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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**European higher education in the world**

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
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**European higher education in the world**

**1. EUROPE AND THE GLOBAL RACE FOR TALENT**

Globalisation and technological development are radically changing the landscape of higher education. Over the next twenty years the demand for higher education is expected to grow exponentially, from the current 99 million students worldwide to 414 million<sup>1</sup> by 2030, with China showing by far the highest increase in recent years followed by Brazil and India. The thirst for knowledge and social mobility in emerging economies will place higher education within the reach of hundreds of millions of citizens around the world.

Technology and the expectations of students are also changing. Students increasingly expect to choose what they learn, how they learn and when they learn, according to their individual needs and interests. They are ready to do it in their country of origin, abroad, via courses offered online or via blended forms of learning combining all of these possibilities.

Education, and in particular higher education, is at the heart of the Europe 2020 Strategy and of Europe's ambition to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy: it plays a crucial role in individual and societal advancement; and, with its impact on innovation and research, it provides the highly skilled human capital that knowledge-based economies need to generate growth and prosperity. Building on the recent initiatives on *Modernising Europe's Higher Education Systems*<sup>2</sup> and *Rethinking Education*<sup>3</sup>, and in response to the Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the internationalisation of higher education<sup>4</sup>, this Communication aims to contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, by helping Member States and higher education institutions<sup>5</sup> (HEIs) develop strategic partnerships that will allow Europe to tackle global challenges more effectively.

Cooperation at EU level and in a wider European framework has already facilitated the development of a high level of comparability, compatibility and exchange among the HEIs and systems of the European Higher Education Area. The Bologna Process, programmes such as *Erasmus*, *Tempus*, *Erasmus Mundus* and *Marie Curie*, and transparency tools such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) have helped EU national higher education systems to achieve a significant degree of intra-European internationalisation. Yet internationalisation is a rising phenomenon with a global dimension: beyond the intra-EU cooperation and mobility issues covered in the Communication on *Modernising Europe's Higher Education Systems*, this Communication

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<sup>1</sup> [www.oecd.org/edu/highereducationandadultlearning/highereducationto2030vo11demography.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/highereducationandadultlearning/highereducationto2030vo11demography.htm)

<sup>2</sup> COM(2011) 567 final

<sup>3</sup> COM(2012) 669 final

<sup>4</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:135:0012:0014:EN:PDF>

<sup>5</sup> This term encompasses all types of tertiary institutions, including applied science, institutes of technology, *Grandes Ecoles*, business schools, engineering schools, IUT, colleges of higher education, professional schools, polytechnics, academies.

analyses the mutually beneficial opportunities offered by the broader international context, and promotes where appropriate the use of European processes and tools to a global audience.

Europe remains an attractive destination for mobile learners with a stable share of around 45%<sup>6</sup> of the internationally mobile student population, a population expected to grow from around 4 million today to 7 million by the end of the decade. Nevertheless, if European HEIs want to continue to be the number one destination against a background of increasing competition from Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, they must act strategically to capitalise on Europe's reputation for top quality higher education. They must increase their attractiveness; actively promote international mobility of students and staff; provide world-class innovative curricula as well as excellence in teaching and research opportunities; and enter into cooperation and strategic partnerships with other HEIs, government institutions, the private sector and civil society around the world. Furthermore they must make a stronger contribution to economic growth by encouraging innovation and ensuring that higher education responds to labour market needs<sup>7</sup>. Digital education, and in particular the emergence of massive open online courses (MOOCs) is also bringing new incentives for strategic partnerships between education institutions, and new opportunities to reach potential students who may not be able to travel or take a break from employment but who are eager to profit from higher education offers outside their country. Member States need to support these efforts by creating favourable conditions for internationalisation at national and regional level and by tackling remaining legal and administrative barriers to mobility.

While world economies push for stronger competitiveness, creating and attracting top talent is no longer an objective of just a few countries or world-renowned HEIs. Many HEIs are committed to increase the quality of their courses to attract and retain the very best students. The internationalisation of higher education will help prepare our learners, whether going abroad or staying in Europe, to live in a global world, increasing their experience and knowledge, employability, productivity and earning power. Similarly, as underlined in the Communication on *Enhancing and focusing EU international cooperation in research and innovation*<sup>8</sup>, this global movement has brought new opportunities for higher education institutions to promote strategic partnerships around research and innovation activities.

