

Annex

ERASMUS MUNDUS IN FAVOUR OF IRAN, IRAQ AND YEMEN

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title	Erasmus Mundus in favour of Iran, Iraq and Yemen Call for Proposals 2010		
Total cost	EUR 3.0 million		
Aid method / Management mode	Project approach – indirect centralised management		
DAC-code	11420	Sector	Higher education

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

Iran, Iraq and Yemen have specific and distinct relations with the European Union. The Erasmus Mundus programme is a platform for better understanding and intercultural dialogue. In particular for Iraq, which continues to go through a difficult period, but also for Iran and Yemen, it should support the rehabilitation, reform and improvement of its higher education system. For this important task, foreign assistance can be very helpful and complement national efforts. Erasmus Mundus aims to build ties at university level through consortia activities, and to set up programmes for student and academic staff mobility between Europe and third countries in general and in this case more specifically with the Middle East countries.

2.2. Lessons learnt

Iran, Iraq and Yemen are eligible to participate in the **Erasmus Mundus** Masters Courses since 2004 and in joint doctoral studies since 2009 (now referred to as Action 1 of the Erasmus Mundus programme). In addition, Iran, Iraq and Yemen are also eligible under the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window (EMECW) programme since 2006 (referred to as **Action 2** under the new **Erasmus Mundus Programme 2009-2013**). Consequently, European cooperation with these countries in the field of higher education is relatively short and limited experience has been accumulated.

Erasmus Mundus (EM) Action 2 seeks to extend to third countries the best practices of the European Erasmus Programme, and to expand the mobility opportunities to include all levels of higher education. Under the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window programme (2006-2008) three Calls for proposals were launched between 2006 and 2008 which included each time a €3 million lot for Iran, Iraq and Yemen. On all three cases, the lots were attributed to a consortium of 10 European universities and 10 universities from Iran, Iraq and Yemen led by the International Institute for Geo-information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) of

the Netherlands. The mobilisation of 330 students/academic staff from the three Middle East countries coming to Europe and 21 students/academic staff from Europe going to the three countries was proposed. The maximum project duration was 34 and 45 months.

2.3. Complementary actions

The Erasmus Mundus programmes (including the former Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window 2006-2008) are to date the only EU funded programmes open to Iran, Iraq and Yemen in the field of higher education.

2.4. Donor coordination

Over the last few years, different countries in this region and elsewhere have requested the EC to open up the opportunities to study, train and carry out research in Europe. There is also an increasing interest for the evolution of the Bologna process and the steps that are taken towards the creation of a Common Space of Education in Europe.

In May 2006, the EC convened a Member States education expert group to discuss the different existing programmes in the field of higher education and its future plan to develop a global external cooperation mobility programme, which would increase the existing possibilities. Four important principles were agreed for the definition of the new programme:

- The new mobility programme should build on the experience gathered under the Erasmus Programme;
- It should as far as possible allow universities to work on models that could in the medium term contribute to the convergence towards Common Spaces of Higher Education;
- It should cover the different types of mobility and allow both for inter-institutional mobility and free- mover mobility;
- Certain measures should be introduced to prevent the brain drain effect.

Mobility initiatives under the Erasmus Mundus programme will be complementary to national scholarship and mobility programmes provided by Member States.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The overall objective of Erasmus Mundus is to achieve better understanding and mutual enrichment between the European Union and third countries through the exchange of persons, knowledge and skills at higher education level, with a view to fostering sustainable development and reform in line with the Millennium Development Goals. More specifically, EM intends to:

- Enhance the international cooperation capacity of universities in third countries;
- Promote cooperation between higher education institutions;

- Enable students to benefit linguistically, culturally and educationally from the experience of pursuing academic studies in another country and to promote EU values;
- Improve the transparency and recognition of studies and qualifications;
- Enhance the skills and qualifications of foreign higher education staff so that they can contribute actively towards a quality improvement in education;
- Enhance in a medium term the political, cultural, educational and economical links between Europe and third countries.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

The following results are expected:

- Multilateral exchange of students and academic staff (at least 100 individual actions per year) between Europe and Iran, Iraq and Yemen;
- Enhancement of the international cooperation capacity of higher education institutions in Iran, Iraq and Yemen through cooperation with high quality European institutions (Erasmus Charter) and with extensive experience in ECTS and in implementation of the Bologna acquis (Erasmus Charter);
- The spreading of the experiences of EU universities in the framework of Erasmus exchanges and in the implementation of Bologna process;
- Improved human resource skills within universities to align them better for international exchange and reform;
- An increased visibility of the EU universities as a quality option in the context of globalisation;
- An enhanced role for the higher education sector in sustainable development in line with the Millennium Development Goals;
- Improved cultural understanding and respect for diversity.

Activities:

A Call for Proposals implements Erasmus Mundus each year. To allow for activities to start in academic year 2007-2008, a Call for Proposals was launched in the end of 2006. Two further Calls were launched in the end of 2007 and 2008 for activities starting in the academic years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 respectively. The conditions of the Call to be funded under this Action, to be launched in the end of 2009 for activities to start in the academic year of 2010-2011, will be similar to the ones for the previous Calls:

- proposals are requested from consortia of European higher education institutions (HEIs) and Iran, Iraq and Yemen universities to draw up a mobility scheme for students and academic staff between higher education institutions in their countries;
- European institutions must all have been awarded an Erasmus Charter;
- Applicants may only be European HEIs;

- Consortia must comprise at least five European HEIs from at least three European countries, plus at least one HEI out of two of the three beneficiary Middle East developing countries;
- In all cases, the consortia guarantees their commitment to involving students and academic staff from the three countries;
- Proposals must state the number of mobility activities planned;
- In their proposal, consortia demonstrate the mechanisms for selection of the students and scholars object of the mobility. These must guarantee a transparent and objective selection on the basis of academic criteria, and taking into account the cross-cutting issues set out in the Call for Proposals.

