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from: Secretary-General of the European Commission,
signed by Mr Jordi AYET PUIGARNAU, Director

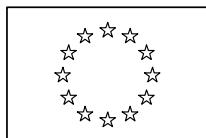
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to: Mr Javier SOLANA, Secretary-General/High Representative

Subject: COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER accompanying document to the
REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL
on the Council Resolution of 23 November 2007 on Modernising Universities
for Europe's competitiveness in a global knowledge economy

Delegations will find attached Commission document SEC(2008) 2719.

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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 30.10.2008
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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER

Accompanying document to the

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL
on the Council Resolution of 23 November 2007 on Modernising Universities for
Europe's competitiveness in a global knowledge economy**

(COM(2008) 680 final)

1. INTRODUCTION

This Commission Staff Working paper accompanies the Report from the Commission to the Council on the Council Resolution of 23 November 2007 on modernising universities for Europe's competitiveness in a global knowledge economy.¹

The Report outlines the work undertaken by the Commission in response to this request and sets out the main conclusions from this work. The present Commission Staff Working Paper outlines the findings from the various studies and ongoing works in greater detail.

The themes covered in this paper are:

- (1) Measures to address the challenges and obstacles that universities in the European Union face in realising their modernisation and in fully contributing to the goals of the Lisbon agenda;
- (2) Mutual learning, undertaken in the context of the Lisbon Agenda, in particular within the Education and Training 2010 work programme and the follow-up of the Green Paper on the ERA, as well as through partnerships between universities and industry/private sector;
- (3) Measures to address the obstacles to the mobility of students, teachers and researchers across Europe and in particular to the mutual recognition of credits and diplomas² and promote the exchange of good practices in this regard;
- (4) Evidence related to questions raised regarding:
 - the social background of students participating in Erasmus,
 - the contribution of Erasmus to the modernisation agenda,
 - the contribution of Erasmus Mundus to the international attractiveness of European Universities

While the Report and the Commission Staff Working Paper focus principally on the mobility aspects of the Council Resolution, they also provide an update of the state of play as regards the modernisation of European universities.

2. ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES OF MODERNISATION

The Council invited the Commission to *"identify, in consultation with the relevant higher education and research stakeholders, as well as national authorities, possible measures to address the*

¹ www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/newsWord/en/intm/97237.doc

² The recognition of professional qualifications of teachers and researchers is already covered by Directive 2005/36/EC of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications. This Directive simplifies modernises and consolidates 15 existing Directives adopted between 1975 and 1999. It had to be implemented in Member States by 20 October 2007.

challenges and obstacles that universities in the European Union face in realising their modernisation and in fully contributing to the goals of the Lisbon agenda."

A series of nine possible measures to address the challenges and obstacles that universities face in the context of modernisation and achieving the goals of the Lisbon agenda were identified by the Commission, in consultation with stakeholders, in the 2006 Communication "Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Education, Research, Innovation".³ The measures which were identified met with general support from stakeholders and Member States, most recently in the Resolution of 23 November 2007. The nine measures, which can be broadly grouped into three main areas – curricular reform, university governance, and funding, addressing the main universities' missions on education, research and innovation - are:

1. Break down the barriers around universities in Europe
2. Ensure real autonomy and accountability for universities
3. Provide incentives for structured partnerships with the business community
4. Provide the right mix of skills and competencies for the labour market
5. Reduce the funding gap and make funding work more effectively in education and research
6. Enhance interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity
7. Activate knowledge through interaction with society
8. Reward excellence at the highest level
9. Make the European higher education area and the European research area more visible and attractive in the world

The challenge now lies in the implementation of these measures. Progress is being made in the Member States and monitored by the Commission through reporting under the Education and Training 2010 process within the Lisbon process, as well as through dedicated studies and surveys⁴ and in the context of national reporting under the Bologna process. The research aspect is addressed in the follow-up of the development of the European Research Area (ERA) in the context of the Commission Recommendation on the management of intellectual property⁵ and the Commission Communication on the partnership for researchers⁶, as they focus on public research organisations, in particular universities, as well as in the part of the Lisbon National Reports dealing with research and innovation.

Curricular Reform

The main determinant of curricular reform in European higher education today is the Bologna Process. It focuses on the introduction of a three cycle system, improved recognition procedures and

³ "Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Education, Research, Innovation," COM(2006) 208

⁴ For an overview of studies and surveys on higher education reform see http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/lisbon_en.html as well as the Eurydice site <http://www.eurydice.org/portal/page/portal/Eurydice>

⁵ "Management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities and Code of Practice for universities and other public research organisations", COM (2008) 1329

⁶ "Better careers and more mobility: A European Partnership for Researchers", COM(2008) 317

trustworthy quality assurance. Biannual reports, prepared by the Bologna Follow-up Group, the European University Association and the European Student Union⁷, with financial support from the Commission, have shown steady, if somewhat uneven, progress across Europe in reaching the reform objectives. Some disciplines find it harder than others to introduce the required structural changes. This is why the Commission in 2006 ordered a study⁸ on the extent and impact of higher education curricular reform across Europe and in particular in four of the more "difficult" disciplines: medicine, teacher training, engineering and law. The study came to the conclusion that a considerable amount of curriculum reform could be observed in the past years, including in the four fields of study mentioned above. Curriculum reform was and is driven by issues on the Bologna agenda, but also reflects particular domestic issues and national interpretations of the shared European agenda. Within the Lisbon agenda for modernising universities, Bologna curricular reforms have been identified as the first priority.

A somewhat unsatisfactory finding of the study was that different countries and disciplines – and, by extension, different institutions and even faculties – seemed to be at different positions in the reform process. Certain aspects of the reform agenda have been interpreted and implemented in very different ways depending on local needs and different starting points. For example, a wide range of two cycle degree structures has emerged, ranging from 3+1 through 3+2 to 4+1, 4+2, 3.5 +1.5 etc. This proves that reforms do not necessarily render systems more convergent, which was one of the original objectives.

In 2006 there still was considerable ambiguity among the players in the fields of study as to whether or not all elements will be fully accomplished by 2010 or at all and also regarding the impact of the reform.

Nevertheless, it is clear that many of the reform elements are being pursued because of their intrinsic or immediate relevance. For example, competence-based learning is pursued genuinely from a belief that this will increase transparency for students and employers and will support attempts to make learning paths more flexible.

Overall, the study showed, notwithstanding some reservations about specific national, historical, disciplinary and institutional contexts, that curricular reform is taking place all across Europe and in all disciplines and that those involved are relatively optimistic about its impacts. The Commission continues to support Member States as well as the non-EU states that take part in the Bologna Process in their efforts to reach a satisfactory level of implementation by 2010.

