

## Action Fiche

### ENPI INTERREGIONAL ANNUAL ACTION PROGRAMME 2009 – PART I

#### ERASMUS MUNDUS EXTERNAL COOPERATION WINDOW

##### 1. IDENTIFICATION

Title	Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window 2008 Call for Proposals (ENPI Countries) CRIS n. 020-030 (East) and 020-031 (South)		
Total cost	EUR 29.0 million		
Aid method / Management mode	Project approach – indirect centralised management		
DAC-code	11420	Sector	Higher education

##### 2. RATIONALE

###### 2.1. Sector context

Most European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries as well as Russia continue to be on a transition path towards establishing fully fledged market economies. Their reform efforts include improving the responsiveness of their education system. The project aims to build ties at university level through institutional cooperation activities (partnerships), and to set up programmes for student and academic staff mobility between Europe and the ENP countries as well as Russia.

The Bologna Process (initiated in 1999) aims at the establishment of a European Higher Education Area by reforming the structures of their higher education systems in a convergent way. Initially, 29 countries signed the Bologna Declaration. By September 2003 (Berlin conference) 10 new signatories including Russia joined the Bologna process. In May 2005 at the Bergen Conference, another 5 countries joined: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Altogether, 46 European countries are currently part of the Bologna Process, including Montenegro (2007).

###### 2.2. Lessons learnt

The Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window (EMECW) combines the European Union education, cooperation and external policies to further deepen and enhance the higher education cooperation links between the EU and the rest of the world. This window complements current and previous higher education schemes in the field. It covers new actions and builds on the positive results that other programmes like Erasmus, the general Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, as well as ALFA, ALBAN, AsiaLink and Edulink, have generated in the different targeted regions.

The first call for proposals under the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window was launched in 2006. Higher education institutions from the EU and 24

targeted Third-countries<sup>8</sup> were invited to form partnerships projects aiming at hosting students and scholars. Nine partnerships projects were selected on the basis of their academic quality and the relevance to the targeted countries. The selected partnerships represented an institutional cooperation of 167 higher education institutions (112 in the framework of the Neighbourhood area) which in return were expected to implement the mobility of more than 1800 students and academic staff (1500 related to the Neighbourhood area) from both European countries and third countries for the 2007-2008 academic year. Owing to its success, the geographical coverage of EMECW was enlarged for the academic year 2008-2009<sup>9</sup>. Indicatively<sup>10</sup>, the number of HEIs submitting a proposal for the school year 2008-2009 was XXX. The expected mobility flows are XXXXX (xxxxx related to the Neighbourhood area).

### 2.3. Complementary actions

To date there have been two EU-funded programmes open to ENP countries and Russia in the field of higher education:

- **Tempus IV**<sup>11</sup>, the overall objective of the programme is to contribute to an area of cooperation in the field of higher education involving the European Union and partner countries in the surrounding area. In particular, the programme aims at promoting voluntary convergence with EU developments in the field of higher education deriving from the Lisbon agenda and the Bologna process.
- **Erasmus Mundus**, a world-wide programme which provides scholarships for students and scholars to around 100 Erasmus Mundus Master Courses in Europe. The programme also funds initiatives to promote the European higher education sector. 290 students and scholars (199 from ENP East and Russia, 91 from ENP South) from the region have benefited from scholarships awarded for the academic years 2004/5, 2005/6 and 2006/7.

### 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. Both this programme and the future Tempus have a vocation to provide an insight of this process to the participating third countries.

In May 2006, the EC convened a MS 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;

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<sup>8</sup> ENPI countries South and East (except Lybia) and Russia, Central Asia countries, Yemen, Iraq and Iran.

<sup>9</sup> To include Asia Regional and India (DCI), Mexico and Chile (DCI), ACP (9<sup>th</sup> EDF), Western Balkans.

<sup>10</sup> At the time of writing the selection process is ongoing.

<sup>11</sup> At the time of writing, there is an ongoing decisional procedure to approve the Tempus IV-2008.

- it should as far as possible allow universities to work on models that could contribute in the medium term to the convergence towards Common Spaces of Higher Education;
- it should cover 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 External Cooperation Window will be complementary to national scholarship and mobility programmes provided by Member States.

