

**3<sup>rd</sup> EM-iDEA Conference,  
Vilnius, 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012**

**Plenary Session 3: An association of Erasmus Mundus coordinators: Towards a statement of shared values and principles**

**Abstract:** This session was led by Andries Verspeeten of Ghent University and Francesco Girotti of the University of Bologna, both of whom are members of the EM-iDEA project and the project's Steering Committee. This session took place following the three afternoon workshops and included around 25 participants. The basis for the shared values and principles to be discussed came from a draft of bylaws for an association of EM and joint programme coordinators dating from initial efforts to create such an association in 2009.

For the benefit of those unfamiliar with the subject matter, the session began with a recap of the background and history of the idea for the creation of an independent association of EM and joint programme coordinators. This information can be found in the report on workshop 4 from the 1<sup>st</sup> EM-iDEA Conference at Ghent (please see <http://www.em-concilium.eu/conferences.html> ).

Something important to be taken into consideration for the future of the association (the Concilium) is that it will still be relevant, and will still make sense, even if the Erasmus Mundus brand name is not retained in the new 'Erasmus for All' programme. The Concilium is inspired by the ideas and principles underlying the Erasmus Mundus programme, not merely by its existence.

The values, principles and aims contained in the aforementioned draft of bylaws were then presented, going from the general values and principles to the more specific aims and proposals for action. These can be consulted in the presentation given during the session, which can be consulted on the Vilnius section of the EM-iDEA website's 'Conferences' page. A first point, which came from the general aim of 'encouraging structured cooperation with higher education institutions in and outside Europe', was that a much wider approach will now be needed given the scope of the Erasmus for All programme. Following this, it was suggested that perhaps the specific aim of promoting the quality and excellence of Erasmus Mundus could be elevated to a 'general' aim of the Concilium, thus awarding this aim a higher priority. This quality and excellence should be preserved, again regardless of whether the EM brand name is kept or not. There was also emphasis put on the importance of using the Concilium as a forum for discussion and exchange of knowledge, best practice and ideas.

One major question was over the different types of members and memberships possible; individuals and institutions. The idea was originally for individuals (EM Action 1 coordinators) to join but Action 2 programmes have since been included too. The question over whether both individual and institutional memberships will be possible was raised, and the consensus was in favour of such a combination. Furthermore, it seems that there is a lot to be defined in terms of the governance and structure of the Concilium, although the draft by-laws clearly advocate the use of an 'association'

under French or Belgian law. Either of these would provide a fairly light structure but one which would empower the Concilium to act.

While these issues await further development and definition, the EM-iDEA project will continue to write position papers (with one suggestion for a subsequent paper to be on scholarship levels), continuing to demonstrate an ability to be relevant, proactive and to take the initiative regarding the latest issues affecting Higher Education in Europe.