

Position paper advocating that

Erasmus Mundus should be kept as a brand name

in the new Union programme for education, training, youth and sport¹.

April 30th, 2012

Signatures are collected at

www.em-concilium.eu

¹ Prepared by a group of Erasmus Mundus coordinators following discussions among held in Gent (23/11/2011), Bruxelles (16 and 27-28/03/2012) and Lund (30/03/2012). The Erasmus Mundus students and alumni association (EMA) has also shown its concern about the possible disappearance of the EM brand name.

Introduction. In the first two versions of the proposal for a regulation establishing the new Union programme for education, training, youth and sport, currently called “Erasmus for All”, the name Erasmus Mundus (EM) is not maintained to describe any kind of action. We believe that this does not serve the interests of the programme, the development of the European Higher Education and Research Areas and undermines European competitiveness in the global higher education market. Indeed, as mentioned in the Commission Staff Working Paper on *Impact assessment on international cooperation in higher education*²: “One of the greatest successes of [the] Erasmus Mundus [programme] has been the establishment of its brand label as a global “marque” of quality in higher education emanating from Europe – hence its key role in increasing attractiveness”.

In this paper we call for the creation of an appropriate mechanism to preserve the Erasmus Mundus brand name at the European level. We argue that:

- *Erasmus Mundus has had a major impact on the quality and global attractiveness of European higher education;*
- *preserving the EM brand name is “mission critical” to deliver the Europe 2020 objectives;*
- *Erasmus Mundus has become a recognizable global insignia for the EHEA and the European Research Area;*
- *Erasmus Mundus is a well-recognized and established quality label.*

We end the paper by suggesting *possible, future uses of the Erasmus Mundus brand name* and by indicating *what we think is needed to keep the Erasmus Mundus brand name*. Some data and references are collected in a few *appendices*.

The EM programme has had a major impact on the quality and global attractiveness of European higher education. Since 2004, well embedded in the global strategies of the Bologna process, *i.e.* fostering the dimension of attractiveness in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the EM programme has stimulated the implementation of concrete high quality projects, which have attracted to Europe students, scholars and more recently doctoral candidates from around the world. Because of their bottom-up origin, these projects were able to solve otherwise seemingly impossible problems. Taking into account the global context, the EM programme empowered European academics and administrators to design highly integrated study tracks with jointly defined learning outcomes, to award multiple and joint degrees, and to increase the quality in joint administrative management and the provision of services. The joint pursuit of excellence that came with the EM programme, allowed the introduction and development of numerous innovative best practices across Europe and beyond. These projects offer a variety of workable models, notwithstanding the legal constraints put by Ministries: this fact is an asset in itself, thus showing the way forward for a simplification of the EHEA and bringing a dynamic image of EHEA to the world. Furthermore, the EM programme has not promoted the EHEA in a conquering way, but has stressed the importance of networking with higher education institutions (HEI) in Third countries, hence contributing to a dialogue with the entire world on HE concrete, specific and advanced issues. Thus, the current EM programme is much more than a mobility programme “offering scholarships to attend high quality joint masters courses and doctoral programmes, and supporting university consortia working with

² http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/doc/impact3_en.pdf

different parts of the world”³.

The kind of cooperation among HEI, as promoted by the EM programme, has become a reference in Europe and the world, but rather than indicating that the time is ripe for focusing on other concerns, this points at the collective responsibility we share to pursue the good work performed under the EM heading. The potential of the EM concept is very large and this will only unfold completely with time. Recall that among the programmes that were cited as examples at the time of the creation of Erasmus Mundus was the American Fulbright programme, which—since its launch in 1946—now counts some 250,000 grantees and has had a major effect on the global recognition of the quality of higher education in the USA.

Preserving the EM brand name is “mission critical”. To deliver Europe 2020 objectives we need to maintain and actively develop the global reach of European Higher Education (HE)⁴. There are currently over 1800 organisations participating in delivering innovative and challenging EM master courses and EM joint doctorates⁵. To them the ‘brand’ in which they are participating is ‘Erasmus Mundus’. Building on a clearly successful brand is the optimal strategy. Trying to mutate to another brand name simply will distract us, and divert resources into coping with re-branding, during these challenging economic circumstances.

The name ‘Erasmus Mundus’ has become politically linked with EHEA excellence, and in their debate and resolution on 13 March 2012 the European Parliament was explicit on the importance it gives to the EM programme.⁶ We fully agree with Parliament that Erasmus Mundus is a unique European HE brand that has generated impact around the world. No business would readily discard a globally recognized brand⁷.

While we fully acknowledge the need for administrative simplification frequently and cogently argued by Commissioner Vassilou⁸ we regard ‘back office simplification’ (to use the e-Government reform terms of DG INFSO) to be separate from service or produce delivery⁹: simplification of programme structures and procedures should not bring along the dismissal of a good brand and with it all the achievements and success it stands for.