Section 2 of this Communication identifies key priority areas for HEIs and Member States seeking to increase their internationalisation activities. The specific actions that the EU will take, bringing its added value to support these internationalisation efforts are presented in Section 3, while Section 4 outlines the next steps.

## **2. KEY PRIORITIES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND MEMBER STATES: TOWARDS COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGIES**

While several Member States and many HEIs already have higher education internationalisation strategies in place<sup>9</sup>, these are often centred mainly on student mobility: international academic cooperation is often still fragmented, based on the initiative of individual academics or research teams, and not necessarily linked to an institutional or national strategy. Effective strategies should also include the development of international

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<sup>6</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics

<sup>7</sup> A Stronger European Industry for Growth and Economic Recovery: COM(2012) 582 final

<sup>8</sup> COM(2012) 497 final

<sup>9</sup> [ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc/mapping\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc/mapping_en.pdf)

curricula, strategic partnerships, finding new ways of delivering content, and ensuring complementarity with broader national policies for external cooperation, international development, migration, trade, employment, regional development, research and innovation. A recent survey performed by the European University Association (EUA) shows that a majority of higher education institutions consider national and institutional strategies for internationalisation to have a positive impact on their internationalisation activities<sup>10</sup>

Developing a comprehensive internationalisation strategy means, above all, positioning a HEI, its students, researchers and staff, and national systems in all the relevant activities related to research, innovation and higher education, within the global scene, in accordance with its individual profile and evolving labour market needs and economic strategy of the country. To this end, there is **no one-size-fits-all** approach, and Member States should tailor their national strategies to reinforce their strengths, their international presence, and attract talent, taking into account identified national and intercultural skills shortages and bearing in mind the knowledge and research needs of their developing partner countries. The suggested key priorities listed for HEIs and Member States should therefore be seen as a tool kit of actions that they should combine, within the framework of a comprehensive strategy, according to their needs.

**A comprehensive internationalisation strategy should cover key areas grouped into the following three categories:** international student and staff mobility; the internationalisation and improvement of curricula and digital learning; and strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity building. These categories should not be seen as isolated but as integrated elements of a comprehensive strategy.

## **2.1. Promoting the international mobility of students and staff**

International degree mobility of students, the most widespread and probably still the most powerful vehicle for internationalisation, is changing dramatically in quantity and shape, and in some cases it has become a critically important source of revenue for HEIs. Every year there are 7% more tertiary students going abroad, with large numbers from China, India and the Republic of Korea. While the OECD countries absorb 77% of the total demand and Asia currently accounts for 52% of all internationally mobile degree seeking students, the share of mobile students who choose to study in Australia, New Zealand and Russia is growing fast. At the same time, North America (US and Canada) remains an attractive region with 21% of mobile students. More and more, source countries are also becoming destination countries: China is not just the most important source country, it already hosts 7% of the world's internationally mobile student population. When looking at the overall volume of incoming mobility, three EU Member States – the United Kingdom, France, and Germany – attract 63% of all students from outside the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).<sup>11</sup>

Credit mobility as part of the home degree is increasing, within Europe through its mobility schemes, within the USA through its study abroad programmes, while similar schemes are developing and extending in other part of the world, this type of mobility provides a significant contribution to internationalisation.

With these increasing mobility flows, the **transparency and recognition of learning acquired elsewhere should be a key priority**. Efforts already made to develop quality frameworks for mobility within the EU and the wider Bologna Process mean that Europe is

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications\\_homepage\\_list/EUA\\_International\\_Survey.sflb.ashx](http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications_homepage_list/EUA_International_Survey.sflb.ashx)

<sup>11</sup> The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report, p. 154.

the most advanced global region in this respect. The *Erasmus* Charter<sup>12</sup> which sets out the fundamental principles and minimum requirements with which HEI must comply when implementing the *Erasmus* mobility scheme, in addition to the Diploma Supplement and the use of ECTS, all are potentially attractive globally. World-wide recognition of acquired learning credits should also be strongly encouraged to enhance transparency and “portability” of learning outcomes across borders.

Mobility concerns more than students: staff mobility brings manifold benefits to the institution and individual. It is an instrument for the acquisition of new competences, languages and teaching methods and forges international networks. HEIs should incentivise staff to increase their international experience and should reward staff appropriately during career appraisal. Embedding incentives and rewards into an institutional strategy plays a fundamental role in ensuring successful staff mobility.

