

EM-iDEA Ghent Conference Workshop Reports

These reports are intended to summarise the points raised and the discussion which took place in each of the four parallel workshops held at the Conference. They should provide an overview to those unable to attend the Conference, or to those who took part in one workshop but with an interest in the outcomes of one or more of the other workshops. The presentations given by each of the speakers can be found on the EM-iDEA project website (<http://www.em-concilium.eu/en/page4012.html>)

Workshop 1: How to create synergies among EM coordinators within an institution?

This workshop was organised and led by Andries Verspeeten of Ghent University and Elisabeth Axell and Ulrika Qvist Mathiesen of Lund University. The workshop attracted a mix of Erasmus Mundus Action 1 and Action 2 programme coordinators, with a few participants with experience in both Actions. There were a total of 35 participants.

One of the objectives of the EM-iDEA project is to create synergies between coordinators. The first presentation focused on synergies within Ghent University for Action 1 projects, whereas the second presentation focused on synergies within Lund University for Action 2 projects. The question was raised whether synergies between Action 1 and Action 2 coordinators are also a possibility, regardless of the differences between the Action's project types.

The synergies created between coordinators within a university might also serve at a higher level as a model for the future Concilium. It was made clear however that the institutional models presented here are but one model each and that there are differences from university to university. The point is to learn from each other's approach and it would be nice to have presentations of different institutional models in future conferences.

Ghent University Presentation (Mr Andries Verspeeten, Erasmus Mundus Action 1)

- Ghent University is involved in 9 Erasmus Mundus (EM) Master programmes and 2 EM Joint Doctoral programmes: Different factors explain such a high success rate (e.g. early adoption of Bologna in Flanders, support from the Ministry of Education, experience in project management, quality + extra incentive due to the high number of running programmes)
- Bottom-up vs top-down approach: EM Master Courses and Doctoral Programmes are managed at departmental level whereas Action 2 programmes are managed at institutional central level. However Action 1 can benefit from central support and Action 2 cannot exist without departments hosting students and staff members
- The relevant department is responsible for the administrative management of programmes, but inevitably other entities are involved, e.g. the Faculty, Board of Governors, Student Administration, International Relations Office, Financial Department, Student Services (housing, language courses,...)
- Role of the International Relational Office (IRO): The IRO provides support in the preparatory (proposal) phase, facilitates knowledge transfer between existing and new programmes (e.g. through regular meetings), acts as a liaison office with university administration and management, and can provide limited additional funding
- Some results and outcomes of Ghent University involvement
 - Network of EM coordinators and administrators, awareness of EM within university
 - Changes in legislation (accreditation), Study and Examination Code, contacts with City council (residence permit), Ministry of Foreign affairs (visa), promotion,...
 - Jointly with Action 2: tender for insurance, annual EM student event, EConsort database
- Some observations
 - IRO also acts as an internal relations office – facilitates relations between EM Master administrating departments
 - Separate programme secretariats: efficiency and sustainability?

- Can this model of local institutional support lead to imbalance within consortia? Other universities in the consortium might not be able to provide these services
- How to fit this bottom-up approach within the overall institutional internationalisation strategy, which might put other priorities first?
- Where do Action 1 and 2 meet? At least certain tools, services and experiences can be shared.
- Can some of the services mentioned above be lifted to a higher level, above the universities? Role for Concilium? Hence the needs analysis and survey of tools and services - for the benefit of all.

Questions and discussion:

The question was raised how and if all joint Masters could fund a full time coordinator at programme level?

- All joint master programmes at Ghent University currently have the EM brand name, due to the specific accreditation and tuition language legislation which makes for favourable circumstances for EM (exceptions). The start-up is less evident for other types of joint masters
- Sometimes the dedicated staff member is funded by the project (which does entail a sustainability risk), sometimes by other means of the department.

When is the IRO a self-starter, or responsible to make sure that other departments follow?

- IRO is a mediator and facilitator, but does not hold authority over the programme coordinators; the main idea however is that the EM programmes have to fit as much as possible into the programme administration procedures like all other Master programmes at Faculty and Central level. This also increases sustainability. Wherever exceptions are due, efforts are made to grant these and harmonise them as much as possible for all EM-programmes as a group.

For whom is this Association or Concilium intended?

- For the moment it is intended to become an association for all academics and administrators with an interest in EM-type projects, regardless of the fact that the first target group is EM coordinators. Collaborations and partnerships outside of the strict EM framework can also benefit from the outcomes.