Governance Reform

A second big area where fundamental changes are needed to free the full potential of European higher education institutions is governance. A study published in 2006 assessed the extent and impact of higher education governance reform across Europe.⁹ The study looked at governance reform at national and institutional level in eight areas: institutional mission and strategy, governance and management structures, development of new study programmes, quality assurance,

⁷ The Stocktaking Reports, the EUA "Trends" reports and "Bologna with Student Eyes", see <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/>

⁸ "The extent and impact of higher education curricular reform across Europe", 2006, Report prepared by CHEPS, CHE, ESMU and NIFU-STEP, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/reports/doc/curricular1_en.pdf

⁹ "The extent and impact of higher education governance reform across Europe", 2006, Report prepared by CHEPS, CHE, ESMU and NIFU-STEP, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/reports/doc/higherextent1_en.pdf

finance and resource allocation, human resource management, student access and selection, and public-private partnerships. The authors stated that, with regard to these eight policy areas, a tendency to enhance institutional autonomy could be observed all over Continental Europe whereas the process towards full autonomy and accountability of higher education institutions had started far earlier and was more advanced in the UK. While the role of the national government was still clearly visible, more policy issues were decided at the institutional level and more powers were attributed to the top management of institutions. Traditional notions of collegiality and consensus-based decision-making have come under pressure, giving way to ‘business-like’ leadership and management, aimed among other things at professionalizing institutional governance and management. Many respondents agreed that current institutional governing structures enhanced the strategic capabilities of the institution and stimulated increased institutional performance. They appreciated the new governance structure because they assigned clear responsibilities and duties, stimulated increased entrepreneurialism and were capable of dealing with future challenges.

Concerning the research aspects, the major trends observed in the analysis¹⁰ of ERAWATCH show that there have been intensive reform activities in universities. Common trends concern: i) increasing scientific autonomy to establish research priorities, ii) promoting excellence in university research teams, iii) fostering collaboration with business and iv) making research careers more attractive.

Although the overall picture regarding ongoing governance schemes was positive, respondents still saw room for improvement: they would have valued more openness, effectiveness and, to a lesser extent, greater accountability and more participation of staff and students in decision-making. The study concluded by underlining that there seems to be an increasing interest in reform per se. Hence, quite recent reforms seem to be followed by new reforms expanding or relating to past reforms. The result is that one can observe a broadening of the scope of reform and a speeding up of the reform tempo in most countries.

In fact the pace and scope of the reforms varies across European countries, resulting in a diverse university landscape. Real autonomy and accountability cannot be effectively implemented without adapting governance systems.

Funding Reform

A third area of reform regards the financial aspects of higher education. The annual report of the Commission on progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training gives a detailed analysis of the present situation.¹¹

Rising participation rates and hence a growing number of students in tertiary education and the goal of a higher quality of institutions imply a need for a proper funding of higher education. The Commission has proposed the goal of investing 2% of GDP (current level: 1.3% from all sources) in higher education (public and private combined). It is also worth recalling the Barcelona target of 3% of GDP for the global investment in R&D.

Table 1 shows *public and private* expenditure on tertiary education institutions as a percentage of GDP in 2004 (for all activities, including both education and research). Total *public* investment in higher education in 2004 was around 1.13% of GDP in EU-27. In Denmark, Sweden and Finland total public spending alone already surpasses the goal proposed by the Commission of investing 2%

¹⁰ ERAWATCH Reports: Activities of EU member states with regard to the reform of the public research base

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/progress08/report_en.pdf

of GDP (from all sources) in higher education. On the other hand the share is below 0.8% in Italy, Latvia, Malta and Romania.

Spending on higher education is more strongly affected by participation rates than compulsory education (where all pupils of a cohort participate in education, while in tertiary education there are strong differences in the shares of young people participating). Still, the overall situation in the European Union doesn't look bad: public spending for the tertiary sector rose by 7.6% from 2001 (1.05% of GDP) to 2004 (1.13% of GDP). The GDP grew by 5.1% in this period, so that the spending on the tertiary sector rose by 13.1% in real terms. Student figures, on the other hand, increased from 16.5 million in 2001 to 18.2 million in 2004, which represents an increase by 10.4%. Public spending per student therefore increased in real terms by 2.4%.¹²

Public investment accounts for more than 85% of the amount spent on tertiary education institutions in Europe. Cyprus and Latvia are the two EU-27 countries with the highest relative contribution from private sources: up to 60% of the amount invested in higher education institutions there comes from private sources. Conversely, in Denmark, Greece, Malta and Finland higher education institutions are almost entirely funded by public resources.

¹² Figures taken from Eurostat.

Table 1: Public, private and total expenditure on tertiary education as a percentage of GDP (2001, 2004)

Country	Public		Of which direct public spending	Of which on R&D In % of direct spending	Private payments to educational institutions	Household payments	Total private	Total private plus direct public
	2001	2004						
EU-27	1.05	1.13	0.95		0.23	0.11	0.35	1.30
Belgium	1.34	1.29	1.09	30.1	0.12	0.17	0.28	1.37
Bulgaria	0.82	0.81	0.72	3.0	0.51	0.26	0.77	1.49
Czech Republic	0.79	0.95	0.89	17.5	0.16	0.11	0.26	1.15
Denmark	2.71	2.53	1.75	26.1	0.06	0.76	0.82	2.57
Germany	1.10	1.16	0.95	36.2	0.15	0.05	0.19	1.14
Estonia	1.03	0.88	0.87	0	:	:	:	:
Ireland	1.22	1.11	0.94	29.7	0.20	:	:	0.94
Greece	1.17	1.46	1.26	17.9	0.03	0.05	0.08	1.34
Spain	0.97	0.97	0.90	:	0.29	:	:	1.19
France	0.99	1.21	1.12	34.5	0.21	0.08	0.29	1.41
Italy	0.80	0.78	0.65	55.8	0.28	0.14	0.42	1.07
Cyprus	1.14	1.48	1.09	12.5	1.19	0.14	1.33	2.42
Latvia	0.89	0.68	0.58	20.5	0.67	0.40	1.07	1.65
Lithuania	1.34	1.06	0.88	:	0.46	:	:	1.38
Luxembourg	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Hungary	1.08	1.02	0.86	20.5	0.23	:	:	1.09
Malta	0.88	0.55	0.23	0.0	0.02	:	:	0.25
Netherlands	1.27	1.35	0.98	35.1	0.29	0.07	0.35	1.33
Austria	1.35	1.42	1.14	33.4	0.08	:	:	1.22
Poland	1.04	1.15	1.13	15.8	0.42	0.06	0.48	1.61
Portugal	1.03	0.84	0.79	:	0.13	:	:	0.92
Romania	0.79	0.70	0.65	:	:	:	:	:
Slovenia	1.45	1.35	1.01	15.3	0.33	:	:	1.34
Slovakia	0.82	0.99	0.88	9.7	0.20	0.27	0.48	1.08
Finland	1.99	2.07	1.71	33.4	0.07	:	:	1.78
Sweden	2.03	2.09	1.47	43.4	0.19	:	:	1.66
UK	0.81	1.02	0.77	17.8	0.33	0.17	0.50	1.27
Croatia	:	0.82	0.78	:	:	:	:	:

FYR Macedonia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Turkey	1.17	:	0.91	:	0.10	:	:	:
Iceland	1.08	1.41	1.08	:	0.11	:	:	1.19
Norway	1.85	2.43	1.42	26.4	:	:	:	:
United States	1.48	1.32	0.54	:	1.91	:	:	2.45
Japan	0.55	0.65	1.05	:	0.76	0.04	0.80	1.85

Source: Eurostat (UOE data collection). Spending on the tertiary level includes R&D spending at universities.