Mobility, and in particular credit mobility, should be used as a strong incentive for improving the quality of European higher education. HEIs should develop better services to send and receive international students or researchers, including individual counselling to advise on career paths and to facilitate integration into the city/region/country, with language training where appropriate. HEIs should compare and upgrade curricula with peer institutions to improve teaching and to strengthen institutional leadership and management. International student exchange within a programme framework will provide an incentive for recognition of foreign diplomas. Mobility will thus have an impact not only on the development and employability of individuals, but also on institutions. At the same time, intensive local linkages between universities and the economy are crucial to use the research and education potential of universities to foster innovation and growth.

**Rules on immigration of third-country nationals should support the efforts** of HEIs to increase their international profile rather than creating obstacles to mobility that weaken Europe's image abroad. The time and cost involved in obtaining the necessary visas, and/or permits as well as the substantial differences in practice between EU countries, may act as a dissuasive factor in choosing the EU as a study or research destination. The recent European Migration Network study entitled *Immigration of International Students to the EU*<sup>13</sup> suggests that while Member States have facilitated the admission of third-country national students to the EU following directive **2004/114/EC**, they can still face challenges as a result of national regulations and/or practices.

The Commission's recent proposal<sup>14</sup> to recast Directives **2005/71/EC** and **2004/114/EC** on conditions of entry, residence and rights of non-EU nationals for the purposes of research, studies etc., should make it easier and more attractive for non-EU national students and researchers to enter and stay in the EU for periods exceeding 90 days. The proposal, among other things, sets clear time limits for national authorities to decide on applications, provides for more opportunities to access the labour market during student stays and facilitates intra-EU mobility.

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<sup>12</sup> [ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/euc\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/euc_en.htm)

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.emnbelgium.be/sites/default/files/publications/0\\_immigration\\_of\\_international\\_students\\_to\\_the\\_eu\\_sr\\_10april2013\\_finalpublic\\_0.pdf](http://www.emnbelgium.be/sites/default/files/publications/0_immigration_of_international_students_to_the_eu_sr_10april2013_finalpublic_0.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-275\\_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-275_en.htm?locale=en)

**The key priorities on mobility for higher education institutions and Member States are to:**

- Focus internationalisation strategies to include a strong student, researcher and staff mobility component, supported by a quality framework including guidance and counselling services;
- Set up two-way mobility schemes with non-EU countries, embracing a wide variety of subjects and where appropriate targeting fields with skills shortages;
- Support fair and formal recognition for competences gained abroad for internationally mobile students, researchers and staff, including a better use of transparency and comparability tools and an increased focus on learning outcomes;
- Adopt, transpose and implement timely the proposed recast Directive merging 2005/71/EC and 2004/114/EC.

## **2.2. Promoting internationalisation at home and digital learning**

The definition of an appropriate level and pattern of international mobility, for staff as well as learners, should be part of all internationalisation strategies. But internationalisation should not benefit only the minority of students and staff in any HEI who will spend time abroad.

Evidence shows<sup>15</sup> that the highest priorities of internationalisation policies for EU Member States and individual HEIs are still the outgoing mobility for students, student exchanges, and attracting international students. However, mobility will always be limited to a relatively small percentage of the student and staff population: higher education policies must increasingly focus on the integration of a global dimension in the design and content of all curricula and teaching/learning processes (sometimes called “**internationalisation at home**”), to ensure that the large majority of learners, the 80-90% who are not internationally mobile for either degree or credit mobility, are nonetheless able to acquire the international skills required in a globalised world.

The presence on campus of internationally minded and foreign teaching/research staff in addition to foreign students is an instrument to expose the non-mobile student majority to international approaches; it has the potential to enhance the performance of HEIs and the quality of their education, by encouraging the exchange of course material, and, increasingly, facilitating the efficient use of virtual campuses, courseware and cooperation. Disciplinary and multidisciplinary networks can be vehicles for staff exchanges and for internationalisation of the curriculum.

