Higher education: cooperation with third countries

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PURPOSE : Communication on strengthening cooperation with third countries in the area of higher education. CONTENT : In developing its higher education systems the Community must seek to prepare its citizens and its workforce for a global environment by including the international dimension. In addition, there is an increasing demand for international education and student mobility. Community programmes in education, and particularly ERASMUS, have had a substantial impact in boosting the capacity for international cooperation among European universities. A further effort is required at Community level, to encourage institutions systematically to integrate new co-operation with third countries into a wider partnership framework. Two immediate objectives are identified: - develop high quality human resources in partner countries and within the EC, through reciprocal human resource development; - promote the EC as a worldwide centre of excellence for study/training as well as for scientific and technological research. The Community will take the following measures: - use the experience gained in the intra-Community programmes in its relations with third countries. ERASMUS, in particular, has attracted interest and requests to participate from around the world. - provide for diversity in the arrangements with each country and each region. Cooperation will focus on multilateral networks and partnerships involving countries that have achieved a level of development in higher education comparable to that of European institutions. The Commission will encourage the use of accreditation systems, in particular the European Credit Transfer System. It will also extend the network of EU Studies Centres and Jean Monnet Chairs around the world, so as to provide a full service to interested academics. A pilot programme for Latin America will be instituted. This will establish a postgraduate scholarship travel and study programme to allow future decision-makers in Latin America develop closer ties with Europe and foster further links between the two regions. The strategy proposed in this Communication will, whenever possible, be funded within existing programmes and within existing budget allocations. The Commission aims to review the process and possibly make further proposals in 2003.