

EM-iDEA Newsletter - Edition 4 - March 2013

With this newsletter, the EM-iDEA project team intends to inform anybody with an interest in the Erasmus Mundus programme on the project's recent and current activities.

This edition comes directly after the **5th EM-iDEA project Conference**, which took place at the University of Valencia on Friday 8th March 2013. The fact that the event took place during the run up to the annual city festival, known as "Las Fallas", made for a somewhat energetic and intense



backdrop. Well over 100 participants from across Europe and further afield attended the Conference. The day began with a brief introduction from **Professor José María Peiró**, who was largely responsible for the Conference programme, and who chaired the first of the two plenary sessions. This was followed by an official welcome from the **Rector Magnificus of the University of Valencia, Professor Esteban Morcillo Sánchez**, who reiterated his University's commitment to Erasmus Mundus and its support to the project.

Professor Morcillo Sánchez spoke of the University of Valencia's long history and tradition as one of the oldest universities in the world, whilst also noting its forward looking approach. He gave thanks to the Dean of the Faculty of Psychology, the Vice Rector for International Relations and to the other Vice Rectors for their support given to both the organisation the Conference, and to the University of Valencia's team working on the other project activities.

The reflection on history and tradition was broadened by **Professor Boas Erez**, who gave the welcome on behalf of the project. Following a short presentation of EM-iDEA for the benefit of those participants less familiar with the project, Professor Erez then spoke of the historical aspect as a common denominator shared by the EM-iDEA partner institutions, and reflected on the **tendency for such older universities to be involved in Erasmus Mundus projects** as a healthy combination of the past and the future.



The first of the two plenary sessions was very much in line with the idea of juxtaposing the past and the future: **Mr. Vito Borrelli, DG Education and Culture of the European Commission**, delivered a presentation on the upcoming Erasmus for All programme, entitled "New opportunities for Higher Education", while **Mr. José Gutiérrez, of the EACEA's Erasmus Mundus and External Cooperation Unit**, looked at the "Lessons learned from the first generation of EM Master courses".

Mr Borrelli gave an overview of the policy framework surrounding the programme, and detailed the new architecture, composed of 3 'Key Actions'. On the subject of the **timetable for the implementation of the programme**, some interesting insight into the EU's decision making process was provided, and the audience was informed of the hypothetical best and worst case scenarios envisaged for the programme's adoption, which were given as early summer 2013 and early 2014 respectively. For his part, Mr. Gutiérrez' presentation was based on a synthesis report concluded in February 2013, and looked at both the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the first generation of EMMCs, before pointing out the challenges which were identified, and which must be tackled in the context of the Erasmus for All programme.



A short break gave delegates the opportunity to view the poster session, before the second plenary began. This plenary was chaired by Professor Erez, who introduced first **Mr. Matthias Kuder**, from the Centre for International Cooperation at the Freie Universität Berlin. Mr. Kuder gave an insightful and entertaining presentation on **"Joint and Double Degree Programmes in the Global context"**, based on a recently published report on a survey carried out between the Freie Universität Berlin and the Institute of International Education. This was notable for the parallel it drew between the growing trend towards double and joint degree programmes, and the increasing ambiguity surrounding the definition of such programmes, as well as the lack of institutional strategy with regard to their development.

Next up was **Mr. Josep Grifoll**, a board member of the **ENQA** (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), who spoke with expertise on the possibility of creating a **European level accreditation procedure for international joint programmes**, and thus expanding on a subject touched on by Mr. Kuder.

Both Mr. Grifoll and Mr. Kuder identified the current role of national criteria and procedures and the distinct accreditation jurisdictions they imply as one of the major challenges involved in ensuring the quality and sustainability of joint programmes. Mr. Grifoll went on to explain the work of the JOQAR project, which is trying to implement steps towards a harmonisation of quality assurance, accreditation and even recognition at the European level.

Following a lunch break extended to allow participants to experience the local festivities, the Conference resumed in the afternoon with **parallel sessions focusing on distinct aspects of the creation of the EM Concilium**. The session on the **Project plan** focused on objectives (mission and vision) and on **what actions the Concilium should actually do**, whereas the session on the **Governance and Structure** looked more at the **form** that the Concilium should take.

The former was led by Professor Erez, who gave a presentation outlining the ideas and proposals contained in the **executive summary**, before audience members then took the opportunity to give their views and suggestions. Professor Erez was accompanied by **Ms. Aimee Haley**, Chair of the Course Quality Advisory Board with the **EMA** (Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association), who was able to add some suggestions to those received from the participants, based on the EMA's own experience.

Professor Vicente Martinez-Tur of the University of Valencia led the other session, which also provided some very useful feedback and advice for the creation of the Concilium. The day finished with a closing plenary session held by Professor Erez and Professor Peiró, which reviewed the afternoon discussions and allowed for some further input from the delegates. A report on the afternoon sessions, available on the project website, covers this final session too.

We would like to express our thanks to the University of Valencia for their involvement and commitment to the event at the institutional level, as well as to Professor Peiró and the local organising team for their tireless work in putting the programme together, in ensuring a healthy participation from Spanish HEIs, and finally in organising many of the finer details of the Conference. Finally we thank all of the Conference delegates for attending and for their valuable feedback.

Details on the Conference programme and links to all Conference presentations and the report on the afternoon parallel sessions can be found on the **project website**, www.em-concilium.eu.

The next Conference will take place on **12th July 2013** in **Bordeaux**, France. This will be the last in the series of European regional conferences, and will also mark the occasion of the **constituent General Assembly of the EM Concilium**. The programmes for this will be confirmed and published on the EM-iDEA website as soon as possible, and the conference registration site will be opened very soon.

Prior to Bordeaux, the project will be busy putting everything in place for the launch of the Concilium, involving updating the executive summary in the wake of the Valencia Conference (currently underway), as well as working towards finalising the statutes of the Concilium. The executive summary will be available to view on the project website soon. A declaration of interest will also be circulated in order to get a basis of who is interested in joining the Concilium as founding members. An EM-iDEA delegation will also hold a session at this year's EAIE Conference in Istanbul, due to take place from 10th - 13th September 2013. This will present the recently created Concilium as well as giving a summary of the project's activities and their outcomes.

Finally, a **delegation from the project** will travel to Addis Ababa in early October to present the EM Concilium and the work of the project at the **next Conference of the ANIE** (African Network for Internationalisation of Education). A similar intervention is planned in collaboration with the AUGM (The Montevideo Group Association of Universities) in **South America in early 2014**. Indeed the relatively high participation of non-European EM Action 1 and 2 coordinators in surveys carried out by the EM-iDEA project has given reason for encouragement ahead of these visits.

We look forward to seeing many of you in Bordeaux, in the knowledge that the coming months will be crucial to the success of the project, in so far as they will see the definition of the shape which will be taken by the EM Concilium.

The EM-iDEA Project Team