

Erasmus Mundus: Past Experiences – Future Perspectives



# ***Presentation***

# **Interim evaluation of Erasmus Mundus**



*Centre for*

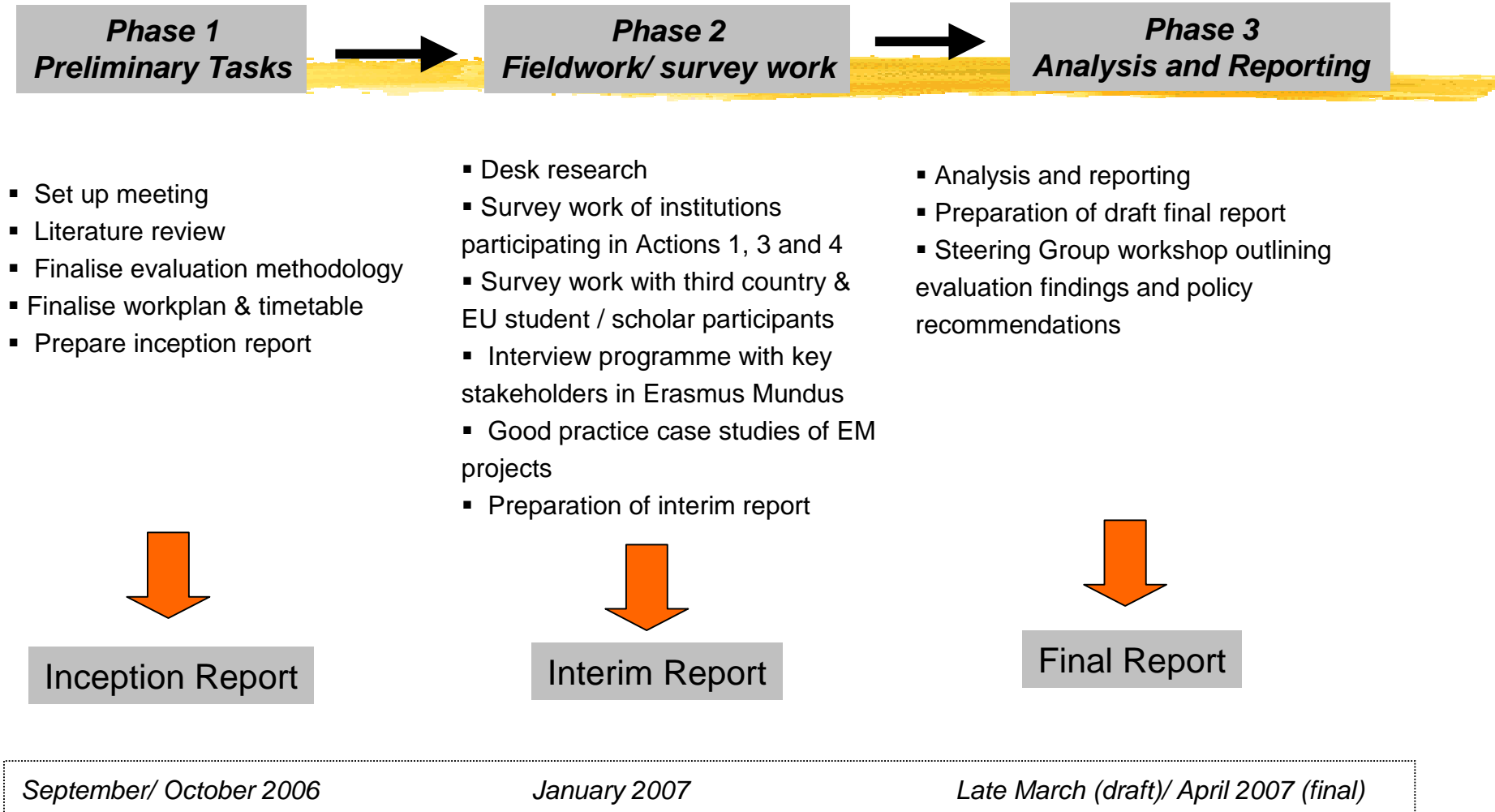
**Strategy &  
Evaluation Services  
LLP**

# Evaluation aims

- Meet legal requirements in Decision establishing EM for accountability/ transparency purposes
- Conduct assessment of key evaluation issues at interim stage including the *relevance and utility, efficiency, effectiveness (and impacts), sustainability* and *Community Value Added* of the EM programme
- Provide Commission / wider stakeholders with rec's as to how the programme can be further improved post-2008
- Key issues were grouped under following headings: programme logic, programme design, programme management and programme outcomes



*Resume of Work Plan – Interim evaluation of Erasmus Mundus Programme*



# Programme logic

- Policy context hasn't changed radically since programme Decision adopted
- Intervention logic remains fundamentally sound with good linkages between programme strategy, aims and objectives and activities supported. Each of EM's four operational objectives is explicitly linked to a separate Action.
- Strong coherence between aims of EM programme and EU policy context esp. Lisbon strategy, Bologna, Education and Training 2010
- These policies emphasise importance of strengthening co-operation with third countries in HE, opening up education systems to the wider world, promoting the European dimension in education, fostering intercultural dialogue
- Also relevant in meeting **identified needs of beneficiaries** (HEIs and students and scholars from both Europe and third countries).
- No major changes suggested to programme rationale