Additional notes:

Direct public expenditure does not include transfers to private entities. If public and private spending are added up, it is preferable to use direct public expenditure (instead of total expenditure) to avoid double-counting.

For more country specific notes see: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=0.1136184.0_45572595&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

While public investment in tertiary-level education in EU-27 is only slightly below the level in the USA it is nearly twice as high as in Japan. However, private investment in higher education is much higher in both the USA and Japan. As a result, total investment on higher education institutions in Europe (for all activities, including both education and research) is far below the level in the United States.

A study carried out in 2006 concentrated on rates of return and funding models in higher education in Europe.¹³ It showed that higher education can be a profitable investment opportunity for individuals compared to other private investment opportunities, as well as for societies at large compared to social opportunity costs. The analysis of existing evidence about rates of return reveals some basic patterns:

The returns to education are higher in less developed countries than in highly industrialised countries, as a result of the relative scarcity of human capital in poorer countries. The private returns exceed the social returns.

The returns to higher education have risen most rapidly in the most dynamic economies in recent years – reflecting the increased demand for educated manpower to complement advances in technology. There exists a wide differentiation of the returns between disciplines, depending on the relative demand and supply for graduates in a given field.

The returns to education have implications regarding equity. It is well known that students from a privileged socioeconomic background stand much better chances of entering higher education. In addition, there is some, albeit limited, evidence showing that they also obtain higher returns than students from more modest backgrounds. The study therefore underlines that improving equity through higher education will require targeted investment at earlier educational stages as well as mentoring and counselling throughout the whole school cycle in order to facilitate students from more modest socioeconomic backgrounds, firstly, to enrol and complete higher education, and, secondly, to succeed later in the labour market.

¹³ "Funding Reform: Rates of return and funding models in Europe", 2007, Report prepared by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education Management (CEGES), see http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/reports/doc/funding_en.pdf

The need for extra resources, as well as the finding that private returns from higher education are often higher than the social returns, suggests that European universities take a closer look at how to increase and diversify their competitive funding from either public or private funds through three main sources:

Tuition Fees. Establishing or increasing tuition fees is a topic currently being debated in many countries. Charging or increasing tuition fees, however, has proved to be very difficult from a political standpoint since it challenges many of the fundamental precepts of egalitarianism and could raise conflicts with students. On the other hand, the different levels of taxation in European countries require different approaches to this question and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Governments need to make sure within their national contexts to provide an efficient and equitable mix of student fees on the one hand, grants and loans schemes on the other.

Research and Service Contracts. Another funding source for European higher education institutions has been sought through participation in competitive research programmes either public or private as well as through privately contracted research and related services from industry. These activities seem to be on the rise in all countries. The incorporation of private research and contracts is nevertheless slowed by many of the traditional legal and structural factors of highly state centralised university systems.

Fund raising. A third opportunity for universities to raise private funds comes from support from foundations, trusts, charities, individuals and corporate donors. A growing number of universities is seeking to raise funds from philanthropic sources. However, even if some of them have been quite successful in this, more still needs to be done to boost philanthropic funding of universities.

Most Member States are presently experimenting with these different tools. The major trends indicate a change in the funding models using performance agreements. Most countries have a dual funding system: "block grants" covering teaching and research activities, based on fixed criteria, and "competitive funding" mainly for research specific projects and programmes. The increase of competitive funding is a clear policy trend. Performance agreements linking funding to outcomes are also increasing.

The Commission monitors their efforts and experiences closely through the reporting tools of the Lisbon Strategy and in particular the Annual Progress reports.

3. FACILITATING MUTUAL LEARNING

- (5) The Council invited the Commission to *"facilitate mutual learning, in the context of the Lisbon Agenda, in particular within the Education and Training 2010 work programme and the follow-up of the Green Paper on the ERA as well as through encouraging partnerships between universities and industry/private sector"*.

The Commission has taken several initiatives to facilitate mutual learning and apply the 'Open Method of Coordination' (OMC) in the area of higher education reform.

One important instrument is the Annual Report on progress towards the Lisbon objectives for education and training. It analyses national performances with regard to a number of indicators and benchmarks. The higher education chapter in the 2008 edition reports on the quality of higher education institutions, international university rankings, investment in higher education (see section

above on funding), numbers of graduates in general and in mathematics, science and technology in particular, and student mobility.¹⁴

A second important instrument is the Cluster on Modernisation of Higher Education. It was set up in 2006 under the remit of the OMC in Education and Training policy. Clusters regroup high level officials from interested countries around a specific theme, corresponding to their national policy priorities, and on which they have expressed a desire to learn from other interested countries, or to share with others their successful or unsuccessful experiences.

Twenty governments are currently participating in the Modernising Higher Education Cluster, together with social partners. Among its activities, the Cluster identifies a limited number of areas where a "Peer-Learning Activity (PLA)" hosted by one country provides an opportunity for a targeted, in-depth look into a specific policy aspect, falling within the scope of the three main areas of HE reform as identified by the Commission: curricula, funding and governance. Since its inception the Cluster has met 15 times, including 7 times in 'PLA' sessions. Themes covered in peer learning to date include:

- Planning and Implementing Curricular Innovation: Structure, Content and Incentives
- University-business partnerships
- Using financial instruments for steering system performance
- Implementing EQF/NQF in Higher Education
- Circling the Knowledge Triangle from the perspective of Education: the added value in better connecting Higher Education to Research and Innovation

The next Peer Learning Activity will concentrate on "Ways to Increase Mobility: Funding Models Examined".

One other key output of the Modernising Higher Education Cluster is the Compendium of Good Practices in Modernising Higher Education which to date groups together examples of good practice from 11 countries. The Compendium of Good Practices has been prepared in an online format which can be accessed via the Internet at www.kslll.net.

With the Green Paper on the European Research Area (ERA), the European Commission launched a broad institutional and public debate on what should be done to create a unified and attractive European Research Area, which would fulfil the needs and expectations of the scientific community, business and citizens. As a follow-up of the Green Paper, the European Commission (DG RTD) decided to set up 6 expert groups (one per axis of the Green Paper).

