Education and mobility: Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013 action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries

2007/0145(COD) - 21/10/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted, by 623 votes to 56 with 5 abstentions, a legislative resolution amending the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries (Erasmus Mundus) (2009-2013). The report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Marielle **DE SARNEZ** (ALDE, FR), on behalf of the Committee on Culture and Education.

The amendments were the result of a compromise between Parliament and Council.

The main amendments - adopted under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure - were as follows:

Academic excellence and geographical representation: the programme should be implemented in line with the objectives for academic excellence while taking into account a geographical representation of beneficiaries that is as balanced as possible.

Information: the Commission must ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on activities and developments in the programme, mainly through the Erasmus Mundus website. It must keep its delegations in the third countries concerned regularly informed of all useful public information on the Erasmus Mundus programme.

Programme actions: these are clarified as follows :

- Action 1: Erasmus Mundus joint programmes (masters and doctorates) of outstanding academic quality, including a scholarship scheme;
- Action 2: Erasmus Mundus partnerships between European and third-country higher education institutions as a basis for structural co-operation, exchange and mobility at all levels of higher education, including a system of scholarships;
- Action 3: promotion of European higher education through measures enhancing the attractiveness of Europe as an educational destination and a centre of excellence at world level.

Details of these actions are set out in the Annex. The excellence objectives will be pursued through Erasmus Mundus Joint Programmes (Action 1) and Action 2, while the development objectives will be covered exclusively by Action 2.

Funding: the financial framework for the implementation of Actions 1 and 3 of the programme and related technical support measures for the 2009-2013 period is set at EUR 493 690 000. The financial framework for the implementation of Action 2 and technical support measures related to those is set in

accordance with the rules, procedures and objectives laid down in Regulations (EC) No 1085/2006, 1638 /2006, 1905/2006 (DCI) and 1934/2006 and Decisions 599/2005/EC and 608/2006/EC (Decision No 1 /2006 of the ACP-EC Council of Ministers).

For the purpose of the programme, and **in conformity with the legal base** from which the funding is derived, Erasmus Mundus partnerships (Action 2) will organise exchanges of students, selected on the basis of academic excellence at all levels of higher education (from bachelor students to postdoctoral researchers). Parliament did not stipulate that under DCI funding or the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement, actions shall only benefit institutions, academics or other persons from developing countries.

Visas: a new recital states that in order to ensure that the beneficiaries of the programme enjoy a high quality welcome and stay, the Member States should endeavour to simplify their visa procedures. The Commission should ensure that all the Member States' relevant websites and useful information concerning contact persons is available on the Erasmus Mundus site. In addition, Parliament specified that Member States must take the necessary steps to ensure the efficient running of the programme at Member State level, including endeavours to adopt such measures as may be deemed appropriate to remove all legal and administrative barriers linked specifically to exchange programmes between European countries and third countries.

Non-discrimination: Parliament's text gives instances of the types of approaches which may be used. These include enhanced support for mobility of people in the field of higher education selected on the basis of academic excellence, particularly from third countries to the Community, taking into account the principles of gender equality and the wish to have a geographic representation that is as balanced as possible, while facilitating access in accordance with the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. Horizontal issues stress the promotion of equal opportunities for all.

Implementing measures: all measures necessary for the implementation of Action 2 shall be governed by the procedures set out in Regulations (EC) No 1085/2006, 1638/2006, 1905/2006 and 1934/2006 and Decisions (EC) No 599/2005 and 608/2006 (Decision No 1/2006 of the ACP-EC Council of Ministers). Other measures necessary for the implementation of the programme and of the other actions of the Decision shall be adopted in accordance with the management procedure in accordance with the principles, general guidelines and selection criteria laid down in the Annex. Parliament did not specify that implementing measures be adopted in accordance with the regulatory procedure with scrutiny.

Tuition fees: establishments shall be free to decide whether or not to establish tuition fees, in accordance with their national legislation and the agreement concluded between partners. The Commission's proposal had stated that the programmes shall establish a joint tuition fee regardless of the actual place of study of the students within the masters' programme.

Brain drain: Erasmus Mundus partnerships, in the case of measures funded under Regulation (EC) No 1905/2006 or the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement must encourage nationals of third countries to return to their countries of origin on the expiry of their periods of study or research to allow them to contribute to the economic development and welfare of those countries. Parliament did not insert an element of compulsion. In its evaluation of the programme, the Commission should pay particular attention to its potential brain-drain effects.

Language requirements: Parliament accepted the Commission's approach and the text now states that, without prejudice to the language of instruction, programmes provide for the use of at least two European languages spoken in the Member States where the higher education institutions involved in the programme is situated and, as appropriate, offer language preparation and assistance for students.

Scholarships: in order to make the programme more attractive for third country nationals, the amount of the full-study scholarships will be higher for third-country master students and doctoral candidates

(Category A scholarships) than for European master students and doctoral candidates (Category B scholarships).