Lund University Presentation (Ms Elisabeth Axell and Ms Ulrika Qvist-Mathiesen, Erasmus Mundus Action 2)

- Lund Coordinates 11 projects and participates as partners in 34 projects in 17 lots or regions, with over 500 mobilities realized in the last 4 years
- Shifts from previous to current organisation:
 - From an ad hoc organisation lacking structure to a set organisation
 - From having one contact person per project doing everything to specialised teams and functions. There are currently project contact persons (Lot specific issues) + staff working on all projects. There is now an EM coordination team and an EM partner team (synergies to a certain extent)
 - From programmes managed at central and faculty level to centralized handling only
- Synergies EMA2 partners:
 - All departments at Lund are consulted and an overview of study fields “on offer” is drafted for all the EMA2 projects in which Lund is involved. This is done mainly to avoid applications in study fields where there is no interest in hosting students or staff members.
 - A common organisation structure for all projects (1 database, common documents, payment of scholarships, mobility coordinator,...)
- Challenge: intra-university differences (different procedures, interpretations, sometimes big input versus small outcome)
- Synergies with faculties
 - Consultation about participation in project and choice of project partners, selection procedure
 - Discuss academic offer and EM organisation
- Some questions:
 - How can the challenge with different timeframes, databases and assessment criteria be met?
 - How can EM 2 projects be integrated at department and faculty level?

- Would it be beneficial if the EM 1 and EM 2 projects would be more integrated in the future?
- Good effects of EM – how do you disseminate that information to the rest of the university?

Questions and discussion

There was reference to major input versus minor outcome. How do you evaluate this input at university management level and how do you speak about that with the management? Which interests do you serve with respect to internationalisation (central interest, research and/or education)?

- The question is interesting and could be included in the needs analysis / survey of tools & services.
- In Lund the management explicitly opted for active participation in Action 2, but there is no real measure of input versus outcome. The faculties are involved as discussed during the presentation.
- At UGent the central level decides which EMA2-projects are participated in. The decision fits into the central internationalisation strategy, but the faculties are represented in the body (policy committee for internationalisation) that takes the decision.
- The issue of IRO versus department in Lund seems to be: the IRO manages a lot of projects and departments can make use of it. Lund points out however that they always start from the interest shown by faculties or departments.
- In Ghent the IRO opted for one common selection procedure, valid for all projects, be they coordinated at UGent or at another institution. The IRO then serves as a “filter” towards the different projects and translates into rankings or other systems as required by the project. This is done to avoid overload of work for the departments during selection and to avoid confusion about all the different systems applied across the various EMA2-projects the university is involved in.
- The question was raised by the board whether any participants knew of EMA2 projects being coordinated at departmental level and more limited in subject area scope, and whether this could consequently lay the roots for possible future joint programme development?
- There was a representative from Erasmus University Medical Centre Rotterdam, which just started the coordination of an EMA2 project with the Western Balkans, which is an example of an EMA2 project with a more limited subject scope compared to the ‘classic’ EMA2-projects.
- The issue of multidisciplinary in EMA2 is an obstacle for many academics to coordinate projects. In the University of the Algarve Action 2 projects have been initiated and coordinated by academics who originated from the target region. The difficulty was to convince their other colleagues to participate, who felt it disrupted their routine/discipline. The participant stressed however that a single professor with a single idea is lost in Action 2. It is a complex and problematic programme.

For both EMA1 and EMA2 the main issues stressed by a participant were the commitment of the university at the institutional level and the attractiveness of programmes to students.

Main conclusions:

Benefits in bringing together EMA1 and EMA2 coordinators are clear. In the models presented, Action 1 has a clear ‘bottom-up’ character (departmental initiatives) and Action 2 is a ‘top-down’ initiative, albeit with decentralised input in the model presented. Between the two groups certain synergies can also be found, to a limited extent on the content level, but foremost on the practical implementation level. There is a need to define these: EM-iDEA Project Activity 5 (Survey of tools and services) will help in this matter. However, for a deeper discussion on specific issues particular to both groups separately, separate sessions at future conference are also wished for.

A particular point raised, valid for EM-iDEA Activity 4 ‘Needs Analysis’, is the request for a tool or mechanism to measure project outcome (both in EMA1 and EMA2) in order to receive support from the institutional management.

Workshop 2: How to best identify the needs of the EM Community

This workshop was organized and led by José María Peiró and Vicente Martínez Tur, of IDOCAL, the University of Valencia. The workshop is part of one of the EM-IDEA activities; that is the performing of a Needs Analysis. A total of over 30 people took part in the workshop. Participants included EM coordinators, with those in Action 1 clearly outnumbering Action 2, International Relations administrative staff, as well as a university Vice President and 2 representatives from a company providing insurance solutions to EM coordinators.

