the Human and Technology Training Centre (HTTC), a laboratory equipped with advanced technologies designed to develop specialistic competences on digital transformation as

well as transversal and transferable competences. The HTTC designs vocational courses, executive courses, and post-graduate masters on the topic of digital transformation. Moreover, it is one of the founding members of ITS MAKER - Higher Technological Institute for Mechanics, Mechatronics, Automotive, and Packaging (post-secondary school courses). CIS is also the managing partner of ITS Tech & Food and ITS Logistics.

CIS contributes to renew the local educational ecosystems, driving cooperation between schools and companies, as well as between Educators and Students and to update the VET training offer. CIS is actively involved in the development and management of EU funded projects to respond to the need to update the educational ecosystems at local and national level. Through its participation in EU projects, CIS intends to pursue the internationalization strategy that has enabled it to raise the quality of its training, offerings and services and to be recognized at regional, national and European level as an organization promoting vocational excellence.

## 2. The mission statement of the organization

We empower individuals and businesses by enhancing their awareness and skills through consulting and training, enabling them to compete in an increasingly globalized market. Our focus on internationalization fosters a dynamic exchange of knowledge, positioning international collaboration as a key driver of research and development. This approach not only strengthens companies but also generates a lasting impact on the local economy, fueling growth and innovation.

### Goals

CIS has been developing and implementing an internationalization strategy since 2015. The updated version of the strategy for the years 2023-2025 has the following objectives:

- To enhance educational quality and innovation by expanding international presence through partnerships with foreign institutions and training agencies. This entails providing a variety of courses tailored for both graduates and professionals, bridging the gap between advanced vocational training and “higher education”. Partnering with Italian universities that value CIS’s business-focused approach will contribute to enhancing its international recognition.
- To qualify as the reference training partner for the internationalization processes of local companies, offering not only the relevant skills to training personnel but also access to its own partnership networks to develop innovative curricula, staff mobility, and internationally focused innovation projects. This contributes to the international competitiveness of the local production system, addressing the growing demand for international profiles within an industry already heavily oriented towards exports and foreign presence.
- To strengthen its role as a knowledgeable and representative entity in the local entrepreneurial landscape when dealing with national, local, and European institutions orienting policies and programs related to education, employment, and industrial technologies. This involves gaining experience in project coordination and active participation in European policy networks.

According to these goals, the internationalization strategy of CIS articulates in 3 main areas of development:

1. **Enhancing the educational offer towards internationalization:** CIS is undertaking measures to enhance and internationalize its educational offerings through:
  - a. the introduction of intercultural training elements through projects involving students from other European and international institutions;
  - b. the development of joint modules and implementation of international mobility programmes;
  - c. the participation in European projects and a strengthened relationships with the most relevant and complementary international partners;
  - d. building a network of European partners to expand its internationalization efforts.
2. **Becoming the educational partner to support the process of internationalization of local businesses:** In response to the needs of local businesses, CIS is undergoing a process of reviewing, updating, and internationalizing its educational offerings, aiming to provide the necessary skills for internationalization through virtual mobility modules, study periods at partner institutions abroad, and international internships. Upon request from specific industry groups, CIS works to support tailored internationalization pathways at the level of business clusters. Lastly, it can provide methodological support to companies or groups of companies seeking European program funding for research and innovation, including assisting in finding qualified foreign partners, if necessary. As a matter of fact, CIS offers its clients the possibility to design, develop, and manage corporate academies, even with an international dimension.
3. **Engaging with local, national, and European institutions fostering innovation and internationalization:** CIS constantly develops relationships with institutional stakeholders, particularly those who define or oversee the management of initiatives, programs, and public funds for innovation and internationalization. Additionally, the participation in the Erasmus+ program provides a valuable opportunity to strengthen CIS's role as a qualified interlocutor with the business world to support innovations that are central to public policies in education and innovation.