# Programme design (1)

- Mixed views on whether current design optimal
- Some NS favoured simpler structure with Actions 1 -3 brought together under single Action. Others thought structure should remain unchanged, given EM new/ need for embedding
- Concerns about low participation of EU students on some courses
  - Prohibitive financial cost for many EU students of participating in an integrated study programme involving mobility periods in HE institutions in different EU countries
  - Lack of financing to support intra-EU mobility for EU students
  - Targeting / marketing issues. EM perceived by some EU students as being for international students
- More EU students should participate if objectives are to be achieved: promoting inter-cultural understanding between EU and third countries, Bologna / single European Higher Education Area



# Programme design (2)

- Little support for extending EM to under-graduate level. Mixed stakeholder views with regard to its extension to PhD level but logic to doing so given sustainability issues
- While some NS very positive, others expressed concerns with regard to possible extension to the third cycle:
  - i) financial implications of extending to PhD level
  - ii) practical difficulties in ensuring a truly integrated study programme (many PhDs involve independent research); and
  - iii) possible duplication - Marie Curie Actions etc.



# Programme design (3)

- While satisfied with EM itself, many HEIs felt that financial provision for preparing and developing an EM Master Course (€15,000/ EM Masters Consortium/ year) was inadequate. Views depended on system of HEI financing in different countries
- However issues for DG EAC around keeping administration and financial/ management reporting requirements simple
- Also difficulties in arriving at common tuition fee level given widely differing funding mechanisms for HE between different MS
- In contrast, the scholarship level for Action 2 regarded highly favourably by students and HEIs
- Action 2 scholarships should be index-linked to ensure they keep track with inflation and remain internationally competitive with Fulbright and other scholarship awards



# Programme management (1)

- High satisfaction levels in respect of way in which programme is being managed overall
- Transition of administrative responsibility from Commission to the Executive Agency appears to have been well managed
- Handover should enable the Commission to switch focus from operational matters relating to programme administration to strategic / policy related issues (and quality assurance)
- Question whether EM should continue to be managed on a centralised basis (significant decentralisation element in other DG EAC programmes)?
- No desire on part of most NS to play a greater management role in the programme / satisfaction with current programme management structure



# Programme management (2)

- With regard to adequacy of financing of NS by education authorities in EU MS, some NS appear to be very well resourced. Others receive minimal financing and rely largely on goodwill
- As EM develops/ new EM Master's Courses come on-stream, workload of NS will increase. Resourcing must be addressed
- Sources of financing for NS post-2008 considered included use of restricted calls for proposals on particular themes and the option of transforming the NS into formal, EU financed agencies
- Becoming full agency structure would mean being subject to EU financial regulation - could make administration overly burdensome
- Support however amongst many NS for idea of thematic restricted calls for proposals



# Quality assurance

- EM Masters Courses are expected to demonstrate academic excellence. But how is this best assessed, defined and monitored?
- Need for appropriate methodological framework to ensure robust quality assurance. Some progress already made, e.g. TEEPII
- Comm. will devote some resources to exploring QA related issues during 2007
- CSES suggested that while self-assessment should remain fundamental basis for QA, some external QA, e.g. of representative sample of courses, desirable
- In proposal for new EM programme, the approach to QA will need to be defined, with a clear delineation of responsibilities for the different institutions involved in EM
- A 'total quality' approach should be adopted so that QA is not seen as a one-off evaluation exercise but rather a continuous process



# Programme outcomes/ impacts (1)

- **Quantitative outcomes** broadly in line with targets. Exception Action 3 (participation by HEIs been lower than expected)
- Impacts difficult to assess at interim evaluation stage

## **Impacts - on achievement of EM programme objectives/ policy aims**

- **Promotion of intercultural understanding** - EM successful in encouraging cultural exchange of experiences (e.g. good distribution of nationalities among third-country scholarship holders). Less successful on those courses which had few EU students
- **Improving accessibility of European higher education:** significant progress through Action 2 scholarships for 3<sup>rd</sup> country students, EU students, much less impact
- **Strengthening and developing more structured cooperation in HE between EU/ third countries** – some progress but a need to promote greater participation in Action 3



## Programme outcomes/ impacts (2)

- **Enhancing the quality, visibility and attractiveness of European higher education** – some progress achieved through Action 4 but perception amongst stakeholders that A4 too fragmented / insufficiently focused
- **Impact on quality.** Case studies identified ex's of high quality courses which appeared to demonstrate academic excellence across range of disciplines. Independent verification through quality assurance system?