We therefore argue that the Erasmus Mundus brand name is ‘mission critical’ in Europe continuing to position itself in the context of the competition among the major global actors in higher education. It would be a paradox that Europe abandons one of its most effective innovations and which has become one of its main competitive advantages in higher education¹⁰.

³ As recalled in the communication from the Commission (COM 787 of November 23rd, 2011).

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/targets/eu-targets/index_en.htm

⁵ See the data collected in Appendix A.

⁶ See Appendix B and

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2012-0072&language=EN>

⁷ We would hardly expect ‘Coca Cola’ to suddenly rebrand its global brands (Coca Cola, Fanta, Sprite, Diet Coke, Oasis, Powerade, etc.) into a single generic brand ‘Coke for All’.

⁸ <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/12/83&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

⁹ The Coca Cola Corporation continually re-organise the back-office to deliver efficiency gains and cost-savings, but they retain the focus on brand and reputation with considerable energy.

¹⁰ Note that the EM programme has inspired the creation of an analogous programme conceived jointly by Japan, the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Korea.

The EM programme has become a recognizable global insignia for the EHEA and the European Research Area. It stands for the joint effort of *European countries* to open their higher education systems to the world and it is noteworthy that several European countries have adapted their regulations to reserve a special treatment for EM projects (accreditation for joint degrees in Greece, in some German Länder and in Spain¹¹; recent review of the Danish University Charter; rulings in both Communities of Belgium; etc.).

EM has been recognised by some *Third country governments*, which perform an 'express' recognition of Erasmus Mundus degrees. This would be something absolutely unthinkable without the brand.

Over the past eight years, by identifying with its brand name, the thousands of institutional and individual stakeholders in the EM programme have developed their share of ownership in the brand name and they have made and are making efforts to get the Erasmus Mundus brand known to *employers* all over the world.

Now that the brand has started to be recognized by EU and Third country states and by employers there is a danger not only of losing this asset but to create bewilderment among them in newer attempts to create a world-wide, well recognized brand for European HE of excellence. Furthermore, the current involvement of stakeholders would of course be lost, if the brand name were to be abandoned.

Erasmus Mundus is a well-recognized and established quality label. The requirements set for submitting applications, the intense competition and the strict selection procedure introduced with the EM programme guarantee that the projects carrying the Erasmus Mundus name are of very high quality, both from an administrative and an academic perspective. Indeed, EM has encouraged real academic innovation, which is required to arrive at highly integrated projects. The quality attached to EM projects has allowed the building up of a trust base, which it would be very regrettable to lose. This base stretches from students to employers.

It should be stressed that the EM name is in a unique position in order to characterize excellence for joint programmes at the European level¹².

Possible, future uses of the Erasmus Mundus brand name. The EM brand name must be kept in the programme, which does not necessarily entail keeping all the actions of the current EM programme under it. Multilateral, worldwide cooperation among HEI offering structured mobility schemes and integrated high quality joint programmes at both master or doctorate level could profit greatly from the possible award of the EM label¹³. High quality and innovative projects awarding joint degrees are the most suitable to continue the growth and strengthening of the EM brand. Indeed, the EM brand name is the best tool to promote the development of joint degrees¹⁴. Furthermore, as already experienced within the current EM programme, the EM brand name can play

¹¹ These regulations concern specific arrangements for the recognition of equivalent efforts in foreign academic cultures (a best practice example), but also for new forms of accreditation (a new practice example).

¹² We think that the reasons set forth to create a Jean Monnet label of excellence, as foreseen on page 13 of COM 787, could also be invoked for keeping the EM name.

¹³ Putting cooperation among HEI at the doctoral level under the Marie Curie heading does not *per se* warrant that the kind of programme developed under EMJD will be continued. Indeed, one important aspect of EMJD is the award of multiple degrees, which is (currently) not taken into account in Marie Curie actions.

¹⁴ Indeed, EM provides a very efficient approach to the development of joint degrees, which goes well beyond the requirements of COM 787, page 8.

a crucial role in making existing innovative projects sustainable in the long run.

COM 787 foresees that, in the field of European integration studies, “the dialogue between the academic world and policy-makers will be strengthened [...] thanks to the [future] Jean Monnet Professors’ network”. The EM community is already available to offer to the European Commission its Erasmus Mundus specific know-how on the integration of study programmes in HE and all related academic and administrative issues. We are aware of the high quality aspects of our experience but also of some existing limitations. More particularly we feel that issues such as a stronger legal status for joint degrees, ownership of joint degrees, possible European registry of joint degrees, difference between joint and multiple degrees, *ex post* accreditation of joint degrees, possibility of joint initiatives with businesses (see Knowledge alliances), *etc.* are all important issues, which should appropriately be tackled within the new programme and on which our think-tank initiative might help¹⁵.

We also observe that keeping the EM brand name is compatible with increasing “the comparatively small number of universities which can participate [in the EM programme] at the moment” (see COM 787, page 6). Indeed, we could keep the brand name independently from the award of scholarships to EM labeled university consortia.