Integrating an international dimension in curricula highlights the importance of **languages**. On the one hand, proficiency in English is de facto part of any internationalisation strategy for learners, teachers and institutions and some Member States have introduced, or are introducing, targeted courses in English (especially at Masters level) as part of their strategy to attract talent which would otherwise not come to Europe. On the other hand, multilingualism is a significant European asset: it is highly valued by international students<sup>16</sup> and should be encouraged in teaching and research throughout the higher education

<sup>15</sup> [www.iau-aiu.net/content/global-surveys](http://www.iau-aiu.net/content/global-surveys)

<sup>16</sup> [ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/evalreports/education/2012/mundus\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/education/2012/mundus_en.pdf)

curriculum. Additional European languages skills widen career prospects and determine in part whether skilled graduates or researchers choose to stay in Europe post-graduation, as highlighted by the *Erasmus Mundus* joint degree students from outside the EU who undertake mobility to at least two European countries. In order to fulfil their potential to successfully integrate in their host country, mobile students, researchers and teaching staff need specific support for language learning, including the opportunity to learn the local language(s), whether or not this is the language of the study course or research group.

Digital learning and the widening use of ICT technology can widen access to European HEI, and can open up the curriculum to knowledge, materials and teaching methods from all over the world, fostering new forms of partnerships, synergies and exchanges across disciplines and faculties that would otherwise be difficult to establish. Increased openness and access through technology will improve competition and transparency, and allow HEI to adjust teaching methods and materials to the needs of students who will work in a globalised labour market.

This will result in a step change in the business model of each HEI, by opening the possibility for completely new audiences (e.g. off-campus international learners; individuals following one single course but not a complete programme; different age ranges) and for new services (e.g. learning support provided by teaching staff; assessment; certification). It changes the social role of institutions as providers of knowledge and innovation and as contributors to development, putting new pressures on HEIs to rethink their societal responsibilities in their local, national and regional context, including the responsibility to build capacity in emerging economies and developing countries of the world.

Europe has some of the best-established distance learning universities providing distance and blended learning and other non-traditional modes of delivery. The provision of Open Educational Resources (OER)<sup>17</sup> and, in particular Open Courseware (OCW)<sup>18</sup> and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) has emerged and rapidly evolved in recent years, growing significantly in sophistication and organisation<sup>19</sup>.

While online courses and degrees are not a new phenomenon, the exponential increase in the supply of online education and digital material, as well as the increase in the provision of assessment, validation and academic credit by selected MOOCs (an emerging trend particularly with many HEIs in countries such as the US and Australia) has the potential of transforming higher education radically. **New trends in digital education and the emergence of MOOCs should be an incentive for HEIs to rethink their cost structures and possibly also their missions, and engage in worldwide partnerships to increase the quality of content and of the learning experience through blended learning.**

Europe must take the lead in the global efforts to exploit the potential of digital education - including the availability of ICT, the use of OER and the provision of MOOCs - and to overcome the systemic obstacles that still exist in quality assurance, student assessment and

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<sup>17</sup> OERs are any type of educational materials that are in the public domain or introduced with an open license. The nature of these open materials means that anyone can legally and freely copy, use, adapt and re-share them. OERs range from textbooks to curricula, syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, tests, projects, audio, video and animation.

<sup>18</sup> An OCW is a free and open digital publication of high quality HEI-level educational materials. It is organised as courses, and often includes course planning materials and evaluation tools as well as thematic content. OCW is openly licensed, accessible to anyone, anytime via the internet.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. [www.coursera.org](http://www.coursera.org); [www.udacity.com](http://www.udacity.com); [www.edx.org](http://www.edx.org)



recognition, as well as funding. This potential and obstacles will be addressed in a future Commission initiative.

**The key priorities on internationalisation at home and digital learning for higher education institutions and Member States are to:**

- Capitalise on the international experiences and competences of the staff of HEIs, aiming to develop international curricula for the benefit of both non-mobile and mobile learners;
- Increase the opportunities offered to students, researchers and staff to develop their language skills, particularly local language tuition for individuals following courses in English, to maximise the benefits of European linguistic diversity;
- Develop opportunities for international collaboration via online learning and expand the use of ICTs and Open Education Resources for new delivery modes to wider access, internationalise curricula and pave the way for new forms of partnerships.

### **2.3. Strengthening strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity building**

New developments such as branch campuses and online higher education, and the emergence of new knowledge powers, are changing the balance between cooperation and competition within internationalisation strategies.

**The economic importance of international higher education is rapidly growing.** A few countries, including popular destinations such as the UK, Canada, the US and Australia, attach great importance to higher education as a service that generates a significant source of income (worth £8.25 billion in the UK, and AUD 15.5 billion in Australia in 2010).