The EC will conclude a "framework partnership agreement" with the coordinating institution of each consortium. The other consortium members sign a mandate granting power to the coordinating institution: this is annexed to the framework partnership agreement with the EC. The specific grant agreement covers mobility activities starting in the academic year 2010-2011. Mobility activities comprise:

(a) Individual mobility for students and staff:

The types of mobility to be funded are:

- For students: undergraduate, master, doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships;
- For academic staff: academic exchanges for the purposes of teaching, training and research.

All proposals must cover all types of mobility. Mobility is open to students or academic staff from Europe and from Iran, Iraq and Yemen. Those from the latter countries must represent at least 70% of the total individual mobility covered by this action.

Costs of the individual mobility covered by the grant include travel, subsistence, tuition fees and insurance costs involved in the moves. The Call for Proposals will include the financial management rules that the selected consortia must follow and the expected target amount or cost interval for each type of expense. From experience with previous EMECW Calls and best practice, the consortium usually decides the tuition fees and pays them directly to the involved HEIs; insurance costs are paid directly to insurance companies; subsistence amounts are regularly paid as a lump sum to the students and staff mobilised; and travel expenses are reimbursed to students and staff against incurred costs within an allowed interval.

(b) Partnership activities to organise mobility and transfer best practice:

The grant awarded covers also the costs of organising the individual mobility, to work with partners on a credit transfer system, to apply principles like the diploma supplement and to work with partners on quality assurance issues. An amount not exceeding 7% of the total budget will cover the organisation costs of the consortium.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

The risk of low take-up of the programme has been minimised by the information provided to specific institutions and higher education authorities to create awareness of the programme and boost demand for mobility. The success of the EM calls in previous years also indicates that this risk is minimal.

A transparent selection process that respects minimum objective criteria (academic merit, economic situation, gender balance and favourable treatment of disabled students) will be put in place in order to avoid favouritism in candidate selection. Experience with Erasmus Mundus (and EM External Cooperation Window) has built up important expertise within European universities to select the most appropriate candidates.

After selection the assumption is that students and academics from Iran, Iraq and Yemen are permitted to leave their country and enter the European host countries. EC Delegations will send lists of selected students to European embassies in Iran, Iraq and Yemen to ease the visa application process.

3.4. Crosscutting Issues

Proposals for mobility schemes must demonstrate how they respond to gender equality and social equity issues (a specific criterion in the evaluation grid). Furthermore, the programme has created a specific target group to ensure that mobility schemes include individuals from the respective third country who are in particularly vulnerable situations.

3.5. Stakeholders

The main stakeholders are universities from Iran, Iraq and Yemen and from Europe, and the higher education students and academic staff benefiting from mobility grants. Additional stakeholders are higher education authorities in Iran, Iraq and Yemen, which will be consulted on priorities.

Direct beneficiaries will be universities of Iran, Iraq and Yemen and European ones and the students and teachers (nationals of the participating countries of the Middle East and Europe) who will benefit from funding to carry out mobility activities with an aim to complete studies or to carry out research or training. European universities will also benefit from greater international contacts at institutional and individual level, and the further close cooperation that this generates.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Implementation method

Indirect centralised management through the signature of grant contracts following call for proposals.

The Executive Agency for Culture, Education and Audiovisual (EACEA) will be responsible for the management of the Call for Proposals, and for the assessment and management of grant awards. Relevant Commission services will participate in the selection of proposals.

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

This programme will be implemented through the Call for Proposals mechanism. All contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the

Commission for the implementation of external operations, in force at the time of the launch of the procedure in question.

4.3. Budget and calendar

Category Breakdown	EC	Total
<u>Grants</u>		
Call for Proposals Erasmus Mundus Iran, Iraq, Yemen	<u>3 000 000</u>	<u>3 000 000</u>
TOTAL	<u>3 000 000</u>	<u>3 000 000</u>

The maximum possible rate of co-financing is 95%. The maximum EC contribution for this action is EUR 3 million, covering at least 110 mobility flows each year for the three countries.

The Call for Proposals for the academic year 2010-2011 will be launched in the end of 2009 and be concluded in mid-2010. Grant award contracts will be signed as soon as possible after the approval of this Decision in order to allow eligible activities to start in the academic year 2010-2011.

The maximum duration of projects funded under the call is 48 months.

4.4. Performance monitoring

The EACEA will monitor the mobility scheme. The number of institutions participating, the number of students and academic staff, the establishment of recognition mechanisms, the award of double or joint diplomas and/or extension of the diploma supplement will be used as performance indicators. Additional key indicators are the return of students to their countries and the impact of their employability: this will be the object of a thorough assessment by Commission services.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

The EC will carry out an evaluation of the programme once the second round of students / academic staff have finished their studies in Europe.

The EACEA will audit the projects financed under this scheme.

4.6. Communication and visibility

The EACEA promotes the Call for Proposals on its website. Information on this call will be sent to all the institutions holding an Erasmus charter at the date of publication. National structures are points of contact for queries on the programme and will receive a short information note and promotion package. Delegations in relevant countries will also be briefed on the programme in order to promote it in their country and/or answer or refer questions. A functional e-mail box has been provided for questions and answers and a Frequently Asked Questions document is at the disposal of the public on the agency's web site.

Each consortium is also required to provide a solid visibility and networking strategy (a) to promote the programme and reach a maximum number of institutions and to increase opportunities for vulnerable groups; and (b) to ensure visibility and credit in all reports, publications and events linked to the activities after selection of candidates. The evaluation grid contains specific points for the evaluation of these aspects.