

ACTION FICHE FOR ARGENTINA (ANNEX 5)

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	Argentina Annual Action Plan 2010 - Erasmus Mundus – Action 2 - EXTERNAL COOPERATION WINDOW – Argentina DCI-ALA/2010/22277		
Total cost	EUR 5,200,000 (100% EU contribution)		
Aid method / Management mode	Project approach Centralised indirect management by Education Audiovisual and Culture – Executive Agency EAC-EA		
DAC-code	11420	Sector	Higher Education

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Argentina has engaged in the process of the inclusion of new social sectors in its universities, thereby providing opportunities of social mobility to the children of immigrants. The university sector today comprises 102 higher education institutions (HEIs) under state or private management, offering a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees with a clear bias towards those more demanded by the students: the ones of a professional kind.

Nowadays, 11.8% of the total population above 15 years of age (nearly 3.4 million people) have completed university education, while a 13.8% (4 million people) has carried out – but not finished – a certain level of university studies. Currently, more than 1.1 million students attend Argentine universities.

During the mid-sixties – in the context of military dictatorships – a period of weakening of public universities began. Nevertheless, in spite of restricted budgets and weak management, public universities in Argentina (40 out of 105) continue to hold high quality and reputation.

Regarding the regional relationship, there is an increasing interest in the evolution of the Bologna process as well as in the steps that are taken towards the creation of a Common Space of Education in Europe.

HEIs, with the support of the National Ministry of Education and international cooperation programmes, are increasingly incorporating the international dimension into their study programmes and activities. However, many institutions have not yet developed clear strategies for this purpose, nor defined long term objectives and goals within the framework of an institutional policy towards internationalisation/ globalisation.

2.2. Lessons learnt

To date there have been two EU regional programmes for Latin America in the field of higher education that have had a clear impact in Argentina:

ALFA: This academic cooperation programme is aimed at enhancing mutual understanding and at improving the quality of higher education programmes from Europe and Latin America. Argentina has been an active participant in the two phases of the programme. Regarding ALFA II, Argentina ranks second in participation after Brazil, participating in 139 approved projects. The European Union's financial contribution to the projects where Argentina participates amounts EUR 35 million.

ALBAN : Concerning this scholarship programme, Argentina has also performed quite dynamically, considering the number of students interested in participating and the final number of Argentine grant-holders that have been selected. Master and Doctorate programmes are the most demanded options. Up to date, nearly 250 Argentine undergraduates, graduates and professionals have been selected to initiate studies in Europe.

Erasmus Mundus Masters Programme: Even though Argentina is eligible for Actions 2 and 3, the participation of Argentine students and academics is rather low. This situation seems to be related to the lack of visibility of the programme within the country. Consequently, **in the light of the experience with Erasmus Mundus**, it would be quite important for the success of the programme to give it a high visibility.

The conclusions of evaluations of related EU programmes, the last Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Report (Thematic Review of Tertiary Education, 2006) as well as the dialogue with the relevant national authorities confirmed the opportunity and mutual interest in increasing higher education exchanges and academic mobility.

2.3. Complementary actions

Erasmus Mundus is a world-wide programme which provides scholarships for students and scholars to attend about 100 Erasmus Mundus Master Courses in Europe. For the academic year 2008/2009, this programme awarded 45 scholarships to Argentine students and scholars.

In late 2008 the first Call for Proposals of an amount of EUR 2.1 million for the implementation of **Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window – Argentina** was launched. The Call was focused on PhD, postdoctorates and staff mobilities in the areas of basic and applied sciences. A consortium led by the University of Bologna was selected and 102 scholarships were allocated for Argentine nationals for academic years 2010/2011.

Additionally, in December 2009 a new for Call for Proposals, structured in three lots, was launched to implement the action foreseen in the Annual Action Plan 2009. The financial allocation for this Call for Proposal is EUR 4.4 million.

Moreover, Argentine universities take part in three consortia implementing **Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window – Latin America**, associated with universities from the EU, Peru and Bolivia.

An important number of **scholarships** is also provided by the following EU Member States: Germany (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst - DAAD), Spain (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo - AECID), United Kingdom (British Council), France (CampusFrance) and Italy.

2.4. Donor coordination

There is also a strong coordination with the said Member States geared at promoting European higher education in the country and enabling donor coordination in the field.

