



## **Session 3 – What role can Joint International Programmes (JIPs) play in the future development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)?**

*Chair: Wicher Schreuders*

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As the main objective of the Bologna Process since its inception in 1999, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. Between 1999 and 2010, all the efforts of the Bologna Process members were aimed at creating the European Higher Education Area, which was launched and became reality along with the Bologna Process' decade anniversary, in March 2010, during the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference. The next decade will be aimed at consolidating the EHEA.

The Bologna Process has set out 5 policy areas that focus on improving information about the EHEA within and beyond Europe, promoting the EHEA and enhancing its visibility worldwide, strengthening co-operation based on partnerships (especially with non-European countries), intensifying dialogues in HE policy deciding and promoting innovation and reforms in the HE system, and finally furthering recognition of qualifications / degrees.

So what is the role of JIPs? The implementation of joint curricula offered by a consortium of HEIs contributes to the attractiveness of HEIs in Europe and to the EHEA as a whole due to the excellent programmes delivered and – at least within the Erasmus Mundus programmes – the multicultural element (student mobility to several countries; a variety of students from all over the world in class), a unique asset that promotes the EHEA and distinguishes it from other HE systems in other regions of the world. Joint Programmes are also strategic vehicles to promote mobility as an integrated part of studies, playing an important role, especially when co-operating with third countries. During the preparation of such programmes, a positive side-effect is that institutions improve their competences due to the competitiveness of the calls, thus it is recommendable to have a member of staff from the institutional central administration involved in the application and implementation to spread the lessons learned throughout other departments of the university.

JIPs stimulate academic and institutional collaboration within Europe and beyond but can also entail strategic, pedagogic, and practical challenges, particularly when education systems are so diverse at government, national and institutional level. Although the policies have improved



a lot due to the Erasmus Mundus lobbying, there are still several obstacles to be overcome. For this reason, it is necessary for the EHEA to implement policies that foster JIPs. These initiatives should be bottom-up approaches involving both co-ordinators of consortia with experience in setting-up and running JIPs and also policy-makers. In this respect, the recent result of ECA's JOQAR Pilot Project (Madrid, June 2013) is positively welcomed, as this will replace the multiple national accreditation procedures as part of the external QA and accreditation of joint programmes by a single accreditation procedure through a multilateral recognition agreement regarding QA and accreditation results.

The EHEA calls for more dialogue between legislators, university leadership and programme managers, including other stakeholders (students, alumni and industry) as well. Exchanges of practices between national and international HE associations, and between JIPs, can also contribute positively to shaping, improving and promoting the EU HE system.

With a vision of the future, stakeholders should consider strengthening co-operating with non-European partners to exchange of staff, researchers and students and also to transfer the know-how between regions, which should always be a bidirectional process from which Europe can learn a lot. In the EU we have to realize, that in other regions the HE system has been and still is evolving as well: JIPs and common guidelines do not exist in the EU only. We have to be realistic: in a lot of non-EU countries the Bologna Process and Erasmus Mundus is still not known, and in case it is known the influence is limited. The EU cannot just export JIPs as such, therefore the best promotion of the EHEA is by showing the JIPs best practices we have.