Higher education: co-operation with third countries, Erasmus Mundus programme 2004-2008

2002/0165(COD) - 17/03/2003

The committee adopted the report by Marielle de SARNEZ (EPP-ED, F) broadly approving the proposal, subject to a number of amendments under the codecision procedure (1st reading). The committee introduced a new clause specifying that that the programme should "respect the competences of the EU and the Member States in education and training, and their cultural and linguistic diversity". It also wanted the title of the programme to be changed from "Erasmus World" to "Erasmus Mundus" on the grounds that a 'universal name' would help to identify it and so preserve the principle of linguistic diversity. In line with this new title, it said that the proposed European Union masters degrees should be called ·Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses· and should be labelled as such, thus making it possible to identify the training offered by the EU easily and in every country. Any course thus labelled must guarantee a particular quality of training and also of hosting of students, such as ease of access to accommodation, language courses, granting of visas, etc. As part of the goal of promoting language skills, the committee also specified that one of the objectives to be achieved during the Erasmus Mundus Masters Course should be for the student to acquire a knowledge of at least two languages spoken in the countries in which the institutions offering the Masters Course are situated. Other points raised in the report included the need to ensure that the programme did not exacerbate the brain drain, which was already a problem for EU Member States and non-EU countries alike, and the need to minimise political influence over the selection of projects and beneficiaries by ensuring that the selection board was appointed on a proposal from the Commission and made up of "prominent figures from the academic world reflecting the diversity of higher education in the EU". Lastly, the committee wanted the budget for the programme to be increased by 50% to a total of EUR 300 million, provided this did not take away funding from existing programmes and remained within the limits of the financial perspective.