In some EU Member States, such as the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark, substantial tuition fees have been introduced for non-EU learners, which institutions use to raise income levels, allowing them, for example to offer targeted scholarships to learners from emerging and developing countries. Other Member States, on the contrary have made clear political choices to keep tuition fees for third country nationals low or non-existent as part of their internationalisation strategy and as a way to attract more international students.

International students have a positive economic impact on the host country regardless of whether they are charged tuition fees. A 2012 study<sup>20</sup> by the Dutch Government shows that if only a modest 2.5% of international graduates remained to work in the country, this would result in positive long-term effects on the public finances, over and above the recouped investment.

Europe's higher education systems offer a number of competitive advantages that should be exploited, such as a strong and successful track record in joint and double degrees, doctoral

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<sup>20</sup> [www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2012/05/16/de-economische-effecten-van-internationalisering-in-het-hoger-onderwijs.html](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2012/05/16/de-economische-effecten-van-internationalisering-in-het-hoger-onderwijs.html)

schools, industrial doctorates and the recent development of EIT<sup>21</sup> Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) in fields of global relevance. But internationalisation requires more cooperation, with new higher education hubs on other continents.

**European HEIs should position themselves according to their strengths in education, research or innovation, and forge partnerships within and outside Europe** to reinforce and complement their individual profile: through joint projects and research activities, web-based courses combining traditional and new distribution and delivery channels, including the running of joint or branch campuses in non-EU countries. Established research networks should be a springboard to launch new teaching collaborations, and mature education partnerships should nurture new research projects.

Evidence shows that **Joint and double degrees** are powerful tools: to promote quality assurance and mutual recognition of qualifications; to attract talent and deepen partnerships; and to enhance the international experience, intercultural competence and employability of graduates. Therefore, the EU and Member States should provide a strong incentive to enhance the role of joint and double degrees in the internationalisation strategies of European HEIs, drawing on the experience of the almost 700 European and non-EU HEIs which have already benefited from the joint and double degrees provided by the *Erasmus Mundus* programme. Two particular obstacles make the undertaking of joint programmes difficult for HEIs, both from the academic and administrative sides, and need to be addressed: institutional regulations (accreditation procedures, grading systems, examination and thesis regulations, enrolment procedures or tuition fees policy), and national legislation (particularly related to the delivery of joint degrees).

**International strategic partnerships with a balanced involvement of business and higher education are essential for cross-border innovation** to address global challenges. This is particularly the case in emerging economies where Europe needs to develop balanced cooperation with centres of excellence in order to ensure a stronger and sustained local presence. Partnerships which aim to foster entrepreneurship and innovation, triggering innovative approaches, entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in learners will bring benefits both to European competitiveness and to partner countries. A particular potential lies in promoting affordable and inclusive innovation which could help the emerging economies to tackle their societal challenges as well as promote market access, trade and investment for European companies.

**Cooperation with developing countries and their HEIs should be an element of internationalisation strategies**, with innovative partnership models as a means to strengthen both North-South and South-South collaboration such as joint programmes and learning and staff mobility.

There is ample evidence<sup>22</sup> showing that higher education is key to delivering the knowledge requirements for economic development: through job creation, better governance, increased entrepreneurship and intergenerational mobility, and a stronger civil society. European HEIs acknowledge that they have a key role to play in supporting the modernisation efforts of emerging and developing parts of the world, as well as to contribute to finding solutions to global challenges such as climate change or narrowing development gaps between peoples

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<sup>21</sup> The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is a body of the European Union established in March 2008 with the aim of increasing European sustainable growth and competitiveness by reinforcing the innovation capacity of the EU.

<sup>22</sup> <http://chet.org.za/papers/higher-education-and-economic-development-review-literature>

and nations. Similarly, most Member States support cooperation and capacity building programmes complemented by EU action in this field. Students, staff and researchers working or studying in European host HEIs are often vectors of cooperation with their home institutions and countries, to develop, coordinate and follow international cooperation projects.

In addition to specific, traditional capacity building actions, mobility itself and in particular credit mobility has a strong potential to improve the quality of higher education in developing countries: by accelerating the design of internationalisation strategies and the use of transparency and recognition tools, and by helping institutions develop better services to send and receive foreign students or researchers, and promote the recognition of foreign diplomas.

