

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE

ASSESSMENT OF FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Context

Purpose of this document: This document must be established for all interim and ex-post evaluations in the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) to provide an objective overall assessment of the evaluation and the validity of its results, as well as a general description of how the evaluation results will be used by DG EAC.

The document shall be published together with the Evaluation Report on Europa:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/index_en.htm

Definitions: Evaluation in the Commission is defined as a “judgement of interventions according to their results, impacts and the needs they aim to satisfy”. It is an information tool that supports the preparation and implementation of public interventions, and reports on the corresponding results to the public and stakeholders. Information about the evaluation framework of the European Commission can be obtained at:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/sound_fin_mgt/evaluation_en.htm

Organisation of the evaluation process: In DG EAC evaluations must be independent and shall be led and carried out by external resources. The operational management of the EAC policy areas is responsible for the identification of evaluation subjects, the organisation of evaluations, and the follow-up of evaluation results. A central Evaluation Sector, detached from the operational activities evaluated, has as a major role in ensuring quality, objectivity and an element of independence to the process, by having a close involvement in all steps of the evaluation. An evaluation Steering Group is appointed to prepare the evaluation, supervise the execution, and support the evaluator on the basis of the members' specific knowledge and expertise of the evaluation subject.

Basic data about the specific evaluation

Evaluation: Ex-post Evaluation of Erasmus Mundus I

Purpose of the evaluation:

The ex-post evaluation was launched according to Article 12 of the Erasmus Mundus Decision (No. 2317/2003/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 December 2003). The primary objectives of the evaluation set out in the Terms of Reference were to assess the impact of the first Erasmus Mundus programme and to "reflect on lessons learned to support implementation of the successor programme".

Evaluator: ECOTEC

Budget of the evaluation: EUR 234 486

Time period of execution: 22.12.2008 – 15.09.2009

Assessment

Carried out by: The Evaluation Sector of DG EAC (Unit R2)

Date: 14/09/09

1. Evaluation subject

The Erasmus Mundus programme was established in 2003, with the overall aim of enhancing the quality of European higher education by fostering cooperation with third countries in order to improve the development of human resources and to promote dialogue and understanding between peoples and cultures. These objectives were sought to be achieved through four Actions: supporting the development of joint Master's courses (EMMCs); providing scholarships to highly qualified graduate students from third countries to attend the EMMC, and to third-country scholars to spend short mobility periods at HEIs which hosted EMMC; supporting structural cooperation between Erasmus Mundus consortia and HEIs in third countries and funding scholarships for EU students and scholars to spend mobility periods at the third-country partner institutions; financing supporting measures and studies that sought to promote awareness of, and access to, EU higher education worldwide. The total budget amounted to approximately 300 M€ (230 M€ from the Erasmus Mundus programme, 65 M€ from the EC's external relations budget and 4.8 M€ from the 9th EDF). The programme is open to all EU 27, candidate, EEA and EFTA countries and all other countries of the world, depending on the Action.

2. Scope of evaluation

The focus of the evaluation was on the "effectiveness" of the programme - the extent to which it has achieved its objectives. The evaluation also analysed the "efficiency" with which Erasmus Mundus achieved these effects and the extent to which the courses supported are "sustainable" in the longer term. All the Actions and geographic areas included in the programme during 2004-2008 were covered.

3. Methodology applied for the evaluation

The methodological approach adopted for the assignment included: desk research to review relevant literature; three separate surveys - (i) of coordinators and partners of EMMC, (ii) of Action 2 scholars, (iii) the Graduate Impact Survey (conducted by ICUnet); and interviews with key stakeholders. Case study visits to twelve EMMC were also carried out. Triangulation and cross-verification of the collected evidence were present throughout the analysis. This approach was adequate for delivering the requested results.

4. Results of the evaluation

The EMMC supported by the programme appear to be of high quality, attracting large numbers of applicants from third countries. The overall academic standard of the selected students and scholars is generally high, although the use of additional "Windows" funding for the students from specific geographical areas was not always consistent with the primary focus on academic excellence. The programme has achieved a generally high degree of efficiency, and the comparatively modest sums allocated to consortia appear to have had a high leverage effect. Actions 1 and 2 are complementary and work effectively together. The effectiveness of Action 2 scholarships for scholars and Actions 3 and 4 is less compelling. In general, the programme has added to the Master's-level education supply in the EU in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The programme also made a generally positive contribution to the EU's strategic objectives in the field of higher education, in particular towards the Bologna Process. However, a majority of those currently participating do not believe that courses could continue without EU funding.

5. Follow-up of the evaluation results

An Action Plan addressing the evaluation results will be established and its implementation monitored by timely progress reports.

6. Conclusions of the assessment of the Evaluation Report

The data collected by the evaluation is accurate and complete. The analytical framework is sound, and so are the conclusions reached. The main results of the evaluation are credible and relevant, and the recommendations are useful. The report is exceptionally good.