What is needed to keep the Erasmus Mundus brand name? Keeping the EM brand name in the programme will not necessarily induce high expenditures. On the contrary, it appears as a good way to capitalize on the investments that have already been made or which will be made by numerous actors of the EHEA. However, the European Commission should at least ensure that an appropriate entity be in charge of the quality assurance procedures necessary to protect the EM brand name. Funds for accompanying measures, such as support for the joint management of consortia of HEI benefitting from the award of the brand name and for the promotion of the brand, would make the brand even more attractive and strong. Individual scholarships could also be awarded the EM brand name, both for students and for scholars. The awards to individuals and to consortia of HEI could be independent of each other. The important thing is that the brand name be kept alive in the general interest.

¹⁵ The EM community is currently working on the creation of an independent, non-profit association under the name Erasmus Mundus Concilium, whose objectives are described at www.em-concilium.eu The creation of this association should be finalised by Spring 2013.

Appendix A

Stakeholders participating in the Erasmus Mundus programme (April 2012)

There are currently about 600 higher education institutions directly involved in the programme. The EM programme already counts over 12000 alumni who graduated from the high quality integrated master and doctorate courses, among whom many future leaders from around the world¹⁶. It should be kept in mind that every year thousands of students from around the world apply to participate in the EM joint courses. So for instance, in 2011, over 31000 students from Third countries have applied for scholarships (of cat. A) to participate in the EM master courses alone and only about 1100 scholarships were offered !

The following table was built from a full review of all the participants on the current set of Erasmus Mundus Master Courses (EMMC) and Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates (EMJD). Each course was reviewed for its Coordinator and Partner Network, and the Associate Members (ranging from local and regional businesses, to other Higher Education Research Institutions, through EU and Global Businesses, and even including some United Nations Organisations). The countries beyond the EU with substantial participation include the USA and the BRICS .

Country/Region	Participants
USA	68
Global Organisations	53
Brazil	38
China	33
Pan-Europe	32
Canada	26
Australia	23
Japan	22
India	21
Russia	18
Switzerland	17
South Africa	16
Mexico	10
Thailand	9
Argentina	8
Chile	8
Morocco	7
Tunisia	6
EU - Estonia	5
Uganda	5
Algeria	4
Bangladesh	4
Colombia	4

¹⁶ If one includes scholarships paid under EM Action 2 as well, then a total of about 25000 students and 3000 academics have so far benefitted from EM scholarships (of which three-quarters from Third countries).

Israel	4
Serbia	4
South Korea	4
Ukraine	4
Pan-Africa	3
Costa Rica	3
Egypt	3
Indonesia	3
Kenya	3
Malaysia	3
New Zealand	3
Vietnam	3
Pan-Asia	2
Cuba	2
Georgia	2
Hong Kong	2
Iceland	2
Kazakhstan	2
Lebanon	2
Nepal	2
Peru	2
Phillippines	2
Senegal	2
Turkey	2
Venezuela	2
Azerbaijan	1
Cambodia	1
Croatia	1
Ecuador	1
Ethiopia	1
Ghana	1
Guinea	1
Moldova	1
Mongolia	1
Nicaragua	1
Nigeria	1
Singapore	1
Sudan	1
Tanzania	1
Uruguay	1
Uzbekistan	1
TOTAL	519
EU Participants	1334

Appendix B

Excerpts from a European Parliament debate and resolution

On March 13th, 2012 the European Parliament:

“32. Calls on national governments and the Commission to develop a system of structured cooperation in order to deliver joint degrees, within clusters of disciplines, with recognition across the EU by improving the performance of, and financial support for, Erasmus Mundus and the future education and training programme and by promoting the creation of a European accreditation scheme of joint programmes;

58. Considers the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) created by the Bologna Process to be progressive; calls therefore for a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education Area to be incorporated into this existing structure and for progress towards the establishment of an effective Higher Education Area for the countries involved in Eastern Partnership cooperation as well as in other inter-state areas inside the EU; calls on the Commission to remove obstacles to the movement of students and teachers, to support the networking of Euro-Mediterranean universities, including EMUNI, and to continue the good practices of the Tempus and Erasmus Mundus programmes.”¹⁷

Appendix C

Declarations from the European Commission showing the political impact of the EM programme and further references

On 8 March 2012 Commissioner Štefan Füle specifically mentioned Erasmus Mundus in the context of the EU contribution to the Arab Spring¹⁸, as did the Commission announcement of HE relationships with Jordan on 12 February 2012¹⁹.

The *Commission Staff Working Paper on IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION*²⁰ contains further valuable positive comments about Erasmus Mundus (see Sect. 2.2.1, pages 11-14).

¹⁷ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2012-0072&language=EN>

¹⁸ <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/12/175&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

¹⁹ <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/12/124&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/doc/impact3_en.pdf