As highlighted in the *Access to Success* project<sup>23</sup>, development cooperation is not always sufficiently acknowledged in the mission statements of HEIs. Yet the participation of European HEIs in capacity building in non-EU countries can at the same time be academically rewarding for the European institutions and form part of their societal responsibility. Working with HEIs in the countries most in need, such as post-conflict states, and establishing partnerships with less well-equipped institutions, gives European HEIs an opportunity to make a strong contribution towards the development of a particular region and thus establish a long-term strategic link with it. In a rapidly evolving world, opportunities are changing quickly, and today's developing countries will be the emerging economies of tomorrow.

**The key priorities on partnership for higher education institutions and Member States are to:**

- Strengthen the capacity of higher education and research to address global challenges by engaging in innovation-orientated international partnerships and alliances;
- Tackle the remaining obstacles for the development and implementation of joint and double degree programmes, both at institutional and national level, and improve provisions for quality assurance and cross-border recognition;
- Provide entrepreneurial and innovative curricula including transferable skills, and create international training opportunities by working together with employers from inside and outside the EU;
- Ensure coherence between internationalisation strategies and EU development cooperation policies by considering the principles of equity and partner country ownership; use students, researchers and staff from non-EU countries as vectors of cooperation with HEIs in these countries.

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.accesstosuccess-africa.eu/images/finalconference/eua\\_whitepaper\\_eng\\_web.pdf](http://www.accesstosuccess-africa.eu/images/finalconference/eua_whitepaper_eng_web.pdf)

### 3. THE EU CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Member States and their HEIs are responsible for reforming their higher education systems and for supporting internationalisation strategies. The EU added value - in collaboration with the Member States and while fully respecting the autonomy of higher education institutions - particularly through Europe 2020 and the *Erasmus+* Programme within the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020 (MFF)<sup>24</sup>, is to provide **stronger policy support and financial incentives for internationalisation strategies**.

The *Erasmus+* programme for the 2014-2020 period will provide substantial EU-level investment in the key areas of internationalisation strategies: international mobility, joint degrees, and international cooperation partnerships, including capacity building and staff development in emerging and developing parts of the world. *Erasmus+*, by integrating the external instruments, puts an end to the current fragmentation of the various existing external higher education programmes and aims at making EU actions more visible, coherent and attractive.

The *Horizon 2020* framework programme for research and innovation and its education-oriented components - the *Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions* (MSCA) for researcher mobility and the *European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)* - will strengthen Europe's role and image as a high-quality and socially responsible higher education provider and will allocate more funds strategically to both incoming and outgoing mobility of learners, researchers and staff to and from non-EU countries. *MSCA* will recruit approximately 20% of all its Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellows outside Europe, and foster research-based links with partners around the world through mobility periods.

**In order to contribute to internationalisation strategies in the 2014-2020 period through EU funding the Commission will:**

- Provide increased financial support through the new programme Erasmus+ for mobility to and from non-EU countries, reaching up to 135,000 learners and staff; and allow up to 15,000 non-EU researchers to start or pursue their careers in Europe through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions in Horizon 2020;
- Support international HEI consortia to develop Joint Master and Doctoral degrees through Erasmus+ and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions respectively, and provide high-level scholarships for up to 60,000 graduates to take part;
- Support strategic partnerships for cooperation and innovation, including up to 1,000 capacity-building partnerships between EU and non-EU HEIs.

The EU contribution will focus on two policy objectives described hereafter: increasing the attractiveness of European higher education by improving quality and transparency; and

<sup>24</sup> From mid-2011 onwards, the European Commission presented its proposals for a new multiannual financial framework (MFF) for the budget cycle 2014-2020.

increasing worldwide cooperation for innovation and development through partnerships, dialogue and capacity building.

### **3.1. Increasing the attractiveness of European higher education by improving quality and transparency**

To improve **recognition of foreign qualifications**, the EU will continue to engage in international dialogue on higher education policies with key partner countries and regions around the world. It will encourage a better understanding of European standards and tools, such as the EQF, Tuning, ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) network, and the *Erasmus* Charter, to enhance the use of these European instruments and their potential as global standards. At the same time the EU should strengthen policy dialogue and knowledge of partner countries' education systems and instruments, including through the Bologna intergovernmental process, as a means to develop Europe's own standards and tools.

