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Lifelong Learning Programme

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CONFERENCE CONTRIBUTION

**Cooperation in Higher Education as a Vital Tool of the
Eastern Partnership Programme**

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Cooperation in Higher Education as a Vital Tool of the Eastern Partnership Programme

Dear Participants of the Conference,

It is an honour and a pleasure for the Jean Monnet Chair and Jean Monnet Center of Excellence of European Integration situated at the **Freie Universität Berlin**, in the formerly divided capital of Germany, to contribute to **Sessions one and two** of the programme of the Global Jean Monnet Conference. While this year's conference is dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Jean Monnet Action, this contribution focus on the vital role of Jean Monnet Chairs and Centers of Excellence in the forthcoming detailed **framing of the Eastern Partnership Programme** (EaP) and thus reflects the importance of this new instrument in the working scheme of the DG for External Relations. Efforts to promote synergies with the renewed **Partnership and Co-operation Agreement with Russia** as well as with the **Black Sea Synergy** are highly appreciated as are interinstitutional endeavours to launch the **Civil Society Forum** as part of the EaP with a prominent role of the **DG for Education and Culture**.

For all these regional frameworks, it is important to enrich the governmental track by providing components to **enhance the understanding of European politics**. In the context of a **knowledge-based society** and of **intercultural dialogue**, bilateral and multilateral elements of **higher education** can be valorised for closer cooperation and interactions on issues related to the European integration. With the purpose to construct an even closer Europe "which is world-oriented, united in and enriched through its cultural diversity" (quoted from documentation on EaP/Civil Society Forum), experience and best practices can be shared among the partner countries.

In this respect, the **existent network of Jean Monnet University Chairs** can be used to support those Jean Monnet Chairs established in respective partner countries as well as to promote the integration of new members. With an interdisciplinary approach and reflections on European integration, the functions and capacities of a Chair can be valorised by **fostering intercultural competence and dialogue on the levels of students, graduates and researchers**. In the framework of the new European Higher Education Area, foci are on **inbound and outbound mobility** and on **exchange of best practices of English-based study formats** such as **three-tier "bachelor-master-doctorate" education systems**. In these contexts, the aim should be to conclude further bilateral agreements of exchange and cooperation on faculty level including PhD Programmes and Graduate Schools. Another benefit of this capacity-building in higher education in countries of the Eastern Partnership is the specialized training of future professionals in a European context.

In addition, the function of the Jean Monnet Center of Excellence as a think tank with an explicit European mission can be used to frame the Eastern Partnership: With the notion of **enhancing the understanding of European integration, the university-based network** can be extended by incorporating **high-level intellectuals and European public policy research organizations** of countries in question. Within the framework of Eastern Partnership's partner countries the university-based network of Jean Monnet Centers can transfer practical expertise in EU affairs and policies to Members of parliament, to governmental bodies and to the civil society. With several formats of exchange, the core values of European integration are brought closer and are made visible to Eastern partner countries.

Jean Monnet Chairs and Centers are thus able to set an early visible signal as part of the "Europe for Citizens" programme 2007-2013" and of course the "Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013".

The Jean Monnet Chair of European Integration as well as the Jean Monnet Center of Excellence "The EU and its Citizens" at the Freie Universität Berlin are **highly motivated by and willing to contribute within the broad network of Jean Monnet activities to the higher education objectives of the Eastern Partnership Programme**. Recently, the Chair has completed a four-year research project "Coping with Accession: New Modes of Governance and EU Enlargement", funded by the 6th Framework Programme as part of the NewGov Consortium, involving PhD students and professors from Poland, Hungary, and Romania, and organizing several workshops with practitioners and scientists of Central and South-East Europe. This **endogenous East European teaching and research expertise** is actually broadened by a research project on "The EU Neighbourhood Policy and Anti-Corruption: Measures in the Southern Caucasus" in the framework of the Collaborative Research Center (SFB) 700 "Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood: New Modes of Governance" funded by the German Research Council. Within the future renewed Partnership and Co-operation Agreement with Russia, a planned dual master degree of EU Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), with which we already have a dual master degree in International Relations, would be compatible with the "Common Space of Research and Education". Generally, as to international higher education, the potentials of the **Excellence Initiative of the Freie Universität Berlin** can be used, especially by incorporating the **Center for International Cooperation (CIC)** and the **Center for Area Studies (CAS)**.

In a **joint effort of a broad number of highly motivated university actors of Jean Monnet Chairs and Centers**, focusing present activities on international higher education towards the partner countries of the Eastern Partnership Programme, the **support of many open-minded multipliers for European Politics** is feasible.