# Programme outcomes/ impacts (3)

## Impact on HEI institutions

- Close alignment between EM aims and those of HEIs (attracting international students, reinforcing European/ international dimension, enhancing reputation for academic excellence etc.)
- Has encouraged HEIs to work together more closely with EU/ 3<sup>rd</sup> country partners, also evidence that universities see EM as mechanism for Europeanising / internationalising curricula
- Less impact than expected in terms of development of links with third country HEIs due to lower participation in Action 3
- Positive impact on legal framework in some EU countries where EM has led to actions being taken to ensure that joint, double or multiple degrees involving partners from HEIs in different EU countries can be accredited



# Programme outcomes/ impacts (4)

## **Impact on students:**

- Most students appear to value their participation in the EM programme and on specific EM courses highly
- Students from 3rd countries identified cultural and linguistic benefits as being more important than the benefit to their future career prospects
- The opportunity to travel and experience living and studying in different EU countries was identified as a major benefit by 3<sup>rd</sup> country students
- Some concerns about recognition of qualifications in third countries
- Student perceptions of courses that offered internships were very favourable. Many expressed the view that all EM courses should include a compulsory internship dimension
- The experience of students - academically, culturally and linguistically - much richer in EM courses with a good balance between European and international students

## **Other impacts:**

- Some EM courses closely involved industry in their design. Further effort is needed on part of some EM consortia to maximise the impact of EM on students through closer cooperation with industry / employers



# Sustainability

- Sustainability can be looked at from different perspectives: financial sustainability of EM courses, sustainability of impacts
- 95% of Action 2 survey respondents would not have participated without the scholarship
- Issue around what happens if courses are unsuccessful in applying for funding after the initial 5 year period as an EM-branded course. Would they continue operating? On what basis? Financing?
- The sustainability of EM in terms of impacts could be improved if the programme were continued to PhD level
- Academic excellence would be enhanced if the very best students had the possibility of continuation
- The impacts of EM on various programme aims, such as contributing towards the development of a single European HE sphere, would be greater and more sustainable if there was a better balance between EU and third country students



# Recommendations (1)

1. The Atlantis Programme and other EU-third country cooperation programmes could be combined with EM to strengthen coherence in the EU policy approach to strengthening co-operation in the field of higher education
2. HEIs should be more actively encouraged not only to develop co-operation with HEIs in third countries but to enable institutions to become full partners in courses. One means of achieving this aim would be to combine Actions 1 and 3 together in a single Action.
3. Scholarships should be awarded to EU students to participate in the EM programme on a competitive basis. There is a need to ensure that EU students participate on a more equal footing with their counterparts from third countries
4. The Erasmus Mundus programme should be extended to the PhD level both at the level of courses and in respect of scholarships.



# Recommendations (2)

5. Consideration should be given to providing EM students with placement opportunities on a more systematic basis. This would contribute to raising the profile of the programme among employers (and be regarded as a major selling point to students)
6. NS should continue to be financed largely by the MS in order to avoid a full EU Agency structure at national level
7. The Commission should turn its attention to quality assurance once EM Courses are actually up and running. Self-evaluation should however remain the fundamental starting point for ensuring continuous course quality. A representative sample of courses should be subject to external quality assessment.
8. This could be carried out by external quality assurance bodies with previous experience in assessing both the quality of academic content and the integration of courses.



# Recommendations (3)

9. The comitology principle for Erasmus Mundus scholarships should be discontinued in order to speed up the finalisation of the selection process.
10. Consideration should be given to increasing the finance allocated to EM Masters Consortia to better reflect the actual cost of administering an integrated courses on a cross-border basis
11. The scholarship level for third-country students should remain at the current level of 21,000 euros per year. However, the Commission should continue to monitor scholarship levels of other scholarship schemes, such as the Fulbright, Chevening and DAAD (German Academic Exchange) scholarships



# The evaluation.....more info

- The evaluation has recently been published by DG EAC
- It is available from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/doc/evalreport\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/doc/evalreport_en.pdf)
- Case studies are also available and full survey results
- The Commission's response to our assessment can be obtained from [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/doc/com375\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/doc/com375_en.pdf)
- The evaluation served a very practical purpose. Several of the recommendations have been taken on board in the new programme proposal for 2009-13
- My contacts: [mwhittle@cses.co.uk](mailto:mwhittle@cses.co.uk)



# Case study list

N	Title	Institutions interviewed
1.	Masters Course in Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management (MESPOM)	Lund University, Sweden (coordinator)
2.	International Master of Science in Rural Development (IMRD)	Ghent University, Belgium (coordinator) Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany (partner)
3.	NOHA Mundus – European Master’s Degree in International Humanitarian Aid	Universidad de Deusto, Bilbao, Spain, (coordinator) Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium (partner)
4.	SEFOTECH.nut: European MSc in Food Science, Technology and Nutrition	Catholic University of Applied Science Sint-Lieven, Ghent, Belgium (coordinator)
5.	European Master in Global Studies	University of Leipzig, Germany, (coordinator) London School of Economics, UK (partner)
6.	European Master’s Degree in Higher Education (HEEM)	Higher Education Development Association (HEDDA), University of Oslo, Norway (co-ordinator)
7.	Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation for Environmental Modeling and Management (GEM)	University of Southampton (UK) (partner)
8.	PEHE EACN- Promoting European Higher Education through Educational Advising Centres' Network	Open Society Foundation, Hungary (coordinator)

