![EUA - European University Association logo]

Response to the public consultation on the future EU programmes for European and international mobility and cooperation

A. Introduction: General Remarks and Overall Approach

The European University Association (EUA) represents 34 national rectors' conferences and more than 800 universities and other research-intensive higher education institutions from 46 European countries. EUA's aim is to strengthen the convergence of European higher education and research, and enhance its global articulation and recognition. Since its conception, EUA has contributed actively to policy development, both as a member of the Bologna Process and in the discussion on the Lisbon Agenda and the European Research Area. Higher education reform, mobility, partnership and cooperation, within Europe and with other parts of the world, are of crucial interest for EUA and its members. These issues have been analysed extensively in the series of six TRENDS reports[1] published over the last decade, based on data provided by higher education institutions and the input of national Rectors' Conferences across Europe. They have also been explored through theme-specific European projects and studies involving EUA membership. It is on this basis that on behalf of its members EUA offers recommendations for the next generation of EC lifelong learning, mobility and cooperation programmes.

Considering EUA's mandate in representing a broad range of research intensive higher education institutions operating in different environments, the recommendations focus on the overall framework, objectives and instruments of cooperation from the perspective of universities rather than pointing to specific ways of improving individual programme components. Our remarks also focus on enhancing the European added value of EU programmes, which we believe is critical both for individual institutional development, but also for the further realization of the EHEA and the overall success of the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth objective at the heart of the EU2020 agenda for the future of the European Union. Recommendations are made both on the international programmes and the current LLL programme, as we believe that these programmes need to be considered in an integrated manner.

Considering the importance of higher education and research in delivering these objectives and of higher education institutions in educating and training the 'smart people' needed to meet Europe's objectives EUA believes that higher education should be given a higher profile in the 'framework agenda Education' and in the next generation of programmes.

Thus, in order to ensure that European higher education can develop its full potential both within Europe and internationally, **EUA recommends accommodating all programmes for higher education under one highly visible, clearly defined and well structured overall 'umbrella' comprising those parts of the lifelong learning programme that concern higher education, but also the present Erasmus Mundus programme and the various relevant initiatives and instruments at regional and bilateral level with industrialised and developing countries.**

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[1] http://www.eua.be/publications.aspx#c399

Under this umbrella we recommend:

1. **Continuing and improving the current Erasmus mobility scheme providing mobility grants to students and staff. Programme revision should also consider a stronger focus on rationales, purposes and benefits of mobility, and include tangible steps to ensure and improve its quality, and the development of adequate legal and social frameworks for intra European mobility.**

2. **Continuing the Erasmus Mundus Master and Doctoral student grants for both European and international students[2].**

3. **Supporting partnership projects that promote networking and clustering among European universities and between European universities and international partners, to improve the quality, effectiveness and visibility of European higher education institutions. This should encompass a wide range of priorities and purposes, including the continued innovation of teaching and learning, the different components of the modernisation agenda, capacity building of both non-European and European institutions, and development cooperation.**

4. **Continuing and broadening the range of accompanying measures on offer to support exchange and cooperation among the different actors of the higher education community, and to promote dialogue with governments and a wide range of partners outside higher education.**

5. **Simplifying and streamlining programme application and management procedures schemes, and allowing for more flexibility.**

These points are further elaborated in the detailed recommendations set out below. In order to enhance effectiveness and maximise impact we strongly recommend clustering all generic mobility and project partnership schemes that concern higher education, within the EU and internationally, as a point of departure for developing the new programme architecture in higher education. This approach would be more conducive to reaching the goals set rather than starting from the different funding sources in the EC's budget, with the ensuing fragmentation that this entails.

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[2] In a separate position paper, EUA has proposed to the ERC a third stream of funding for doctoral schools and programmes.

B. Specific Recommendations

Recommendation 1   Establish a central, clearly structured and visible umbrella scheme for all European Commission programmes addressing higher education

1. A central umbrella scheme should be established to accommodate all programmes and instruments addressing higher education. This would enable the creation of a visible 'one stop shop' for European higher education: a central point for information and an interface for applications for students, and higher education institutions, but also for agencies and organisations from Europe and other parts of the world. We strongly recommend considering the systematic development and visible branding of this umbrella structure and its main programme strands, e.g. under the name of Erasmus. Erasmus is the most strongly established brand name in European HE cooperation and is also recognised internationally.