Additionally, CIS recognizes the strategic importance of attracting and retaining talented professionals with international expertise to better support businesses. By fostering a globally skilled workforce, CIS helps companies enhance their competitiveness, drive innovation, and successfully navigate international markets

This goal has become even more important for CIS after the issue of the regional law n. 63 on "Attraction, Retention, and Enhancement of Highly Specialized Talents in Emilia-Romagna" on February 14th, 2023. The Emilia-Romagna Regional Government intends to promote incentives for companies that hire young people returning from abroad or interested in working or researching in Emilia-Romagna, customized training paths, specialization and qualification programs through a master's network in high education structures and schools, welfare service packages (childcare, schools, housing, life-work balance) for young people and their families.

### 3. Internationalization at Home and Global citizenship

CIS mostly serves local students and companies, and only a few of the present courses are delivered in English.

However, the following three factors push towards a significant increase of courses delivered in English and other languages in the near future:

1. the commitment to contribute to the regional strategy for talent attraction and retention,
2. the goal of becoming a partner of local enterprises also in their international activities
3. the willingness to further consolidate the partnership with other VET providers in the delivery of jointly developed courses

Also, thanks to DIGINT, the capacity to work internationally is becoming a criterion for the accreditation of VET providers, and CIS stands out as an expert organization in this field, able to advise other VET providers.

Intercultural skills are part of CIS teaching capacity, but only some of the provided programmes are actually designed and delivered through an intercultural approach.

Emilia-Romagna is a region attracting internal, intra-EU and extra-EU migration, but the CIS training supply is not specifically designed to serve foreign students, being rooted in the service to local industry.

CIS is increasingly committed to developing study programs in collaboration with international partners. This effort is being strengthened through its participation in the ERASMUS+ CoVE EXCEED project, where new curricula are co-designed with project partners. Through this initiative, CIS is enhancing its expertise in international collaboration, improving the quality and relevance of its educational programs to better prepare students and professionals for a globalized and competitive environment."

#### **Priorities for development**

CIS is interested in further developing its level of internationalization through the activation of new international study programmes with its ERASMUS partners, first of all those involved in the DIGINT project; it is also interested in increasing the number of courses delivered in English, whenever the demand of learners justifies it.

Increasing the capacity to deliver courses on intercultural communication and skills is also an interesting development for CIS, both to serve the local enterprises going abroad to produce or commercialize their products, and to better integrate students of foreign origin attending its courses.

### 4. International partners

CIS has already a significant number of partners thanks to its long experience in ERASMUS; some are excellent partners with which some joint programmes have already been developed, some are consolidated partners for ERASMUS programme.

However, this stratification of partners has not a full European coverage and does not include long-term collaboration with extra-EU partners.

Some of the partners are similar organizations, but many are Higher Education Institutions, Regional Development Agencies and other associations of public and private actors. France, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Romania and Poland, Turkey, Lithuania are the countries with which most collaborations are based.

The ambition for the next three years is to have at least one reliable VET partner in most EU countries, to consolidate the capacity to develop joint training programmes with EU validity, and to maintain the partnership with the other categories of partners within ERASMUS.

## 5. Student mobility

CIS has few significant direct experiences in this domain, it is willing to consider small scale and short duration of staff mobility to exchange experiences and develop innovative programmes, but does not foresee the systematic development of its own students mobility. What is more interesting for CIS is Virtual Mobility as a way to provide international learning experience to its students without the complications of ERASMUS mobility schemes.

On the other side, CIS is active as a designer of integrated (Physical and Virtual) mobility for other training organizations in Italy, who are not satisfied with the quality level of student mobility.

## 6. Staff mobility

CIS has limited experiences in this domain, and the few are in relation to KA2 Erasmus projects, in which teachers mobility may be functional to the development of joint study programmes or peer learning. Within these limitations, this area may be interesting. However, it should be considered that CIS has very few full-time teachers, most of its employees are not teachers, while the many teachers committed in CIS courses are experts coming from enterprises, business schools, universities and specialized consultancy companies.

## 7. Virtual mobility development

Virtual mobility is considered a very important strategy for CIS internationalization:

1. It may help to internationalize study programmes, by allowing international study experience for our students and joint design of programmes between our teachers and foreign teachers, thus building trust relations and fostering long term collaboration
2. It may be used to activate study programmes with neighboring countries and developing countries, thus increasing CIS capacity to perform internationally
3. It may be used to develop intercultural skills for our teachers and learners
4. It may be applied to programmes for employees of our companies working abroad and wishing to integrate in foreign countries

Virtual mobility can support a part of or a whole study programme/curriculum and, through the partnership with other trustful organization, may allow to steadily increase the international profile of CIS, thus attracting local clients (companies) and international students.