Two of these expert groups, the ones on "Realising a single labour market for researchers" and on "Strengthening research institutions with a focus on university-based research" are closely related with the Council Resolution of November 2007. In the follow-up of the ERA Green Paper and of the Council Resolution two additional expert groups on "Diversified funding streams for University-based research: impact of external research funding on financial management in universities" and "Assessment of University-based research" have recently been launched.

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/progress08/report_en.pdf

The Expert Group *Realising a single labour market for researchers* presented a report¹⁵ in which it suggested four cornerstones to ensure more attractive careers for researchers and to progressively eliminate the obstacles hampering their mobility. These cornerstones concern recruitment procedures and career progression, geographical, sector, disciplinary and demographic mobility; researcher-friendly social security and pension systems and the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for their recruitment. The report reflects very well the state-of-play of researchers' mobility today together with their future challenges.

It has also contributed to the elaboration of the Communication of the European Commission *Better Careers and More Mobility: A European Partnership for Researchers*⁴ which was adopted in May 2008. It is proposed to develop a partnership with Member States to address the remaining obstacles to substantially improve the mobility and scientific career of researchers., especially on four key areas: i) open recruitment and portability of grants, ii) social security and supplementary pensions rights, iii) attractive employment and working conditions and iv) enhancing the training, skills and experience of European researchers.

To promote exchange of experiences on the reform of University-based research, a Working Group with representatives from Member States on "mutual learning on approaches to improve the excellence of research in universities" was set up within the OMC to research policies under the supervision of the Scientific and Technical Research Committee of the European Union.

Furthermore, a number of initiatives (expansion of the CHE ranking, CHEPS classification, expert group on "Assessment of University-based research", a study on data collection on European universities) is receiving support from the Commission. The objectives are to develop more robust and reliable methods for the classification and performance assessment of universities covering their different missions.

The European Commission is intensifying its efforts to promote the mobility and career development of researchers and thereby establish Europe as a leading area of excellence in scientific research. The objective of the new portal EURAXESS¹⁶ is to provide a single access point to information and support services which assist researchers and their families in moving to and pursuing careers in another Member State. This goes hand in hand with the newly adopted Partnership for Researchers between the European Commission and the Member States which aims to improve careers development and mobility of researchers.

Encouraging partnerships between universities and industry/private sector

As an integral part of their public mission and overall social and cultural remit, European universities should increasingly become significant players in the economy, able to respond better and faster to the demands of the market and to develop strategic partnerships with the business community.

This is why, in March 2007, the Commission raised the idea to launch a European Forum on cooperation between higher education institutions and business ("University-Business Cooperation").¹⁷ During a seminar organised in Brussels in July 2007 involving several stakeholders from the academic and economic world, all participants welcomed and supported the

¹⁵ "Realising a single labour market for researchers",
see: http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/era_green_paper_eg1_lowres.pdf

¹⁶ www.ec.europa.eu/euraxess

¹⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/business/>

establishment of the forum. By offering a platform for the exchange of best practice and for the identification of innovative solutions the Commission facilitates the dialogue between higher education institutions and the business community and contributes towards the achievement of more effective and efficient education systems in Europe.

The first plenary University - Business Forum took place in February 2008 in Brussels. It addressed the following topics:

- Curricular development, and how it can lead to greater employability and an entrepreneurial mindset among graduates;
- Continuing education, and how to explore and improve cooperation between universities and companies in the provision of training/retraining programmes;
- Modernisation of governance structures within universities;
- Development of mobility, including student mobility, but also mobility of researchers and teaching staff, between academia and businesses, and vice versa.

As a follow-up to the February conference, it was decided to organise thematic forums to explore in more detail topics that are relevant for the modernisation of Higher Education in Europe and more particularly in the context of University-Business Cooperation.

The first thematic Forum was organised on 30 June 2008 in Brussels, focussing on 'Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning'. It dealt with issues related to the current and potential role of Universities as actors in the field of lifelong learning and it also discussed the forth-coming Charter on Lifelong Learning for Universities, which is being elaborated by the European University Association (EUA). Given the very positive response, the Commission is planning to continue to organise regular meetings of the University Business Forum.

Two further thematic Forums will take place in Autumn 2008, one dealing with "Curriculum development and entrepreneurship" and the other focussing on the improvement of knowledge transfer between universities and the private sector, taking up the Commission's Recommendation on the management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities. A second plenary University Business Forum meeting is planned for February 2009.

The Commission intends to publish a Communication on the future of this dialogue in June 2009, including main aspects of university – business cooperation and partnership in education, research and innovation, including knowledge transfer.

In addition to the University-Business Forum, the Commission had previously acknowledged the need for creating such opportunities for dialogue, exchange of best practice and opportunities for training and transfer of knowledge through specific Marie Curie Actions in FP7 (2006-2013), in particular the two actions Industry Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP) and Initial Training Networks (ITN). The Marie Curie Industry Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP) action is directly aimed at breaking down real and perceived barriers to mobility between universities and the private sector and creating the bridges to enable intersectoral dialogue. The Initial Training Networks (ITN) action is aimed at providing postgraduate training in an international environment, often leading to a PhD qualification. Therefore both actions have a key role to play in promoting university/enterprise exchange.

4. ADDRESSING THE OBSTACLES TO MOBILITY

The Council invited the Commission to *"identify possible measures to address the obstacles to the mobility of students, teachers and researchers across Europe and in particular to the mutual recognition of credits and diplomas and promote the exchange of good practices in this regard"*.

The Commission has been addressing the question whether the structural changes induced by the Bologna Process hamper mobility rather than advance it. The limited data available seem to suggest that the introduction of three cycle structures represents a phase of transition, requiring certain curricular adjustments to allow for mobility also within Bachelor and Master programmes that are shorter and often more compact than the previous long one-tier programmes. Also the new opportunities for vertical (or degree) mobility that the Bologna Process offers – doing a Bachelor degree in one country and a Master degree in another – are only gradually taken up. These different factors may lead to a temporary stagnation or reduction of student mobility during a phase of adaptation but there is no evidence to suggest that the Bologna structures do in principle pose an obstacle to mobility. The results of a study on transnational mobility currently under preparation by the German national agency for the Erasmus programme are expected for November 2008 and will shed additional light on this issue.¹⁸

To have a wider vision of the future of mobility in the context of Lifelong Learning, the Commission established in December 2007 a High Level Expert Forum on Mobility. In July 2008 it presented its findings and recommendations.¹⁹ The following paragraphs are based on this document.

The well-known obstacles to mobility are: lack of opportunities and information, language barriers, recognition problems, insufficient funding, and the non-portability of grants, loans, insurance, health and other social benefits. The Forum recommended setting goals for the medium and long term.

The long term target is for mobility to become the rule and no longer the exception. This requires that all study programmes will have to contain a 'window for mobility'.