Recommendation 2   Mobility grants and Partnership projects as basic building blocks of the new generation of programmes

2. The new generation of programmes, should be built on two principal actions:
   a. Individual mobility grants benefitting students, academic and administrative staff, which could be either awarded within partnerships and projects or independently.
   b. Partnerships projects, promoting networking and clustering of universities, thus implemented by several universities that receive a grant for jointly conducted actions. These partnerships can have a wide range of purposes ranging from academic excellence and the promotion of the various modernisation agenda priorities to development and capacity building issues (as for example under the LLL programme, Alfa, Edulink and Tempus) or have specific predefined purposes such as staff and student mobility and joint study courses and programmes as under the current Erasmus Mundus action 1+2).
3. These two instruments are crucial for ensuring the added value of European action and for improving the quality of European higher education, as they can be varied, combined and employed for a wide range of different purposes and in different settings, within Europe and internationally, in response to priorities defined either by the higher education institutions, or through the programme priorities set by the EC.

Recommendation 3   Continue and improve intra European student and staff mobility and include tangible steps to ensure and improve its quality, and the development of adequate legal and social frameworks for intra European mobility.

4. For many European institutions and students, the Erasmus student and staff mobility scheme continues to be the first step towards mobility and internationalisation. Feedback from institutions suggests that it is widely used in different environments to the benefit of both students and institutions. It also generates co-funding at various national/regional levels. It is therefore recommended that the current Erasmus programme and other mobility schemes should include the following improvements:

a. Ensure broader participation and better balanced exchanges:
   i. Encourage where this is possible the use of structural funds for the provision of support for student and staff mobility grants in countries where currently no or little national support is available
   ii. structural funds could also be a source for supporting universities for their participation in mobility and partnership schemes (e.g. in their efforts to improve curricula, enhance English and other foreign language teaching provision, and develop sustainable student services).
b. Improve the quality of mobility periods and ensure that learning goals are achieved through embedding mobility grants into (existing) structured partnerships. This approach is already employed under Erasmus Mundus, but it would also be an appropriate action under Erasmus (or cross-cutting the two programmes). In order not to exclude institutions that are just starting internationalisation, or seek to explore new exchanges, this should not become a requirement, but rather remain optional, and be used as an incentive.

5. With regards to long identified obstacles and hindrances for student and staff mobility within Europe, policy initiatives and funding measures should be developed that also promote and encourage the creation of a level playing field across Europe with greater coherence of national regulatory and social frameworks for mobility, including, among other things, important questions such as the portability of grants, the transfer of pension rights and other social security benefits.

Recommendation 4   *Foster* and interlink European and international graduate mobility

6. The decision to include European students as beneficiaries of Erasmus Mundus Master and doctoral grants is very much welcomed, as mobility at graduate level is highly relevant for both for European students and European institutions. This could become a crucial building block for establishing a European knowledge area and fostering its global connectivity and outreach. Therefore for the future, both European and international students should be eligible for grants. The courses are only attractive if they bring European and non-European students together.

Recommendation 5   Develop versatile Partnership projects strand as instruments for fostering partnerships, cooperation and mobility among European institutions and with their international partners

7. The establishment of partnership project strands is recommended, on basis of the lessons learnt from the LLP and the Third Country cooperation instruments. Such partnership project strands are needed in order to foster partnership among universities, their representative bodies and other relevant stakeholders.
8. Partnership projects are considered to be a very creative, productive and cost efficient way of enhancing the quality and innovativeness of learning and teaching, fostering institutional and systems' development, stimulating European and international outreach, and facilitating better balanced and quality assured mobility of students at all stages and of staff members.
9. Rather than establishing two parallel strands, i.e. one benefiting only European (Erasmus Partnership project strand), and one benefiting European universities and their

international partners (Erasmus Mundus Partnership project strand), a more outward looking approach would be to have both under one strand.

10. Partnership projects also serve multiple purposes and are the basis for a wide range of activities, ranging from curriculum development to institutional capacity building, development and capacity building partnerships. The partnership projects could also be a strategic tool for developing joint research consortia for submission under future Framework Programme instruments.

11. Another important function could be to encourage better coordination and synergies of transnational higher education provided by European higher education institutions outside of Europe. This would not only diminish unhealthy competition and duplication, but also enhance the visibility of Europe in a very strategic manner. It could also contribute to developing a more convergent European approach in TNE, and also address issues such as quality assurance and two-way mobility. One possibility would be to develop an 'Erasmus Campus' strand, a programme for developing European off-shore campus as joint ventures of several institutions from different countries.

