

**4th EM-iDEA Conference,
Novi Sad, Serbia, 2nd October 2012**

**Summary of the Satellite Conference on Erasmus Mundus and TEMPUS in
Serbia and the Western Balkans**

Abstract: Given that a large part of the Conference was dedicated to the presentation of the EM-iDEA project's internal activities, it was decided that the Conference should take place over two days. This would ensure that enough attention was given to the regional aspect of the Conference. The University of Novi Sad took quite an active role in proposing speakers for this event, and particularly in inviting representatives from other universities and institutions in Serbia and the region. In addition the speakers for two of the topics presented were members of the University staff. This report can be read in complement to the presentations used by each of the speakers, which are available on the EM-iDEA site at www.em-concilium.eu/conferences.html.

General summary: The afternoon began with a general introduction to both the Satellite and Main Conferences given by the Rector of the University of Novi Sad, Professor Miroslav Veskovic. Short presentations were given on four projects or topics relevant to this part of Europe. Ms Jasmina Gajic of the Serbian national TEMPUS Office presented "Tempus, Erasmus Mundus and Joint Degrees in Serbia". Vice Rector for International Relations at Novi Sad Professor Pavle Sekerus spoke on "Joint Degrees in Serbia: Examples of best practice - the JoinSEE project". Ms Dragana Ilic of the University of Belgrade presented the EM Action project "Astromundus". Finally, Ms Ana Soti, also of Novi Sad, presented the EM Action 2 project "Basileus". It had been hoped that a representative of the EM Action 3 project "ECCE Mundus" would also be present, but in the end they were unavailable. For the second part of the Conference, the four speakers then formed a panel and fielded questions from the audience.

As three of the presentations focused on specific Erasmus Mundus projects it was natural that some participants were hoping to learn something from their experiences, and questions were asked about specific topics such as recognition and training. The consensus from those presenting and from others present with prior involvement in joint programmes, was that internal organisation among consortium members is crucial, as this is where major obstacles come from. In terms of recognition, for example, it was suggested that it is better to designate one person as responsible, rather than several professors. This person would generally be a Vice Rector or Vice President who can go directly to the Rector or President to negotiate solutions. In the case of Astromundus, all of the courses and lessons from all four European partners had to be presented to the University of Belgrade in order for them to recognize the course. This involved a lot of work gathering detailed information on all of the courses and translating it into Serbian and, in some cases, English.

There was also a desire from some participants to know just how joint programmes originated at universities and how consortiums are formed. Again, the consensus was that this usually comes from individuals in different universities researching similar topics and being brought together through shared interests. In this way joint programmes are often described as 'bottom up' in their origin, while cooperation and mobility programmes (EM Action 2) are more 'top down' within institutions. It

was added that Tempus projects can also provide a starting point for Erasmus Mundus projects, with perhaps classic Erasmus as a stepping stone. Statistics given from the EM-iDEA Survey of Available Services and Tools backed up the aforementioned consensus: Erasmus Mundus Action 1 and Action programme coordinators were asked how they set up their programmes. More than 70% of Action 1 coordinators cited research as the starting point, whereas Action 2 was more institution based.

The focus then turned to the problems experienced by Serbian universities in attracting and welcoming more international students, to an extent representative of Third county universities in general. The lack of attractiveness could be attributed to the image of Serbian cities in general, which is still relatively poor. Furthermore, the local police and government officials speak very little or no English, therefore this complicates matters for international students, especially for obtaining residence cards. In Novi Sad it is felt that the campus could be more attractive, something which would require cooperation and investment from the city council. They also identified a problem with accommodation for students, because the University does not own student residences. In addition, a high percentage of the students enrolled at the University every year come from all over Serbia, but they live in Novi Sad, therefore they take up a large proportion of the private accommodation available in the city. The feeling is that help from the central government, both in terms of direct funding and investment and in more practical measures, such as providing services in English and perhaps streamlining procedures, is still a long way off. Therefore despite the progress made with regard to participation in European cooperation and exchange programmes, those involved are not overly optimistic about the future internationalization and general development of Serbian Higher Education. Nevertheless, despite this lack of national support, Erasmus Mundus and similar programmes remain of importance to Serbian universities. Following are some statistics concerning the numbers of incoming and outgoing students to and from Serbia under Erasmus Mundus programmes.

Between 2004 and 2011, 257 Serbian students received scholarships for EM Action 1a Master programmes, 9 Serbian students received scholarships for Action 1b Doctoral programmes, and 10 scholar mobilities were funded. The figures for the Western Balkans are 573, 22 and 21 respectively. In terms of incoming students, there were 6 for the Astromundus EMMC course in 2011-2012, in which the University of Belgrade is a partner. Serbian Universities are involved in a further 2 EM-type programmes offering joint degrees and at least a further 10 more offering double degrees, however statistics are currently unavailable for these. 596 mobility schemes were funded in total via EM Action 2 (including the External Cooperation Window) between 2007 and 2011; this includes students at undergraduate and Master level, PhD Candidates, Post-Doctorate level and staff mobility. The corresponding figure for the Western Balkan region as a whole is 1899 mobilities funded. Again, as regards incoming flows, in 2010 there were 180 students and 20 staff from EU Institutions, who visited partner Institutions in the Western Balkans. In 2011 the figures were 55 and 72 respectively. Furthermore, Serbian universities are involved in at least another 14 EM-type joint programmes, and Novi Sad is notably involved in the European University Foundation - Campus Europae exchange programme, along with 17 other Universities across Europe.

As these statistics show, the European funded joint programmes and cooperation programmes concerned have so far mainly benefitted Serbian students moving to the EU; there have not been as many International students moving in the opposite direction. This would back up the view in Serbia that Internationalization contributes to 'brain drain' and poses a threat to national Higher Education.

Thus there would seem to be a kind of 'vicious circle', in that a lack of national investment and support means that Serbia remains relatively unattractive to International students. As EU funded programmes encourage more Serbian students to study in the EU without a similar level of movement in the opposite direction, the Government in turn is not encouraged to support Internationalisation. One possible solution mentioned by Professor Pavle Sekerus during his presentation was the potential of Erasmus Mundus for creating Joint Degrees although, as he noted, this potential has so far been unexploited.