The medium term mobility target for higher education could be 15% of graduates (650,000 individuals) by 2015 and, in the longer term, should aim to provide mobility opportunities to 50% of students by 2020. Such a European target could be broken down into targets for Member States, regions and institutions. Similar targets could be set for mobility of researchers in Europe to be achieved through the Marie Curie actions and national programmes.

This vision will not be realised unless there is a substantial and concerted action to make it happen. There is need for a new European partnership to promote learning and research mobility, involving the active engagement of the EU, Member States and regions, enterprises, educational institutions, civil society and young people themselves. National and EU legislative efforts should focus on enabling portability of pensions and other social benefits. Special attention should be given to the quality of the mobility arrangements and the recognition of the learning outcomes achieved, including research skills (ECTS, Diploma Supplement, Bologna, EQF, ENIC-NARIC).

To reach these ambitious goals and targets, the report presents a package of urgent reform of the present mobility programmes – Erasmus, Leonardo, Comenius, Grundtvig, Marie Curie - to

¹⁸ German Academic Exchange Service DAAD, see www.daad.de

¹⁹ *"Making learning mobility an opportunity for all"*,
http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/2008/mobilityreport_en.pdf

simplify procedures and to engage actors in education institutions, in business and among local and regional authorities.

One central element of this strategy is to expand the opportunities to learn a second and third European language. This will require better language teaching within all parts of the education and training system, and a stronger focus on languages in the preparation of mobility moves.

The primary mechanism for the expansion of higher education mobility will be the Erasmus programme, which should be greatly enlarged, so that it can offer opportunities and be attractive to a vastly increased share of the student population.

The Forum has proposed that the future Erasmus should also include a "vertical" mobility initiative aimed at allowing Europe's best students to access the world's best higher education and at allowing Europe's universities to attract the best global students. This should build on the Erasmus Mundus II programme, albeit greatly expanded to offer a greatly increased number of opportunities to both European and non-European students. It should invite proposals from consortia to put together new high level courses - joint or double degrees, where appropriate within input from business partners - for which the programme would then allocate scholarship funding, offered to the best EU and non-EU applicants. In this way, the structuring impact of the initiative - on the quality of education offered, on the formation of partnerships between institutions - would be maximised. By 2020, the "vertical" and globally open Erasmus Mundus initiative should account for 10% of student mobility moves.

The Forum would like to see an increase of the volume of mobility under the Marie Curie actions and a much stronger linkage to ensure that Erasmus and its suggested new vertical strand can integrate effectively with these actions. According to the report by 2020, Marie Curie and other actions for mobility of researchers should support targeted mobility by 50% of the researcher population. Mobility should be a criterion for career advancement in higher education.

Erasmus placements, between university and business, should also be increased as part of the overall expansion of mobility opportunities. The Forum considers it crucial to seek out and build networks of enterprises which are capable and willing to act as hosts to Erasmus students. This promotional exercise should be undertaken jointly with the effort to enlist businesses to host Leonardo trainees and young entrepreneurs under the planned pilot scheme. Universities should be incentivised to include businesses as Erasmus partners.

Finally, to overcome mobility obstacles, the Report underlines the need to exploit to the full the potential created by the Bologna process to promote networking between universities, leading to the delivery of more joint and double degrees. ECTS needs to be implemented in full and the Diploma Supplement should be used to ensure transparent academic recognition of the mobility experience. To support the further implementation of both ECTS and the Diploma Supplement the Commission has decided to relaunch the ECTS and DS labels, with the first deadline for applications in January 2009.

5. THE IMPACT OF ERASMUS AND ERASMUS MUNDUS

5.1. Social background of students participating in Erasmus

The Commission has for many years monitored the socioeconomic impact of the Erasmus programme, in order to address existing barriers and make the programme accessible to all students. The last large scale survey of the Socio-Economic Background of Erasmus Students was published

in 2006²⁰. This chapter draws on this study and also uses findings from the new Eurostudent survey²¹ and the Erasmus Student Network survey 2007²².

Parental education

There seems to be no clear correlation between parents' educational attainment and mobility with regard to Erasmus students. The ESN survey 2007 surveyed approx. 8000 students, of which 78.4% were Erasmus students, 11% students who had studied abroad but not through the Erasmus programme and 10.6% non-mobile students. Among Erasmus students and non-mobile students, there were more families in which none of their parents had a higher education degree (38.9% and 39.4% respectively), compared to non-Erasmus students (34%). In conclusion, it seems that Erasmus programme participants are more or less representative of the student population and do not come from a more privileged background than other students.

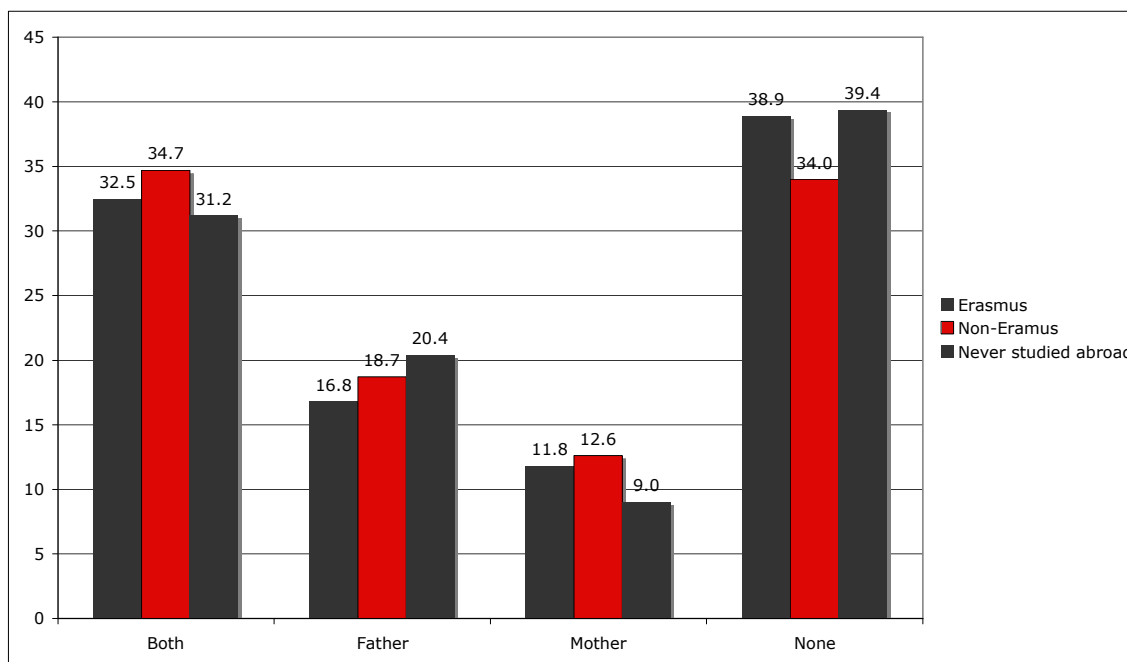
²⁰ Manuel Souto Otero and Andrew McCoshan, Survey of the Socio-Economic Background of ERAMUS Students, Final report, DG EAC 01/05, 2006