### **3. DESCRIPTION**

#### **3.1. Objectives**

The overall objective of the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window (EMECW) 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. More specifically, the EMECW aims:

- To enhance the international cooperation capacity of universities in third countries;
- To promote cooperation between sending and hosting institutions;
- To enable students to benefit linguistically, culturally and educationally from the experience of pursuing academic studies in another country, and to promote EU values;
- To improve the transparency and recognition of studies and qualifications, in particular building on the achievements gained of the Bologna process in this area;
- To provide good students from vulnerable groups with higher education;
- To enhance the skills and qualifications of foreign higher education staff so that they can contribute actively towards a quality improvement of education;
- To build the capacity of the administration and public and private sector by participation of their staff in higher education mobility activities;
- To enhance in the medium term the political, cultural, educational and economical links between Europe and third countries.

#### **3.2. Expected results and main activities**

The expected results are:

- Multilateral exchange of students and academic staff<sup>12</sup> between Europe and ENP countries as well as Russia;
- Enhanced international cooperation capacity of higher education institutions in ENP countries and Russia through cooperation with high quality European

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<sup>12</sup> The minimum number of mobility flows will be established in the framework of the Call for Proposals on the basis of the budget allocations. This will be in line with previous Calls for Proposals.

institutions (Erasmus Charter) and with extensive experience in ECTS and in the implementation of the Bologna acquis;

- The spreading of the experiences of EU universities in the framework of Erasmus exchanges and in the implementation of Bologna process;
- An increased visibility of EU universities as a quality option in the context of globalisation;
- Improved cultural understanding and respect for diversity;

The links created can be expected to contribute to improved ties between the ENP region and Russia and the EU in coming years, and the sharing of European values.

#### Activities:

The Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window is to be implemented through a Call for Proposals. In order to allow for activities to start in the academic year 2009/10, the 2009 Call will be launched at the latest by December 2008. Institutional partnerships of European higher education institutions (HEI) and third country universities from ENP countries and Russia are expected 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 HE institutions. The 2008 CfP will in principle follow the same standards as previous Calls and lessons learned will be duly taken into account.

It is expected that like previous years, ENP geographical lots are the following : lot 1 comprises Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia; lot 2 comprises Egypt, West Bank and Gaza and Israel; lot 3 comprises Lebanon, Syria and Jordan; lot 4 comprises Russia; lot 5 comprises Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and lot 6 comprises Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus.

In principle, partnerships will be expected to comprise at least five European HE institutions from at least three European countries, plus at least one university from each of the beneficiary countries. In all cases, the partnership will guarantee to involve students from all countries in the lot.

Proposals will state the number of mobility activities planned. In their proposal, partnerships will demonstrate the mechanisms for selection of the students and scholars object of the mobility. These must guarantee a transparent and objective selection which takes into account academic merit, socio-economic situation, gender balance, support for disabled students and compliance with regional priorities. Partnerships must prove their capacity and experience in hosting students. Proposals will need to show in which ways the mobility scheme will increase knowledge rather than favour the brain-drain from third-countries.

The best institutional partnership will be retained. An evaluation of the quality of the proposals, including the operational capacity and expertise of the applicant and his partners, will be carried out based on a number of evaluation criteria relating to a.) the operational capacity and the expertise of the partnership, b.) the relevance of the proposal, c.) the methodology proposed, as well as d) sustainability.

The EC will conclude a contract with the coordinating institution of each partnership. The other partnership members sign a mandate granting power to the coordinating institution: this is annexed to the framework partnership agreement with the EC. The

selected partnership will receive a specific grant agreement covering the mobility flows of the call for activities starting in the academic year 2009/10. Mobility activities comprise:

1. individual mobility for students and staff:

The types of mobility to be funded in this third round of the programme are expected to be the same as in previous years:

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 Europe and from ENP countries and Russia. Those from ENP countries and Russia must represent at least 70% of the individual mobility covered by this action.

2. 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.

The signature of a new specific grant agreement every year is subject to an annual renewal process and to the requirement of including new partner universities in the partnership.

### **3.3. Stakeholders**

The main stakeholders are universities from ENP countries and Russia and from the EU, and the higher education students and academic staff benefiting from mobility grants. Additional stakeholders are higher education authorities in ENP countries and Russia, which will be consulted on priorities.

Direct beneficiaries will be ENP countries' and Russia's universities and secondarily the students and teachers (nationals of the participating countries of ENP countries and Russia) who will benefit from funding to carry out mobility activities. European universities will also benefit from greater international contacts at institutional and individual level, and the close cooperation that this generates.