If internationalisation is to increase quality in higher education, it requires closer cooperation with equivalent systems in other regions of the world on **quality assurance**, covering quality of services offered to mobile learners, quality assurance of the academic content of their courses, and quality assurance of joint projects and programmes. Equally, accreditation procedures of degree courses should be the subject of closer cooperation.

With the growing importance of university rankings and their impact on branding and therefore on student choice of study destination, the Commission is supporting the development of a **transparency tool** as an alternative and complement to the traditional rankings that mainly focus on research. The new user-driven, multi-dimensional and international ranking for HEIs '*U-Multirank*' will publish its first results in early 2014. From 2016/17 an independent organisation will run the ranking. The new ranking approach will communicate the diversity of European HEIs' profiles, teaching and research strengths and specialisations, and will be open to the participation of non-European HEIs on equal terms.

'*U-Multirank*' will allow HEIs to position themselves on several indicators such as their international profile, and to identify complementary and like-minded cooperation partners; it will enable policy makers, HEIs and students to rank individual institutions or programmes according to what is most important to them. By increasing transparency of the profiles of European HEIs, it will facilitate the 'matching' of needs for potential international learners or researchers, and thereby help boost the attractiveness of a broader number of European HEIs.

If Europe is to remain highly attractive as a destination for internationally mobile students against the rising backdrop of new regional higher education hubs, it should **reinforce its efforts to promote global awareness of the high quality and the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of European higher education**.

International information and promotion campaigns at EU level have, to date, been organised through traditional means such as participation in international student fairs under the *Study in Europe* banner, the *Study in Europe* and *Destination Europe*<sup>25</sup> websites and communication tools, a series of European Higher Education Fairs in Asia and Latin America and activities within the scope of the *Erasmus Mundus* programme. The Commission will collaborate with national promotion agencies and stakeholders in order to **complement national information and promotion efforts** on study and funding opportunities, in particular in Member States

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<sup>25</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm?pg=destinationEurope>

with a smaller international student presence, and will promote the European dimension of higher education outside Europe, with the help of EU delegations and education and research counsellors in Member State Embassies.

Most EU Member States have set up “one-stop shop” websites in English that provide mobile learners or researchers with information and help. National websites announcing study or work opportunities and funding, e.g. Finland and the Netherlands<sup>26</sup>, are complemented at European level. The Commission will continue to finance **higher education portals**<sup>27</sup> that promote the European educational and scholarship offer across the board, in addition to the *EURAXESS*<sup>28</sup> portal, which lists research job vacancies and links to different services offering practical information about living in different countries, immigration tips and social security information. The EU Immigration Portal<sup>29</sup> provides tailored information both at EU and Member State level on immigration procedures for third-country national students. Innovative methods will be used to good effect, for instance, via student and alumni associations acting as ambassadors and promoters of EU higher education, as well as the use of new media to reach a digitally literate target audience.

Alumni networks of international education programmes should be used as a valuable instrument of **soft diplomacy**, to influence and engage new audiences in a way that advances the interests of individual Member States or the EU, and the Commission will work with Member States to identify best practice.

**The Commission will:**

- Foster the comparability of qualifications, credits and registration systems through international cooperation and dialogue;
- Enhance the quality of mobility through a reinforced Erasmus Charter by the end of 2013 including through guidelines for HEIs for self-assessment and monitoring;
- Promote the implementation of U-Multirank, the new multi-dimensional and international ranking tool for HEIs to enhance the transparency, comparability and benchmarking between HEIs;
- Support cooperation with national promotion agencies and alumni associations by sharing information and coordinating joint actions in order to market Europe as a high-quality study and research destination (e.g. student fairs and the design of joint promotion tools).

### 3.2. Increasing worldwide cooperation for innovation and development

**Joint and double degree programmes** are a particularly successful aspect of the EU's international cooperation activities, based on international networks of excellence for

<sup>26</sup> [www.studyinfinland.fi](http://www.studyinfinland.fi); [www.studyinholland.nl](http://www.studyinholland.nl)

<sup>27</sup> [E.g. ec.europa.eu/education/study-in-europe](http://ec.europa.eu/education/study-in-europe); [www.study-info.eu](http://www.study-info.eu); [www.distancelearningportal.eu](http://www.distancelearningportal.eu)

<sup>28</sup> [ec.europa.eu/euraxess](http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess) including the *EURAXESS LINKS* networks set up for European and Non-European researchers in USA, China, Japan, India, ASEAN and Brazil to promote Europe as an attractive destination for researchers.

