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

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PURPOSE : to establish a programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries (Erasmus World) (2004-2008). CONTENT : the Erasmus World programme offers high-profile assistance in the form of 250 European masters courses and thousands of study grants and fellowships for nationals of third countries and for Europeans. Like the Fulbright Programme for the United States (please refer to summary CNS/2000/0263), it will help to strengthen intercultural dialogue and communicate European cultures and values more effectively to the rest of the world. Covering the period 2004-2008, Erasmus World will have a budget of EUR 200 million. The Erasmus World Programme has the following objectveis: 1) Creation of 250 inter-university masters courses with the seal and support of the European Union Erasmus World aims to create or develop a European higher education product providing both European students as well as students and invited scholars from third countries with added value. Host European postgraduate courses which already exist or are to be set up will be selected for a five-year period. They will receive funding from the Community and an "EU" seal. These "EU Masters Courses" will be an ideal structure for receiving students from third countries under the Erasmus World programme, alongside European students. At the end of the programme in 2008, around 250 "EU Masters Courses" should have been established. To qualify for the "EU" seal, these courses should involve at least three universities from three different Member States and entail recognised periods of study in at least two of the three universities. These courses will lead to diplomas that are officially recognised in the European countries taking part. They will reserve places for third-country students receiving Erasmus World scholarships. The courses will cover various fields and there will be no conditions regarding the language in which teaching takes place. 2) "Erasmus World" scholarships for 4 200 students and 1 000 visiting scholars to Europe from third countries Either directly or under partnerships between their university of origin and the universities taking part in an "EU Masters Course", postgraduate students from third countries will be able to study in Europe for up to two academic years. During their studies, they will follow courses in several Member States, like all the students enrolled in an "EU Masters Course". The scholarships, amounting on average to EUR 1 600 per month, will enable the students to come to Europe and cover their living expenses while they are there. When it comes up to speed, Erasmus World should enable over 2 000 third-country students to receive a scholarship of this kind, with around 4 200 scholarships being awarded over the life of the programme. When implementing the programme, special attention will be given to ways of avoiding a "brain drain" from the developing countries whose students are to take part in the programme. 3) the "EU Masters Courses" will receive visiting scholars from universities around the world for teaching and research assignments lasting an average of three months. Between now and 2008, Erasmus World will provide support for over 1 000 visiting scholars to Europe from third countries, who will receive anaverage grant of EUR 13 000. 4) Partnerships between the "EU Masters Courses" and universities in other continents to facilitate the mobility of 4 000 European students and 800 European scholars Erasmus World will encourage the universities taking part in an "EU Masters Course" to establish a structured cooperation with top-class universities in third countries through joint projects covering a three-year period. This cooperation on an equal footing will provide a means for the exchange of students and scholars going to third countries with Erasmus World scholarships. Between now and 2008, almost 4 000 European postgraduate students and 800 European visiting scholars should receive support under the Erasmus World Programme. This cooperation will relate to areas given high priority for higher education in Europe. 5) International cooperation : Erasmus World will provide financial support for the international promotion of European higher education (publicity material, presence at international education fairs) and for the establishment of services facilitating access of third country students to

European universities (tools for language training, living conditions for third country students, etc). It should be noted that this programme does not replace, but complements in an innovative way, existing regional programmes such as TEMPUS (mainly with countries from the former USSR, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean Basin), agreements with the United States and Canada, ALFA and ALBAN (for Latin America), Asia-Link, pilot projects with Australia, etc. Compared with these programmes and with national initiatives on cooperation with third countries, Erasmus World will offer third-country students and teachers a greater opportunity for mobility and an enhanced European added value.