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/erasmus/doc/survey06.pdf>

²¹ The Eurostudent 2008 study provides comparable data from over 20 European countries on the socio-economic background and living conditions of students. See www.eurostudent.eu

²² Veerle Boomans, Seweryn Krupnik, Ewa Krzaklewska, Sara Lanzilotta, Generation Mobility. Results of ESNSurvey '07, <http://www.esn.org/survey2007>

Figure 1: Parents' educational attainment (in %) (n=7921)



Source: Generation Mobility. Results of ESN Survey '07

Income status of parents

According to the ESN Survey 2007, 32.7% of Erasmus students reported that their family's income was above the country's average, while 57.7% said it was around the country's average (see Figure 3).²³ The Erasmus respondents who described their family financial situation as being below their country average (9.6%) represented a higher percentage than non-Erasmus students (8.4%) or students who had never studied abroad (7.5%). This finding seems to indicate that Erasmus allows students from less affluent families to study abroad, and is in line with the finding of the 2006 Survey of the socio-economic background of Erasmus students that there has been some progress in attracting people from less well-off backgrounds to the Erasmus programme in the five years from 2000 to 2005.²⁴

Income status of parents and economic situation of Erasmus students

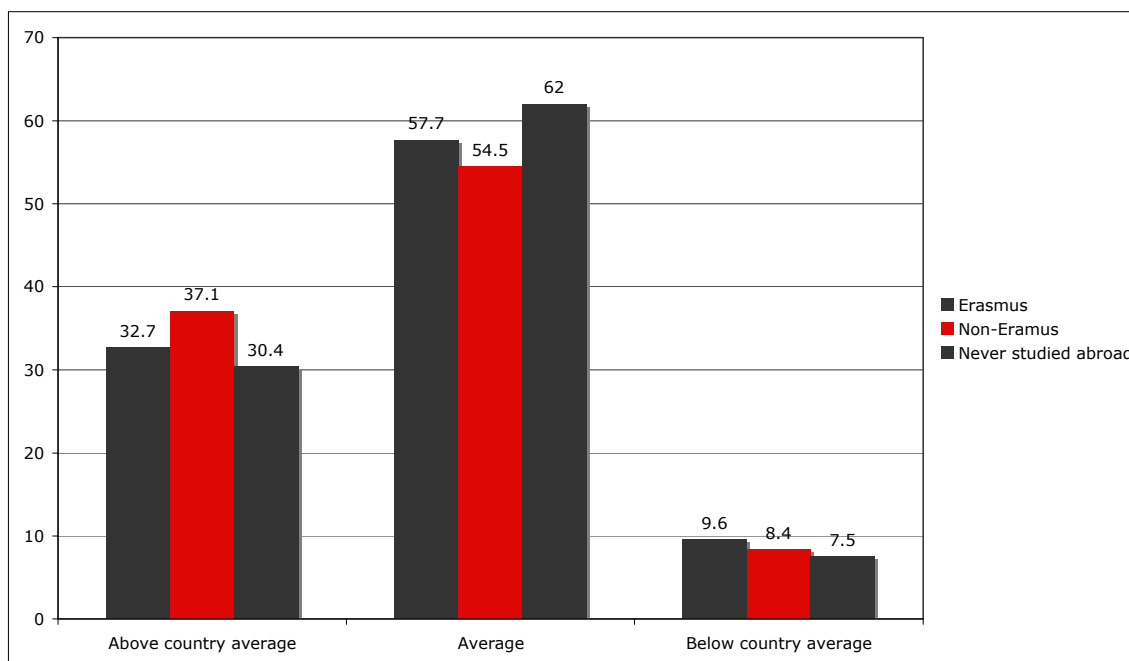
However, there is a clear relationship between the economic situation of parents and the financial situation of students during their Erasmus period. Students from considerably lower than average income families are overrepresented amongst the students who considered their financial situation poor during their Erasmus period, whereas students from families with considerably higher than average incomes were considerably overrepresented amongst the students who considered their financial situation very good during their Erasmus period. The income status of parents also affects the views of students as to whether the Erasmus grant is sufficient, with over 60% of students from average or below average income households reporting the Erasmus grant to be insufficient, against

²³ Veerle Boomans, Seweryn Krupnik, Ewa Krzaklewska, Sara Lanzilotta, Generation Mobility. Results of ESN Survey '07, 2008

²⁴ Manuel Souto Otero and Andrew McCoshan, Survey of the Socio-Economic Background of ERAMUS Students, Final report, p. iv

only 40% of students from households with an income considerably higher than average holding the same view (total sample 55%).

Figure 2: Family income of Erasmus students, mobile non-Erasmus students and non-mobile students (in %) (n=7879)



Source: Generation Mobility. Results of ESN Survey '07

Further removing socio-economic barriers

The Erasmus programme seems to draw participants from the whole student population, irrespective of parents' educational background, and seems to give students from less well-off families the opportunity to study abroad. However, these students appear to be worse off during their Erasmus semester than students from better-off families. Hence, it might be worthwhile taking students' economic background into account when awarding grants. Some Member States and regions offer supplements to the Erasmus grant linked to the income situation of the student. Their impact on the socio-economic balance within Erasmus should be studied.

The organisational support for mobility provided through mobility programmes is important but it may be worth pointing out that the share of free-movers is rather high. As Eurostudent 2008 reports, well over half of all mobile students in the Czech Republic, Turkey, Sweden, the Slovak Republic and Norway are not part of a programme and the share of free-movers is below 30% in only two countries.

5.2. The contribution of ERASMUS to the modernisation agenda

The Erasmus programme, launched in 1987, supports student and staff mobility, multilateral projects (including curriculum development), pilot projects and thematic networks. This section of the Paper looks at the impact of the Erasmus programme on the modernisation agenda of universities, as regards internationalisation, curricular innovation, and quality assurance. It also looks at the links between the Bologna process and the Lisbon Strategy.

The impact of different Erasmus actions and tools on higher education institutions

A new study entitled "Impact of Erasmus on European Higher Education: quality, openness and internationalisation study"²⁵ evaluates how the Erasmus programme has contributed to achieving the European objectives regarding teaching, research and openness to society both at the system level (national and supranational levels) and at institutional level (central management, departments). It assesses how Erasmus has stimulated quality improvement in various core activity areas such as student services, modernisation and internationalisation of higher education institutions' operations, professionalization of cooperation and integrating the European dimension in higher education.

The study shows that, regarding the influence of Erasmus actions and tools at institutional level, Erasmus coordinators indicate outgoing student mobility as the most important Erasmus element, followed by incoming student mobility, ECTS and Learning agreements. Tools such as staff mobility, the Diploma Supplement and the Erasmus Policy Statement are considered to be somewhat less important.