<sup>29</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/immigration/>

teaching, learning and research<sup>30</sup>: Joint Masters programmes will be supported and increased in number under *Erasmus+*. These joint programmes, complementing the Masters and PhDs of the *EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)*, will ensure excellent quality training with a strong focus on skills required by future employers. Innovation and international exchange between HEIs and business partners will be enhanced, and learners and researchers will have the opportunity to work in another country and gain experience in both the academic and private sectors. In turn, *Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions*, including joint doctorates, Innovative Training Networks and European Industrial Doctorates will help HEIs foster research-based links with partners around the world and reinforce the knowledge triangle between higher education, business and research.

Similarly, the *Knowledge Alliances* under *Erasmus+* will foster innovation and strengthen links between employers and participating HEIs, also at international level.

**Policy dialogue** is a system-to-system exchange with non-EU countries or regions about common challenges. It is led on the European side by the Commission and has different objectives, depending on the international partners: it should be enhanced as a flexible instrument for cooperation and soft diplomacy. To this end, the Commission will promote peer-learning, capacity building on both sides and the exchange of good practice in these dialogues including with the involvement of key stakeholders; it will help partners to better exploit the possibilities for such exchange offered under the new EU programmes. Policy dialogue in higher education with international partners should be aligned with the external priorities of the EU, and should take place within existing cooperation frameworks such as the Enlargement Strategy, the European Neighbourhood Policy (for example in the framework of the Eastern Partnership) or the different (multi-sector) partnership agreements with emerging or industrialised countries such as the High-level People-to-People Dialogue between the EU and China, the Education and Training Dialogue within the EU and Brazil Strategic Partnership and the EU-Russia common spaces.<sup>31</sup>

**International capacity-building partnerships** will be essential to support non-EU countries in improving the quality of their higher education systems and in their modernisation and internationalisation efforts, to prepare the ground for future academic and research collaboration, to address cross-border issues, and to develop a stronger knowledge of local markets.

The Commission will strengthen **evidence-based policy making** in the field of international education, and will ensure that policies are based on state-of-the-art knowledge relating to cross-border provision of higher education. There is in particular a need for improved data collection on international learner, researcher and staff mobility flows, and on international academic cooperation. New cooperation tools such as OER will also require close monitoring in order to adequately gauge their impact on learners and learning providers. In pursuit of these aims, the Commission will work with national and international authorities to identify and fill knowledge gaps via research, collection and analysis of statistics, and dialogue with experts in the field, from the EU and beyond.

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<sup>30</sup> [www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Publications/Publications-and-Reports/IIE-Bookstore/Joint-Degree-Survey-Report-2009](http://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Publications/Publications-and-Reports/IIE-Bookstore/Joint-Degree-Survey-Report-2009)

<sup>31</sup> [ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc/china/joint12\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc/china/joint12_en.pdf)

**The Commission will:**

- Pursue bilateral and multilateral policy dialogues with key international partners;
- Promote the EIT and its KICs to support international cooperation in higher education and innovation in order to address societal challenges, in synergy with other EU and national research and innovation activities;
- Strengthen evidence-based policymaking in the field of international education, through research, collection and analysis of statistics, and dialogue with experts;
- Present, in Autumn 2013, an initiative for the promotion of digital learning and better use of ICT and OER in education.

**4. NEXT STEPS**

This Communication aims to contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, by helping Member States and higher education institutions (HEIs) develop strategies and partnerships that will allow Europe to tackle global challenges more effectively.

Comprehensive internationalisation strategies will only be successful if they are the result of a collaborative effort. In formulating these proposals, the Commission has consulted informally a broad range of stakeholders, including key organisations representing HEIs, employers, student and alumni networks, experts in the field, and representatives from EU and non-EU education ministries. It will continue to engage with these stakeholders, and will now involve the European Parliament, the other European Institutions and EU Member States to take this initiative further and the Bologna Follow-up Group to implement the actions proposed.

The development and follow-up of the policy guidelines and actions proposed at the end of each section in this Communication will be ensured through the implementation instruments of the *Erasmus+* and *Horizon 2020* Programmes; the joint reporting on the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020); the governance provisions of the Europe 2020 strategy and the annual EU Education and Training Monitor; and the Bologna process and policy dialogue with key international stakeholders.