## 8. Role in Erasmus and other international programmes

The ERASMUS Programme has been the main ground for CIS internationalization for almost ten years; with DIGINT Cis has experienced the coordination of an ERASMUS KA2 project for the first time; however, many times CIS was a substantial partner of projects coordinated by other organizations, but proposed and written by CIS.

CIS considerable experience in ERASMUS is a strong asset, but the capacity to fully exploit ERASMUS projects result in the daily activity of CIS can certainly be improved.

The DIGINT Project constitutes a good example of significant local impact of an ERASMUS project, also thanks to the presence of the Regional Development Agency as a partner and of the Regional Government as an associated partner.

CIS is learning from this experience and trying to maximize the project impact on its internationalization strategy.

## 9. Recognition of credits and diploma achievement abroad (optional)

CIS has not developed a solid tradition yet in the recognition of credits and certificates coming from foreign countries; its specific orientation to local employment and training needs (CIS is owned by the Industrial Union of Reggio Emilia - UNINDUSTRIA) has not supported the full commitment to this aspect of European VET policy. Nevertheless, in recent ERASMUS projects the requirement to use ECVET and the European approach to the recognition of learning outcomes achieved through informal learning and work experience, inclusive in foreign countries, has become a new priority. The microcredentials approach proposed by the EU has become a recurrent object of analysis and experimentation, therefore its adoption by CIS is foreseen in the near future and its application to at least a part of its training supply is considered a feasible objective for the medium term.

## 10. Partnership with local companies for international investment in kind

CIS intends to become a partner of local companies which have already or are planning to have investments in other countries, within and beyond the EU. The basic idea is to offer the same trust relationship and quality standards that CIS offers locally to those local companies also to their staff who works abroad (either Italians temporary displaced to accompany an investment or foreign staff employed in another country. CIS is committed to develop this line of activity also thanks to the work done in DIGINT and is interested to involve DIGINT partners in this line of activity, when its client companies are active in the partners' countries

## 11. Organization and Human Resources

The staff systematically involved in international activities at our organization comprises a group of 4 people with varying qualifications and backgrounds, but a long experience in developing European projects in the field of education.

Approximately one tenth of our total staff working time is dedicated to international projects. While our organization occasionally offers courses related to internationalization upon demand from the international unit or individuals, our recruitment strategy includes hiring teachers and staff with an international background when there are projects that can benefit from foreign expertise.

We actively support our staff and teachers' training and mobility abroad, particularly within certain projects. Around 15% of our teaching and staff members have participated in international study programs in the last two years. Furthermore, the cultural diversity in our organization is valued, with a range of staff from different national and cultural backgrounds.

CIS actively engages teachers of Higher VET courses in pathways for developing their pedagogical as well as technical competences, thanks to the support of initiatives carried out within the framework of European projects.

This dynamic blend of qualifications and international experiences enriches our institution's global outlook and fosters a vibrant, inclusive learning environment.

## 12. PR and communication

We promote our internationalization efforts through our website, social media channels, and collaborations with local High Technical schools and Regional Development Agency. We also engage in workshops, networking events, vocational and education fairs, to enhance our international engagement.

### **Areas for Development**

In five years, we aim to be a recognized hub for international cooperation, known for fostering strong partnerships and providing valuable international learning opportunities for both individuals and companies.

We plan to expand our communication efforts towards businesses to better position our internationalization area and provide companies with insights and opportunities for reflection and exchange. We will broaden our network to include key stakeholders and conduct a mapping exercise to identify potential partners and collaboration opportunities.

We will start by improving our digital communication tools and increasing engagement through targeted campaigns. Next, we will establish structured dialogues with businesses and stakeholders, organizing events and roundtables to foster collaboration. Over time, we will continuously evaluate our impact and refine our approach to ensure long-term success in internationalization.