On the other hand the centralised Erasmus actions, i.e. curriculum development, networks, university-business cooperation, virtual campuses, initiatives to modernise higher education, are rated as clearly less important. There is a difference, however, between the institutional leadership and the programme coordinators: institutional leaders consider Erasmus funded curriculum development projects almost twice as often as (very) important than central Erasmus coordinators.

The study confirms earlier findings that the participation in Erasmus has often led to the development of an institutional strategy to internationalise curricula in all subject fields. Many respondents stated that Erasmus-funded activities and tools such as Thematic Networks, joint degree programmes and ECTS have triggered the modernisation and internationalisation of their study programmes. This applies both to the revision of existing programmes and the setting up of new ones at all levels, from undergraduate to PhD. ECTS is reported to have been extremely influential in increasing the transparency and transferability of study results in many universities.

One important example for the impact of Erasmus on curricular reform is the "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" project which provides reference points for bachelor, master's and doctoral programmes in a series of disciplines. The project has expanded to the Southern Balkans and Eastern Europe (Tempus) as well as to Latin-America (Alfa). The Tuning approach helps to implement the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) and is expected to contribute to the New Skills for New Jobs initiative which has been requested by the European Council in March 2008.²⁶

The Impact Study on Erasmus shows that institutions in the new Member States give on average higher ratings to Erasmus actions and tools than older Member States. Over half of the institutions provide supplementary funds for outgoing student and staff mobility. Experiences from Erasmus funded projects are generally widely used in the institutions. Also feedback from Erasmus participants is widely used, also at central management level, particularly in new member states.

²⁵ Impact of ERASMUS on European Higher Education: quality, openness and internationalisation - preliminary conclusions. August 2008, CHEPS, INCHER-Kassel and ECOTEC

²⁶ Presidency Conclusions of the Brussels European Council (13/14 March 2008): "In view of increasing skills shortages, in a number of sectors, it invites the Commission to present a comprehensive assessment of the future skills requirements in Europe up to 2020, taking account of the impact of technological change and ageing populations and to propose steps to anticipate future needs"
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/99410.pdf

Improving institutional quality

The influence of Erasmus on institutional quality was another aspect studied. With regard to teaching and learning, most progress is made in the areas of teaching students soft skills, modernising curricula, mandatory foreign language requirements and internationalisation. The introduction of joint degrees has seen least progress. One third reported little progress in internationalising their curricula.

Quality assurance is high on the agenda of most institutions, just like transparency and transferability of qualifications and modernisation of learning infrastructure. Erasmus has either directly triggered initiatives in these areas or been highly supportive. Also student and graduate surveys to measure study satisfaction have become important, often thanks to Erasmus.

A lot of progress was made in the area of student services. Erasmus has been a major factor behind the introduction of counselling for mobile students and staff, providing non-academic support to incoming students, and increasing easily accessible information for international students, often provided in English.

Mobility is still increasing, strongly supported and triggered by Erasmus, both for student and staff mobility. But also international institutional networks, participation in international projects, conference attendance and cooperation with businesses are increasingly important, with Erasmus playing a strong role.

Erasmus and internationalisation

Erasmus has played a very important role in institutional internationalisation strategies and international visibility. More than half of the institutions have developed such activities because of Erasmus. Institutional leadership is even more positive than the central Erasmus coordinators. 22% of the former also indicated that Erasmus initiated a process to diversify institutional funding.

Institutional Expectations regarding Erasmus

Regarding expectations and recommendations, most respondents (70%-75%) indicate that the impact of Erasmus will increase even further in their institutions in the future. Only a very limited number expect the impact of Erasmus to decrease (3%-5%). The expectations with regard to a broader impact of internationalisation activities are even stronger. Internationalisation is seen as one of the key drivers for change.

For the future, (new) Erasmus actions in the field of university-business cooperation, such as student placements in enterprises abroad or staff training in enterprises, are considered highly important.

The study suggests that ways in which Erasmus could be improved in the future include increased funding for mobility and language training. On the other hand, formal administrative and reporting requirements should be reduced. Official forms should be simplified, remain unchanged over a period of several years and be standardized for the whole higher education sector.

Many respondents also identified issues to be changed within their own institutions in order to improve the impact of Erasmus. These included language training, recognition, networking, internationalization and harmonization of curricula structures. Finally there is a call for other resources, e.g. from private sources, to underpin internationalization and mobility.

Erasmus and research

Erasmus has impacted not only teaching, but also on research activities, mainly through staff mobility programmes but also other Erasmus activities that help to create international contacts. Firstly, Erasmus contacts have helped universities to benchmark themselves with regard to other institutions and to learn from quality standards elsewhere. Secondly, the contacts that academics establish with their international colleagues often lead to joint research projects and publication activities in the future. The identification of potential new research areas is mentioned as one benefit. As many universities aim to become globally renowned centres of research, international collaboration is seen as vital to reach this objective.

Erasmus and European cooperation in quality assurance

Both internal and external quality assurance in higher education have seen an unprecedented growth over the last years, and Erasmus contributed strongly to this development. Erasmus Pilot projects organised in the 1990's helped to underpin the 1998 Council Recommendation on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education. This Recommendation defined the features of external quality reviews and led to the creation of the European Network (Association) for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in 2000.

Internal benchmarking and external reviews have increased spectacularly in the years following the 1998 Recommendation. Of particular importance was the fact that the Bologna Declaration of 1999 identified quality assurance as one of the pillars of the European Higher Education Area.

At the request of the Bologna Ministers, ENQA cooperated with the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European Students' Union (ESU) in the establishment of Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and the European Quality Assurance Register for higher education (EQAR), which were endorsed by both the Bologna Ministers and by the EU Parliament and Council. EQAR was officially launched in March 2008 and quality assurance agencies have now been invited to apply for inclusion in the Register. The first deadline for handing in applications is 3 October 2008. All these activities in quality assurance have benefitted from Erasmus grant support.

The Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy

The Erasmus activities described above are an integral part of both the Bologna Process towards a European Higher Education Area. They also contribute to achieving the educational objectives of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

The Bologna Process, launched in 1999, identified a series of Action Lines directly inspired by the Erasmus programme: student and staff mobility, quality assurance, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), Diploma Supplement, double and joint degrees. Subsequently, the Bologna process helped to amplify the impact of Erasmus tools such as ECTS and make them accessible to all students. The Commission plays an active role in the governance of the Bologna Process and supports its activities with the help of Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus and Eurydice.

The Lisbon Strategy, launched in 2000, identified the Bologna Action Lines as part of the EU Modernisation Agenda for Universities. In addition, the Lisbon Strategy also calls on governments and universities to modernise their systems of funding and governance and this call is backed up with Erasmus grant support. The two reform processes and the Erasmus programme are therefore complementary and mutually supportive.