THE MAIN FOCUS OF THE WORKSHOP WAS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A “METAPLAN” IDENTIFYING AND ANALYZING IDEAS TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What are the four main unfulfilled needs (totally or partially) in your EM programme?

Consider the programme level and also the institutional, national and European levels. Avoid too narrow or too wide an approach.

- Write four ideas about what the CONCILIUM could do for your needs, problems and challenges.

Have in mind the potential functions of the CONCILIUM: Providing services, information and resources to identify support and tools etc. for services. Lobbying for influencing the Program at the EU level. Voice and representation of coordinators, etc.

NEEDS PRESENTED BY COORDINATORS OF MASTER COURSES

- The main needs mentioned by the coordinators of EMMCs are related to the following topics:
 - Promotion
 - Visa issues
 - Consortium management (support)
 - Academic (e.g., Recognition)
 - Quality assurance
 - Employability
 - Sustainability

ACTIONS PROPOSED BY COORDINATORS OF MASTER COURSES

- The main actions suggested by the coordinators of EMMCs are related to the following topics.
 - Good practices repository
 - Creation of communities (students, coordinators, etc.)
 - Advocacy activities
 - Support for coordinated projects

NEEDS PRESENTED BY COORDINATORS OF DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

- The main needs mentioned by the coordinators of EM Doctoral Programs are related to the following topics.
 - Sustainability
 - New initiatives (good practices)
 - Joint and double degrees
 - Communication
 - Administrative issues (visa, contracts...)
 - Coordination of projects.

ACTIONS PROPOSED BY COORDINATORS OF DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

- The main actions suggested by the coordinators of the Doctoral programs are related to the following topics.
 - Feedback for applications
 - Administration (good practices...)
 - Communication and promotion
 - Sustainability

NEEDS PRESENTED BY COORDINATORS OF ACTION 2 PROGRAMS

- The main needs mentioned by the coordinators of Action 2 programs are related to the following topics.
 - Policy (clear rules, sustainability,..)
 - Visa problems

- Quality control for students
- Communication

ACTIONS PROPOSED BY COORDINATORS OF ACTION 2 PROGRAMS

- The main actions suggested by the coordinators of the Action 2 programs are related to the following topics.
 - Sharing knowledge
 - Offering support (tools)
 - Lobbying at the national and European levels.
 - Sponsors
 - Helping in dissemination
 - Create link between coordinators

NEEDS PRESENTED BY OTHER PARTICIPANTS

- The main needs mentioned by other participants are related to the following topics.
 - Funding
 - Academic difficulties
 - Administrative-logistic problems (e.g. Visa)
 - Networking (increase interaction)
 - Small feedback from EACEA (referees)
 - Communication and coordination

ACTIONS PROPOSED BY OTHER PARTICIPANTS

- The main actions suggested by other participants in the session are related to the following topics.
 - Online tools
 - Sharing good practices among programs
 - Sustainability
 - Advocacy

Workshop 3: Perceptions of the Erasmus Mundus program in third-countries

This workshop was organized and led by Professor Pierpaolo Faggi from the University of Padua. The workshop focused on two third country regions: Africa & Latin America, but not however on Asia. Two invited speakers were present, Dr James Otieno Jowi, Director of the African Network for Internationalisation of Education (ANIE), and Dr Panambi Abadie, Head of Programmes and Projects at Grupo Montevideo Network of Universities (AUGM). There were a total of 30 participants at this workshop with a majority of EM Action 2 coordinators.

First speaker: Dr James Otieno Jowi, ANIE

Double goal of Erasmus Mundus:

- To spread excellence from Europe outwith the EU; enhance the reputation of the European Higher Education Area
- To integrate excellence from outside EU into our European networks

ANIE:

- The project began in 2008 – African Network – mainly focuses on international dimension of Higher Education (HE) in Africa – the secretariat is based at Moi University, Kenya

General comments:

Message = create a strong HE space & partnerships

What does Africa know about EM

- Many universities in Africa don't know what EM is
- Providing more publicity about EM via the ANIE network is key!
→ The challenge: information is "closed", not available enough for students and researchers

Benefits:

- Research is important: Africa needs to develop research
- Young people can study in very specialized areas, which are not available in Africa.
- Initiatives to promote institutional collaborations.
- Opportunities for reverse mobility.
- Open more opportunities (financially also): need in Africa for understanding the needs of developing countries
→ EU does not think Africa is qualified region for collaboration, and North America & Asia don't even consider Africa.

