

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

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In accordance with the requirements of Decision n° 1298/2008/EC, the Commission presents a report on the interim evaluation of the Erasmus Mundus II Programme. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency of the programme, paying particular attention to the novelties introduced in phase II of the programme. The evaluation covered all three actions over the implementation period of 2009-2011. The report puts forward the Commission's position on the main conclusions and recommendations of the Interim Evaluation.

To recall, EM has a budget of over EUR 950 million, with around EUR 494 million allocated to Actions 1 and 3, taken from the EU's education budget, and EUR 460 million allotted to Action 2, taken from a number of different funding instruments.

Commission's position

The Commission shares the overall assessment of the evaluator that the programme EM II has provided strong support and made an important contribution to the internationalisation process of the European Higher Education Area.

The programme remains highly relevant in promoting excellence, international cooperation support, mobility and academic capacity building. During the first half of the EM programme (2009 – 2011), the programme has shown effectiveness in strengthening the international orientation strategy of participating institutions, providing as well sustainability to strategic networking activities. The Interim Evaluation of EM reveals a programme that has been efficiently implemented with a very good cost/benefit ratio.

The 3 programme Actions have provided outstanding outcomes for HEIs, students and scholars from EU MS and third countries.

Action 1 has contributed to improving excellence in teaching and learning and to supporting institutional networking.

Action 2 Partnerships have been relevant in supporting international cooperation in the field of higher education and quite efficient in including third country institutions as members of international partnerships supporting academic mobility.

Action 3 has been effective in giving coherence and sustainability to the whole programme.

EM II was designed to include **4 novelties** to overcome several deficiencies, shortcomings and weakness observed in the previous phase (2004 – 2008). These are as follows:

- extending Joint Programmes to the doctoral level;

- offering scholarships for European students;
- integrating the “External Cooperation Window” scheme into the EM programme as Action 2 and widening its scope;
- allowing third country higher education institutions to participate in the EM Joint Programmes.

Even if **the novelties need further improvements, the overall result is highly positive**, notably in the integration of the new Action 2, the more active participation of third country partners in consortia and in the scholarships offered for European Union students.

The Commission notes the findings of the evaluation in favour of **further improvements**, which could be made in the second half of the programme.

Reinforcing relevance by strengthening links between EM and other EU programmes in the field of higher education: this recommendation very much reflects the preferred option identified in the impact assessment on the international dimension of the Higher Education Actions of the future [Integrated Programme for the period 2014-2020](#). That option aims to strengthening objectives and impact through concentration and streamlined architecture. The use of this option in the design of the future integrated programme should create the necessary links within internal programmes (between Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus) and between external and internal policies and programmes in the higher education field (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, EDULINK, Alfa, Atlantis, etc.). It is also expected to reinforce links between mobility and partnerships (including capacity building and policy support measures) and provide support to increase the overall quality and relevance of higher education, enhancing the links between policies and programmes, accompanying universities in their internationalisation strategy and the modernisation of higher education in non-EU countries together with the development of their human capital.

Improving the effectiveness of the programme: the evaluation recommendations are addressed to the following main issues: (i) employability; (ii) programme balance between objectives for excellence, capacity building and geographical participation; (iii) involving employers; (iv) helping the visa process; and (v) mapping best practices.

The Commission wants to improve effectiveness by

- allowing for a better balance between excellence and capacity building (notably linking the financial allocations to each action with clearly identified policy objectives, reflecting different world regions' needs);
- further involving employers-good practices for involving employers should be fostered, and outreach activities in candidate and potential candidate countries are needed; and
- helping to improve – as far as possible – the visa process.

Sustainability: recommendations on sustainability are related to a better use of the limited EU funding. Sharing good practices and a more integrated programme may be useful as well. The Commission states that it has already been supporting sustainability through different initiatives, such as the establishment of the Erasmus Mundus brand name and the implementation of a cluster regrouping all the best sustainability practices under Erasmus Mundus.

Efficiency: the evaluation recommends improving the monitoring and evaluation of future projects by better balancing quantitative and qualitative assessment and by involving field experts in the monitoring

visits and project evaluation. It also suggests streamlining programme promotion across different Actions under the post-2013 programme, while maintaining the current institutional framework that involves the Executive Agency, the National Structures and the EU Delegations.

The Commission agrees on the need to improve the monitoring and evaluation of projects and to streamline the programme's promotion. This will be done in the framework of the future integrated programme, using the tools produced in its current phase, notably under the EM Quality Assessment Project.