



Reflecting on 10 years of Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees

Deirdre.Lennan@ec.europa.eu



Background

- Fast evolving higher education landscape
- 414 million people worldwide will enter HE by 2030
- Learners expectations differ according to their region but all students want to choose what they learn and how they learn
- First joint programmes in 90s, then spread in 2000s as mainly double degrees (over 50% of EU HEIs run double degrees) but no scholarships or funding for managing the training
- 2004: Erasmus Mundus designed to make Europe host destination number 1



10 years on ?

- To what extent have the EMMCs achieved 'jointness' and more generally, contributed to the EHEA through inter-institutional cooperation?
- To what extent are the courses contributing to the employability of their graduates?
- What are the sustainability prospects of these courses after the end of EM funding?



Jointness

- The process of cooperation between stakeholders from programme design and implementation
 - *Design of an integrated course (including mandatory mobility with clear added value)*
 - *Development of joint and integrated management structures*
 - *Interinstitutional transfer of knowledge (sharing practices, overcoming disciplinary boundaries, different teaching and management practices)*
 - *Harmonisation and recognition of awarded degrees*
 - *Integration of scholarship holders in local environment and of local students into courses*



Contribution to EHEA

- *Better needs assessment and knowledge sharing across Europe*
- *Enhancement of joint research, structured networks, increased internationalisation, global visibility, contents addressing global issues*
- *Enhancement of innovation and development with studies and research projects in tune with emerging economic and scientific needs (academic staff implication as well as theses results)*
- *Promotion of interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary (innovative training paths and mobility)*
- *Student centered learning (innovative approaches to studying, professional tracks, acquisition of transversal skills)*
- *Added value of career professionals, experts and industry*



Contribution to EHEA

- *Quality control mechanisms, through several institutional, national and external practices and standards*
- *Mobility as a means to ensure coherence in course content, delivery and performance assessment*
- *Common understanding of differentiation in student performance and grading with criteria and conversion defined in partnership agreement, joint examination boards, transnational defense of thesis*
- *But varying types of qualification... so the nature of the EM qualification not always clearly represented*
- *Importance of work by organisations such as ECA's guidelines for good practice for awarding joint degrees or a number of EM-funded projects (JOQAR) and liaison with ENIC/NARIC structures*



Contribution to employability

- Curricular integration with internationalisation of the academic content does not automatically increase employability
- No measurable indicators of the extent to which the EM degree has enhanced employability more than comparable national high quality masters
- Number of studies available (course evaluation reports, surveys of course coordinators, EMA, EM cluster study on employability, Graduate Impact studies)

Contribution to employability

- *Employers not always well acquainted with double, multiple or joint diploma system*
 - Importance of the Diploma Supplement to facilitate the readability of the degree and help promote its market value
- *Important relationship between joint programme structure, curricula design, university career support services and employer perception*
- *Quality of the academic provision: standard internal quality control according to practices of each university combined with programme level procedures including external peer review and student assessment*

Contribution to employability

- *Internships and work placements which equip students with professional skills and competences tailored to market needs, flexibility and building up a professional network (varies between 30-50% in EM) but depends on sector, the design of the programme and the extent to which the non-academic dimension was an integral part of the programme*
- *Complementary skills through programmes that involve non-academic sector (guest lecturers), innovative evaluation models for defending thesis*
- *Structured career guidance plan combining individual guidance with programme-level events (career and industry days)*
- *Considerable numbers of EMMCs graduates embarked on a research career by joining a PhD programme and those already working saw more opportunities at more senior levels and on higher income positions*



Promotion and sustainability

- Primary purpose: attract the best students for scholarships as well as renowned scholars
- But also: raise awareness, recruit self-paying students and attract a broad range of stakeholders for networking, all of which together should provide a strong basis for sustainability after the EM funding
- The best results have been achieved through the development of promotion strategies and marketing programmes jointly by all partners
- However, whilst most programmes are well established and recognized, they still depend to a large extent on the scholarship funding by the European Commission



Promotion and sustainability

- *All programmes successful in attracting excellent third-country students*
- *Third-country students often of higher quality and staff needed to ensure that they were suitably challenged*
- *Oversubscription extremely high (selection rate as low as 5/10%!)*
- *Students coming from 20 or more countries, in some cases 50*
- *Broad transfer of knowledge between countries, avoiding bias towards only best known universities and wider diversity amongst student population with introduction of EU students*
- *But challenges with regional windows and EU students who had lower scholarships*
- *Average: 2 EM scholarships for 1 self-paying (but very variable)*
- *Relatively small number of self-paying combined with the fact that these were mainly EU who paid lower tuition fees meant that consortia struggled to reach financial sustainability*



Promotion and sustainability

- *Many consortia successful in raising interest of industry, with return from industry (bursaries for self-funded students and sometimes mobility costs)*
- *Other means: bursaries from partners, waivers, national programmes for additional scholarships, sponsorships from local authorities, national or regional organisation for joint events and workshops*
- *Majority however were financially depending on the EM programme*
- *Many consortia lacked business plans with differences in tuition fees, sharp increases of fees but no visible difference to the programme offered*
- *Only few consortia set targets or explored possibilities for co-funding or matched funding*
- *Little information as to whether universities continued cooperation with guest lecturers or whether efforts were made to set up joint research programmes with national co-funding*
- *Alumni have a crucial role to play in linking students with the network of future employers and generate requests from the professional sector*



Conclusions

- *'Jointness' has contributed significantly to the Bologna process*
- *EMMCs offer high quality education, promote the EU dimension in higher education through joint curricular development, inter-institutional cooperation in teaching and supervising students, joint recognition of qualifications, support of mobility streams within Europe and between the EU and third countries and contribute the worldwide attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA*
- *EMMCs have provided a well-integrated system of academic and complementary skills through internships and contributions from sectors that have opened career prospects*



Conclusions

- *Strong indication that the professional internships offered well tailored and appreciated competences*
- *For already employed graduates, the degree gave access to better paid and higher ranked positions*
- *EMMCs are highly attractive for students and scholars but still depend to a large extent on the scholarship funding from the EU Commission*
- *Failure to renew will often result in abandoning the project, decreasing the number/international profile of students or decreasing mobility options*



Conclusions

- *Notable efforts have been made by various consortia to negotiate additional scholarships from industry/public authorities but few have explored options for support from national or regional programmes*
- *More efforts should go into developing business models, exploitation and marketing plans and an impact analysis in view of sustainability*
- *More efforts need to go into raising the value of the learning outcomes among potential employers*



European
Commission

Comments, your experience, questions?

***Education
and Culture***