Since 2006, the EU Delegation in Argentina organises every year the event **Europosgrados** in cooperation with the Embassies of France, Germany and the United Kingdom. In later years the Embassies of Spain, Italy and Netherlands joined this initiative.

Europosgrados turned out to be very successful, counting with the participation of more than 100 European universities, cultural institutes and diplomatic representations and attracted nearly 7000 visitors – including students, graduates, heads of international academic cooperation agencies and university professors – in its first year. Inter-university cooperation dialogues and workshops on application procedures for European scholarships and programmes were also held.

In 2007, **Europosgrados** has also been the formal starting point of the **Policy Dialogue on Education with Argentina**, as agreed with the Argentine authorities at the VII Joint EU-Argentina Commission in December 2006. This format was also implemented in 2009, with the active participation of EAC EA.

In 2008 and 2010, **Europosgrados Tour** was carried out in major universities of the Argentine provinces. The objective of the tours, jointly organized with the abovementioned embassies, was to allow the university communities outside the country's capital to disseminate information related to EU cooperation programmes.

Member States offer scholarships programmes in their countries and remain active in cooperation in higher education, in particular in areas related to exchanges. Regular coordination in this field is held with Germany, Spain, France and United Kingdom.

The coordination with the beneficiary country takes place through the Ministry of Education, through the Secretariat for Higher Education and the Directorate for International Cooperation.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The overall objective of the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window - Argentina (EMECW) is to contribute to social cohesion in Argentina 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, the EMECW-Argentina aims at:

- providing Argentinean university students and academics with increased higher education opportunities, notably for education and training in Europe;
- enhancing the skills and qualifications of Argentinean higher education staff from the academically least privileged HEIs in particular;

- enhancing the international cooperation capacity of universities in Argentina and promoting cooperation between sending and hosting institutions of these HEIs.

Expected results and main activities

The expected results are:

- Multilateral exchange of students and academics from Argentina into the European Union;
- Enhanced capacity of higher education institutions in Argentina with respect to international cooperation as a result of the collaboration with high quality European institutions (Erasmus Charter); with extensive experience in European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and in the implementation of the Bologna 'acquis';
- The dissemination of the experiences learned by European universities within the Erasmus exchanges, the implementation of the Bologna process; and an EU – Latin America Common Higher Education Area.
- An enhanced role for the higher education sector in sustainable development in the least developed regions, in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

Consortia of higher education institutions selected in the context of call for proposals should take account not only of academic quality but also of the criteria to respond to the country's development, notably in line with the priority axis identified in the Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013.

Amongst other, consortia must take account of the country's education policy and country development specificities and other conditions set out in the call for proposals. It is imperative that, in their minimum composition, consortia include public higher education institutions from the country's regions with a low human development index (HDI).

The conditions set out in the subsequent calls for proposals (launched by the consortia of higher education institutions) for the selection of students and academics who will take part in the mobility flows, need to take account of cross-cutting issues (cf. 3.3) and of any other country's specificities, including regions where an enhanced support is necessary aiming at social cohesion and inclusion as well as increased education quality and strengthening.

Target groups:

Group 1- Argentine national students, graduates and academic staff registered or graduated in one of the Argentinean member universities of the partnership and academic staff from European universities members of the partnership.

Group 2- Argentine nationals having obtained a first higher education diploma in one of the Argentinean universities not member of the partnership.

It is estimated that the action would fund the following types of individual mobility flows:

- Master
- Doctorate (full and 'sandwich')
- Post-doctorate
- Academic staff

These periods may be extended for a few months for linguistic preparation. Academic staff mobility will consist principally of exchanges for the purposes of teaching, practical training,

research and cooperation activities performed by invited academic staff in host institutions and cooperation activities with partner universities which are members of the consortium.

3.2. Risks and assumptions

Information is provided to specific institutions and higher education authorities to create awareness of the new programme, and boost demand for mobility.

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. Experience with Erasmus Mundus has built up important expertise within European universities to select the most appropriate candidates.

3.3. Crosscutting Issues

Proposals for mobility schemes must demonstrate how they respond to gender and social equity and should take account of the identified needs and priorities of Argentina with a view to an inclusive socio-economic development of the country.

3.4. Stakeholders

The main stakeholders are universities in Argentina and Europe, as well as university students, researchers and academic staff benefiting from mobility grants. Additional stakeholders are higher education authorities in Argentina, which have been consulted on priorities to be taken into account in the context of the EMECW for Argentina.