A new emphasis is expected on transparency of university missions and performances. The Erasmus programme supports pilot projects to test the feasibility of European systems of classification and ranking, which would do justice to the variety of universities missions as regards education, research, internationalisation and community outreach.

DG Research, the Education and Culture DG and EUROSTAT will examine, in close cooperation with stakeholders and National Statistical Offices, the feasibility of a sustainable data collection on higher education institutions. Erasmus supported projects will also contribute to the OECD project to examine the feasibility of a systematic Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO).

The overall impact of Erasmus

Criticism of Erasmus seems to be quite marginal. Administrative burden, difficulties in terms of recognition or periods abroad and low levels of language proficiency are most frequently mentioned. The 2008 Impact study²⁷ found that about 20% of the people in charge of handling Erasmus in the higher education institutions consider the costs of participating in Erasmus too high in terms of administrative, financial and human resources.

With regard to centralised actions of the Erasmus programmes, one third of the respondents indicate the administrative burden is too heavy. Respondents indicate no further conflicts between Erasmus activities and those developed with relation to third country mobility, cooperation, teaching and research.

Altogether, the Impact study shows that Erasmus has been very valuable to the development of higher education in Europe, not only in terms of its primary functions in teaching, learning and research, but also in areas such as institutional and organisational modernisation, internationalisation and development of student services. The Commission will respond to the criticism regarding the administrative aspects of the programme.

5.3. The contribution of Erasmus Mundus to the international attractiveness of European Universities

Erasmus Mundus (EM) is a co-operation and mobility programme in the field of higher education intended to improve the quality of higher education and promote intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries. It provides a response to the challenges of internationalisation faced by European higher education. The programme consists of four main Actions:

- Action 1: Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses, comprising integrated courses at masters' level offered by at least three universities in three different European countries
- Action 2: Erasmus Mundus scholarships for students and scholars from third countries
- Action 3: Partnerships with higher education institutions in third countries, comprising scholarships for students and scholars from EU countries for mobility towards third countries
- Action 4: Projects to enhance the worldwide attractiveness of European higher education

²⁷ Impact of ERASMUS on European Higher Education: quality, openness and internationalisation - preliminary conclusions. August 2008, CHEPS, INCHER-Kassel and ECOTEC

The 2006 Interim Evaluation of Erasmus Mundus²⁸ showed that the programme is perceived by universities as adding value in a number of ways, for example by promoting the development of joint, double and multiple degree awards between institutions in different countries, in line with the aims of the Bologna Process of strengthening the European dimension in education and increasing mobility. EM has also begun to make a contribution to the promotion of academic excellence in European higher education, in particular by encouraging European higher education institutions to foster cooperation with other institutions regarded as “world-class” in particular subject disciplines.

EM students enjoy not only the academic benefits of studying on a Masters Course which demonstrates academic excellence but also have personal development benefits that arise from exposure to new cultures and languages. Participation in EM was also viewed as bringing benefits to students in terms of their future career development. Its full impact on the employment prospects of potential students will be assessed through longitudinal studies of EM graduate destinations.

The Erasmus Mundus programme was allocated a budget of 230m Euros for the period 2004- 2008. Supplementary financing of 57.3m Euros was made available in the years 2005-2007 through the “Asian Windows” as well as 8.8m Euros in the year 2007 through the “ACP Window” and the “Western Balkans Window”. These are financial envelopes to fund additional scholarships for students from specific countries which have been allocated through the EU’s external relations budget. Consequently, a total budget of 296.1m Euros is available for the programming period 2004-2008.

The feedback provided by the stakeholders on the first phase of EM was overwhelmingly positive. The main messages can be summarised as follows:

- Continue high-quality integrated masters programmes and full-study scholarships for third-country students, thus keeping the Programme focus on promoting excellence in higher education;
- Provide grants for European students to participate in these programmes, thereby ensuring the credibility of such programmes;
- Extend the programme to the third cycle (doctorate);
- Establish collaborative partnerships with third-country HEIs.

These responses have been taken into account in the drafting of the future Erasmus Mundus programme (Erasmus Mundus II).

Second phase of the Erasmus Mundus Programme

Based on the 2006 Interim Evaluation and consultations with interested parties²⁹, the Commission designed a proposal for a second phase of the Erasmus Mundus Programme. The second phase of Erasmus Mundus (2009-13) is expected to start in 2009 with a planned total budget of €950 million, which represents an increase of more than 300% compared to the first phase of the programme.³⁰ It

²⁸ Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services LLP, Interim Evaluation of Erasmus Mundus, Final Report, June 2007, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/news_en.html

²⁹ Feedback meetings with programme actors: course and project coordinators, students, scholars, National Structures, representatives from Member States; and a public online consultation on the future of the programme carried out in February/March 2007

³⁰ Commission of the European Communities, Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries (Erasmus Mundus) (2009-2013), COM(2007) 395 final

will continue the activities of the first phase of Erasmus Mundus Programme, while extending its activities. Its main new features are:

- the inclusion of joint doctoral programmes
- increased scholarships for European students
- an intensified structural cooperation with third-country higher education institutions.

Global Promotion Project

The Erasmus Mundus Global Promotion Project (GPP) is the European Commission's comprehensive attempt to market Europe as an attractive destination for higher education students. The project aims to improve the availability and accessibility of information on European study opportunities and to enhance the professional capacity of Europe to proactively promote its higher education. In pursuit of these aims, the Global Promotion Project develops, amongst other things, a European higher education brand, runs media campaigns and organises European higher education fairs.

As part of the Erasmus Mundus Global Promotion Project, the 'Study in Europe website' was set up in May 2008.³¹ It aims to improve the availability and accessibility of information on studying in Europe for international students. Also, in June 2008, a Communication tool-kit was launched to assist European higher education institutions in promoting the opportunities they offer to students outside Europe to come and study in Europe.³²

6. CONCLUSIONS

The Commission has been working successfully with Member States and the higher education sector to help implement the modernisation agenda of universities covering the education, research and innovation dimensions. Main actions include: the application of the OMC (involving dialogue among clusters of policy makers and experts, peer-learning activities, indicators, benchmarks, reports and analyses), specific initiatives (Quality Assurance, ECTS, EQF, EIT³³, Data Collection, etc.) and supporting the initiatives of others (pilot projects, associations, networks etc.) through the Lifelong Learning Programme and the 7th EU Framework Programme for Research. The Commission will continue its activities in these areas.

The Commission will also continue to support the modernisation agenda through the implementation of actions under the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs, the Bologna Process, the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme, as well as the Structural Funds and EIB loans.

³¹ <http://www.study-in-europe.org/>

³² http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/news_en.html

³³ ECTS: European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System; EQF: European Qualifications Framework; EIT: European Institute of Innovation and Technology