Problems:

- Administrative and bureaucratic obstacles (too much reporting to the EACEA!)
- *Need:* EM (EACEA) should share information with the ANIE on what the African students come to do in EU & other parts of the world and process this info!
- *RISK:* remains brain drain → focus is too much on Europe: for the good of Europe only

Second speaker: Dr Panambi Abadie, Grupo Montevideo

Grupo Montevideo:

- A network of Latin American universities
- AUGM in Latin America: Brazil (10), Argentina (10), Bolivia (2), Chile (2), Paraguay (3), Uruguay (1)
- Association of 28 universities :
 - each university pays for it's own expenses
 - public
 - self governed
 - autonomous
 - funded by its members

Goals:

- Develop & improve regional critical mass
- Develop joint projects and programs in key areas
- Creation of conditions for research (young scientists, joint doctorates)
- Enrichment of society (seminars oriented to gather people from societies, regions, cities)

EM in their network:

- EM EMECW Action 2 most active part of their group:
- -21 lots:
 - Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia have shared lots
 - Chile, Brazil and Argentina have own and shared lots (Chile only own lot)

First impressions of EM:

- Very positive (= possibility for mobility of many students – huge projects)
- Good chance for students and academics (students have been doing well)
- Academic arrangements worked well
- However problems still exist with recognition, diverse grading systems: credits are still a problem
- Different academic calendars
- Language: is always a problem for students coming to EU (except Spain and Portugal)

Questions and discussion: (Input from Canada, China, Western Balkans)

Need for awareness of heavy bureaucracy of EM program:

- Better training to increase awareness for people working with EM → staff need more support, also on non-EU side
- Awareness from EU side: there are differences in working methods of different universities (administrative issues!)

ECTS

a. Question to AUGM: Does the network plan to develop ECTS in Latin America?

- A kind of equivalent of grading systems already exists in L.A.; a common system of recognition is a work in progress. → heading for a more national system.

b. Balkan window since 2009: similar issue with different grading systems but they implement ECTS. A major challenge is to give support to the incoming students in third countries!

c. China on ECTS:

- EM should make sure both ways are recognized (but also streamline the ECTS).
- Difference in awarding credits is too big.

Conclusion:

- ECTS = it is a matter of trust: trusting each others' competences.
- Need for meetings on how to mark students (difference in marks = a cultural problem).
- Independence can exist but it is "give and take and understand": realize that you are part of a pool of universities that work together and that accidents happen.
- We all must give up a small part of our sovereignty.

Double/Joint degree:

- Double degree is big problem in China: high level universities do not do this.

- Joint degree: one PhD diploma signed and stamped by both home and host universities → Not possible in China and L.A.

- These programs often blocked on a national level, also in EU.

Conclusion:

- In order to establish Joint Degree, there must be a strong will & trust.
- Any joint degree or program: you must give up part of your peculiarity and build up something new. We must be ready to create a new identity.
- Everybody states that his own course is the best. Motivation = required on institutional level. → structural and individual motivation is important.

Danger of external franchising:

- African participant's point of view on masters in developing countries: opportunity = possibility to take certain programmes which are not available at home + opportunities to study in certain disciplines.

- LA (Grupo Montevideo): these European universities just use the name (the brand) for money: that is it has become businesslike. Immigration and quality matters – need for clear rules. But 3rd countries are not strong enough to regulate.

+ is also question of double moral: European universities abuse the fact that in LA they are weak.

Conclusion:

- It is NOT a question of colonization by EM.
- It can help to strengthen the national system: spot the weaknesses!
- There is in any case a need for new partnership.

Down-scaling:

- Down-scaling of networking: in general bigger third countries' universities join EM projects but there are a lot of smaller universities who cannot reach this level.
→ This kind of EM connectivity can be dangerous if you do not consider down-scaling the experience of the largest universities to the regional ones, which are not connected to the large networks.

Conclusion:

- Down-scale positive result of internationalization to smaller universities!

South-South university cooperation (LA – Africa)

- A lot going on already between Africa and Asia. Asia is an up and coming region.
- North-South-South cooperation: need to have some specific English programmes devoted to topics of third countries.
- Danger remains 'brain drain'.

Conclusion:

- EM should foster this type of cooperation
- Cope with brain drain in first phase; it will decrease in later phases.

Workshop 4 – What role could an association of EM coordinators play?

This workshop was led by Professor Boas Erez of Bordeaux 1 University, coordinator of the EM-iDEA project. The workshop is part of one of the EM-iDEA project's activities; that is the creation of the Concilium, an association of EM and joint programme coordinators. Jean Carlos Pelicano, president of the Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association (EMA), was due to give a presentation of the Association and its activities, but was unable to attend. In the end a presentation was given by Gwenaëlle Guillerme of the Ecole Centrale Paris. There were a total of 21 participants, including a mixture of Erasmus Mundus Action 1 and 2 coordinators (mainly Action 1) as well as coordinators of EM type programmes.