Direct beneficiaries will be Argentine universities and subsequently the students and academics who will benefit from funding in order to carry out mobility activities with the 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 from the increased cooperation that this generates.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Implementation method

The action will be implemented under centralised indirect management. The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) that is supervised by the Commission's Directorate-Generals for Education and Culture (DG EAC), Communication (DG COMM) and its EuropeAid Office (DG AIDCO) will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the call for proposals, and for the preparatory stages of the assessment and management of grant awards. Other relevant Commission services, including the EU Delegation in Argentina, will participate in the selection of proposals.

The programme will be implemented via a call for proposals for consortia of HEIs from Europe¹ bearing an Erasmus Charter plus HEIs from Argentina. The consortia must comprise at least five European HEIs from at least three European countries, plus at least five HEIs from Argentina.

¹ From the 27 Member States, plus Croatia, FYROM, Turkey, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

The priority areas and the types of mobility for each call for proposals are defined by the Commission after consultations with the Ministry of Education of Argentina.

Proposals will state the minimum number of mobility activities planned. In their proposal, consortia of HEIs will set out the mechanisms for the selection of students and scholars which will be subject to the mobility. These must guarantee a transparent and objective selection on the basis of academic criteria, and take into account the cross-cutting issues and priorities set out in the call for proposals.

The selected university consortia will receive a specific grant agreement covering the mobility activities of the call for proposals, starting in the academic year 2011/2012. Mobility activities comprise:

(a) individual mobility for students and staff:

The types of mobility to be funded in this round of the programme are:

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

All proposals must cover all types of mobility, as above. Mobility is open to students and/or academic staff from Argentina. European outward mobility to Argentina is excluded except for academic staff mobility. Those from Target Group 1 should represent at least 60% of individual mobility.

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

The consortium also receives a grant to cover the costs of organising the individual mobility, and to work with partners on issues such as credit transfer, diploma supplement and quality assurance.

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

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.

This programme will be implemented through the call for proposals mechanism. The essential selection and award criteria for the award of grants are laid down in the Practical Guide to contract procedures for EU external actions. The maximum possible rate of co-financing for grants is 100% as defined by Article n° 169 of Financial Regulations.

Full financing may only be applied in the cases provided for in Article 253 of the Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget o.

4.3. Budget and calendar

The total maximum cost of this action is **EUR 5.2 million**, wholly funded by the EU.

Eligible activities are expected to start in the academic year 2011/2012.

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

The European Union will contribute to financing within the mobility scheme:

- The cost of the organisation of individual mobility of HEI students and academic staff and accompanying measures
- The cost of implementation of individual mobility for students, researchers and academic staff.

Organisation of the individual mobility: EU grants will cover the costs incurred by the universities member of the consortium for the organisation of the mobility and eventually the cost of the organisation of specific events to promote the action.

Implementation of the individual mobility of students and academic staff: The EU support for individual mobility of students, researchers and academic staff will contribute to cover the travel expenses, subsistence costs, insurance cost and, where applicable, tuition fees.

For all activities linked to mobility, applicants will explain in which way these mobility exchanges can favour the creation of durable links between the partner institutions and how they can respond to the social, economical and political needs of the HEIs and the country.

4.4. Performance monitoring

The EACEA will regularly monitor this mobility scheme and report to the relevant Commission services. 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 the students to their countries of origin and the impact on their employability and career opportunities: this will be the object of a thorough assessment by Commission services.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

The EU will carry out an evaluation of the programme and particularly will consider its implementation with a view to the implementation of the second National Indicative Programme (NIP II) under the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) 2007-2013 for Argentina.

The EACEA will carry out audits of the projects financed under this window.

4.6. Communication and visibility

All the projects presented in the calls for proposals will aim to provide visibility for the European higher education sector and must therefore include a solid visibility and networking strategy aimed at reaching as many universities as possible in Argentina and at increasing the higher education opportunities under the Programme. Communication, Information and Visibility events should take account of the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions.

Appropriate visibility and credits will be given to the grant awarded by the EU, for example, in reports and publications stemming from the action, during public events associated with the action, web pages of counterparts, including while launching the calls for proposals for the selection of students and academics under the respective window, etc.