### **3.4. Risks and assumptions**

A transparent selection process that respects minimum objective criteria (academic merit, economic situation, gender balance and favourable treatment of disabled students) will remain in place in order to avoid favouritism in the selection of candidates. EU universities have an important expertise to make a proposal on the most appropriate candidates. The mobility project should also increase knowledge of rather than favour the brain-drain from third-countries.

After selection, the assumption is that students and academics from ENP countries and Russia are permitted to leave their country and enter the European host country. Partnerships are encouraged to liaise with EC Delegations in third countries and European embassies in these countries in order to ease the visa application process.

As far as the decisional procedure is concerned, it is expected that the lessons learned from previous CfPs follow the same line and do not imply a complete revision of the Programme.

Considering the possibility that the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window integrates the second phase of the "Erasmus Mundus" programme, for the purpose of the current Decision, it is assumed that it will do so following the same lines as the current External Cooperation Window programme.

Since the current Decision concerns the Annual Action Programme 2009, for which there is as yet no budgetary commitment, it is expected that funds will be available in 2009 at the time of contracting<sup>13</sup>.

### **3.5. 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, in its second edition, the programme created a specific target group (Group 3) to ensure that mobility schemes include individuals from the respective third country who are in particularly vulnerable situations<sup>14</sup>:

- 1) they have refugee status or are asylum beneficiaries (international or according to the national legislation of one of the European recipient countries) or
- 2) it can be proved that they have been the object of unjustified expulsion from university on racial, ethnic, religious, political, gender or sexual inclination or
- 3) they belong to an indigenous population targeted by a specific national policy

When relevant to the specific situation of the country, proposals with a solid strategy and effectively promoting participation of group III will be given priority.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES**

### **4.1. Implementation method**

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

### **4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures**

The Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture (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 panels of proposals. In the selection process EC Delegations will be consulted on the eligibility of third country institutions and relevance of the proposals to the country needs.

The programme will be implemented via a 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.

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<sup>13</sup> The current Decision can only be adopted after the adoption of the APB 2009, supposedly during the first semester 2008. This information will be updated accordingly in the course of the decisional procedure.

<sup>14</sup> This category is meant to remain in successive CfP.

#### **4.3. Budget and calendar**

The maximum EC contribution for this action is EUR 29 million, allocated as follows: - Neighbourhood South (lots 1, 2, 3) : 13 M€

- Neighbourhood East (lots 4, 5, 6) : 16 M€

The maximum duration of projects funded under the programme is 42 months.

#### **4.4. Performance monitoring**

The monitoring of this mobility scheme will be done by the executive agency. The number of institutions participating, the number of students and academic staff, the establishment of recognition mechanisms, award of double or joint diplomas and/or extension of the diploma supplement will be used as performance indicators as well as the return of students to their countries and the impact on employability and career opportunities. This will be made 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 that the second round (academic year 2008-2009) of students have finished their studies in Europe.

The Executive Agency will audit the projects financed under this scheme.

#### **4.6. Communication and visibility**

The EU's international programmes to support education account for a large part of the success of its Public diplomacy abroad. Bridging together students and academics from the EU and the wider world broadens the understanding of the EU, and forms lasting partnerships and networks that sustain support for European values.

Under Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation window, special attention will be paid to increasing visibility, dissemination and exploitation of results.

The EACEA promotes the programme and its Call for Proposals on its website. Information on yearly calls is sent to all the institutions holding an Erasmus charter at the date of publication. National coordination structures are points of contact for queries on the programme and receive an information note and promotion package. Delegations in relevant countries are also briefed on the programme in order to promote in their country and/or answer or refer questions. Information sessions are normally held in Brussels during the Call for Proposals. Additional info sessions in the ENP countries may be conducted. A functional e-mail box is provided for questions and answers enriching a frequently asked question document which is put at the disposal of the public on the agency's web site. EC Delegations are relays in Third countries thus they are important players in disseminating the information and broadcasting in their websites information about the programme, the CfP and the partnerships active in their respective countries. EC Delegations and Headquarters may consider the possibility of capitalising other big EC events in the respective regions. They might consider additional ways of publicising the programme in a particular country.

Each partnership 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.

The Commission services will assure the visibility of the actions, in compliance with the Visibility guide.