12. The approach suggested here would not only include the present foci of the Erasmus Mundus action 1 and action 2 to fund the establishment of joint study courses or to facilitate mobility, but would open up a wider range of possibilities that could be developed and combined by university consortia, or promoted as priorities by the EC under regional and thematic windows. Principally, it is recommended that both possibilities are offered, in order to allow responses to policy priorities, and also to foster the development of innovative approaches by universities.

13. It is suggested that a wider range of funding possibilities and levels is considered, depending on the actual needs of the projects, with grants ranging between 250.000 and 750.000 EUR as a general rule, but in exceptional cases also going beyond 1 Mill EUR. The length of funding should also be considered. Cooperation projects with developing countries may need a longer start-up period, and more time to ensure take-up and sustainability (a criticism of the Edulink programme). Ultimately benefitting institutions should have a certain flexibility to request both the length and grant amount, within broad limitations.

> Recommendation 6 Enhance underpinning and supporting measures provided by the programmes, for enhancing ownership and sustainability, the dissemination of results, and for stimulating dialogue and cooperation among the various stakeholders

14. EC funding programmes are not only "tools", but for many Europeans, and for a growing number of international students and academics, programmes such as Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus and Tempus, represent an important learning and professional experience in their individual pathways and careers. The identification with the programmes, developed, for example, through the establishment of Alumni organizations, is particularly valuable and should be fostered as such. Similarly the further development of underpinning measures that would enhance dissemination of results, promote synergy between projects and initiatives, and ensure the identification of the HE community with the programmes, and their relations with the Commission should also be considered based upon s those currently provided under some of the programmes as action 3 or action 4). These would

a. stimulate exchange among project holders and alumni,
b. stimulate exchange within the university community, in particular institutional leadership, who are not usually directly involved in projects
c. promote partnerships with external stakeholders (industry, national agencies)
d. and also enable a more systematic dialogue between the EC and the stakeholder community.

15. These measures would
a. Pay the way for improving synergies and cooperation between grant holders, projects and a wider range of stakeholders
b. enhance the dissemination and sustainability of information and project outcomes
c. facilitate events (such as stakeholder meetings, conferences, workshops)
d. Support information and promotion (student opportunities, match-making portal for university partnerships, portal on national HE funding programme for international cooperation, campaigns for mobility, encouraging students and staff to consider different types of mobility and destinations; etc.)
e. support alumni associations and their activities
f. support platforms on policy and practice issues
g. Support policy dialogue between associations and agencies
h. In addition to the demand driven and bottom-up approach, they could also focus on regional (e.g. interregional platforms) or horizontal and disciplinary issues, thus contributing to European Union policy interests.

These measures would not only promote Europe, but would generate crucial discussions on the future of European higher education in the global environment, and contribute to better synchronised modernisation and convergence efforts at European Union, national and institutional levels.

> Recommendation 7 Streamline application and administration procedures. Currently, the Erasmus Mundus programme Action 3 seems to provide a good example of a fit for purpose application and reporting procedure.

16. The revision of programmes is also an opportunity for easing and streamlining project application and administration requirements. Currently, different programmes employ different application procedures and forms, but also a different project logic.
17. It is crucial that programmes provide flexible funding opportunities for universities encouraging them to link diverse thematic and geographic areas, actions and actors in a creative, innovative and sustainable manner: Beyond its defined priorities, programmes should respond better to the needs of higher education institutions and the way they work. Universities' initiatives are often characterized by multilayered rationales, involving different actors and activities.
18. Rather than developing several strands addressing different policy priorities (transversal, modernization etc.), it is recommended applicants should be encouraged to explain how the project will contribute to the policy priorities and will use the defined eligible actions (which is in principal the approach currently taken e.g. in Alfa and Tempus). The current application forms for Erasmus Mundus Action 3, for example, are far more user-friendly than those of the LLP.

Recommendation 8   A tentative list of priorities

19. While programmes allow universities to identify and explain their own needs, some thematic areas are critical. For the period of 2013-2020, programmes should provide incentives for exchange and cooperation among European (and where appropriate international) higher education institutions in order to jointly develop innovative approaches and explore good practice in the area of
    a. Widening and broadening access
    b. innovative approaches in research-based learning and teaching
    c. Support measures to the student life cycle
    d. Staff development, in particular with regards to the implementation of institutional autonomy
    e. Cooperation with local and regional environments
    f. University contribution to continuous education
    g. Measures for enhancing European and global outreach.

European University Association, Brussels, 3 December 2010