Background: The idea of an independent association of EM coordinators was first brought up in 2005 by a group of EM coordinators working together on a project. In 2009 the number of coordinators had grown and the idea was taken up again. A further meeting on the subject took place in January 2010 in Brussels, and in October of the same year the group of coordinators met and started working on writing up a set of bylaws for the Association. The idea was to present these, as well as a 'raison sociale' for the Association in January 2011 but no further action took place, no feedback on the draft of bylaws was forthcoming and thus the Association was not started up as planned. The purpose of this workshop today is to set about establishing an action plan for starting the Association.

Presentation: (Gwenaëlle Guillerme, Ecole Centrale Paris). This focused in on three main roles that an association of coordinators would ideally perform, which were "Sharing Experience", "Collecting Data" and "Giving Coordinators a Voice". Following is a summary of the points raised and the discussion over each point.

1. Sharing Experience: An annual meeting of EM coordinators was suggested, but it was added that these events should go beyond simple get togethers, for example there could be workshops on concrete issues. They could also go beyond just sharing experience, also getting into cooperation building on management issues. A main objective could be to work towards convergence, how to position and further promote the European Higher Education Area in the broader scope of international Higher Education.

2. Collecting Data: An example was given on the collection of data about the future employability of Erasmus Mundus graduates, as knowing what they go on to do after their studies is important for dissemination and promotion of the programmes. This could include some 'promotion' by alumni who might be willing to recount their positive experience in finding employment after graduation.

Ms Edith Genser of the EACEA mentioned that a survey on employability, among others was available on the Executive Agency's Action 3 website; as this could prove a potentially useful tool.

Suggestions for possible website content were covered in the presentation, specifically the inclusion of a section containing interviews with programme coordinators and a 'search by project' function.

An example was given concerning the difficulty in recruiting researchers in Japan. Here it was suggested that an association of EM Coordinators might not provide a direct solution but could give a coordinator in the EU (for example) a better understanding of what tools his or her counterparts in Japan are using and thus how they work. The association could then play an indirect supporting role.

3. Giving Coordinators a Voice: This would basically be manifested through advocacy/lobbying of the European Commission (perhaps also at national and regional levels where appropriate. It was suggested that a singular interlocutor be nominated to express Coordinators' concerns to the European Commission. The single interlocutor would not however have a 'single' message as this would represent a clear lack of legitimacy, vis-à-vis the various interests at stake.

It was also proposed that lobbying may be carried out on the basis of field specific questions based on the different fields of study, for example questions relevant to PhD students in arts and humanities and those in engineering will obviously differ.

A further intervention stated the need to 'put pressure' on the EU, but also on national and local authorities, to recognize issues.

There was also a suggestion of using a 'clusterised' approach to work within the Concilium, i.e. with a distinction between different types of programmes. There was mention of the different issues confronting Master and PhD students.

Finally the issue of fundraising was brought up, in particular to provide for coordinator training.

Other points raised:

Problems finding European students: It was suggested that this is to do with the availability of scholarships in comparison to non-European candidates, as well as the availability of information on such scholarships. Ms Genser commented that this matter has actually been raised within the EACEA, and is of ongoing concern to them. An example given by a participant explained that European students at their institution felt discriminated against through lack of funding. The institution itself then provided these students with extra funding which helped counter this feeling. Therefore there is a need to find ways of sustaining this.

A further reason suggested for a lack of EU students was the EACEA deadlines for candidate selection: specifically, that the deadlines are different for EU and non-EU students and that non EU students are generally more aware of these and of the need to apply well in advance.

Sustainability of the association: The Joiman experience should be taken into account, as its reapplication was unsuccessful despite the novelty of its approach. EM-iDEA wants to make sure that its activities are sustainable.

The use of academic expertise should not be overlooked; this expertise could be applied to concrete problems. As a general example, in the EM-iDEA project the University of Valencia is in charge of the Needs Analysis activity because this is their field; normally this type of activity would be outsourced but on this occasion the expertise was already 'in house'.

Conclusion/Plan of Action:

It was agreed that work will now start on the creation of a position paper in time for the next Conference in Lund, where a workshop will be dedicated to finalizing this paper. Discussion between participants will take place via e-mail. Issues to be discussed will be: the use of brand names and their sustainability; the level of grants; and EU student participation levels in Action 1 programmes.