



Erasmus
Mundus
Association

EMA Policy Team Annual Report 2008-2009

Vilnius (Lithuania), June 2009

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1 Executive Summary

The EMA Policy team has focused its activities during 2008-2009 into the following work streams:

- EMA Statute:
 - o Release the new version of the Statute as voted by the GA-08 in Perugia (Italy). This new version has also been posted within the EMA website
 - o Prepare new amendments of the Statute to be proposed and voted by the GA-09 in Vilnius (Lithuania)
- General policies: the team advises the SC as well as other structures of the association on policy matters in order to carry out their activities according to the Statute and the mission of the association. During 2008-2009 the following activities should be highlighted:
 - o Create a better frame for organic creation and development of EMA Chapters as well as better integration of Chapters into the Statute and the EMA Structure
 - o Support on EMA elections (President, Vice-President and EMMC representatives to EMA)
 - o General advice to the SC on internal discussions as well as other EMA teams
- Survey & quality issues: developing means to survey the opinion of the association members on quality matters regarding Erasmus Mundus Master Courses (EMMC) and EMA activities. Moreover the results of the survey on quality of EMMC were published within the second edition of the EMA Magazine

Regular online meetings have been carried out by the policy team and a face-to-face meeting was carried out in Faro (Portugal) in order analyze the as is situation, way-forward and follow-up of the following topics:

- EMA Survey and quality issues
- EMA Chapters
- EMA Statute

The EMA Vice-President was invited to this meeting in order to participate to the Chapter discussions

Finally the policy team has been represented on the following events:

- IFISO 2009 (Split, Croatia – Nov 2008)
- Launching of EM-2 (Brussels, Belgium – Feb 2009)
- Liaison Group meeting (Brussels, Belgium – Mar 2009)
- Erasmus Mundus Quality Assesment

During 2008-2009 the activities of the policy team have been lead by:

- Jean Carlos Pelicano – Policy coordinator (policy@em-a.eu)
 - o Tammy de Wright – Statute
 - o Peter Bentley – Survey & quality issues
 - o Mateo Botero – EMA Chapter policies

2 General topics

2.1 Service team members

Members recruited between 2006 and 2008 (Brussels):¹

- Aimée van Wynsberghe
- Buddhadeb Halder
- Edlira Alku
- Jean Carlos Pelicano (*Policy coordinator 2008-2010*)
- Mateo Botero
- Matthias Herkt (*Policy coordinator 2007-2008*)
- Peter Bentley
- Roman Savka (*Policy coordinator 2006-2007*)
- Sachin Badkas
- Saurabh Singh
- Sridevi Seetharam
- Tammy de Wright
- Tom Morrison
- Ugochukwu Nwaogu

Members recruited in 2008 (Perugia):

- Antonius Armanious - *Joint European Master Programme in Environmental Studies (JEMES)*
- Jason Gillis - *Erasmus Mundus Master in Adapted Physical Activity (EMMAPA)*
- Mateo Botero - *Water and Coastal Management (EJMWCM) & Chapter representative*
- Merten Reglitz - *Master of Applied Ethics (MAE)*
- Samant Kakkar - *N/A*
- Sandra Rosero - *Formation de professionnels de la formation*
- Yi Hu - *Joint European Master Programme in Advanced Materials Science and Engineering (AMASE)*

And looking forward to recruiting new members in Vilnius!

2.2 Budget

A total budget of 3500€ was allocated to the policy team for the exercise 2008-2009. This budget was partially used for the meeting carried out in Faro on transportation means for the participants, lodging and meals. Total budget remaining and spent was not available when writing this report but will be confirmed later on by the global budget of EMA²

2.3 Erasmus Mundus Quality Assessment

The Directorate General - Education and Culture (DGEAC) along with the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Agency Executive Agency (EACEA) launched in 2008 a quality assessment with the objective of carrying out an in-depth study of the effectiveness of 6 Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses, aiming at deriving good practice that will be formalized in a handbook with the purpose of supporting and

¹ Members within EMA Policy database

² Final budget numbers to be consolidated and confirmed by EMA Steering Committee

improving the quality of the organization and implementation of highly integrated masters courses and thus their effectiveness.³

EMA proposed to the DGEAC & EACEA to include an EMA member within the Steering Group in charge of coordinating and evaluating the results of a second assessment taking place in 2009. EMA proposition was very welcomed and accepted and as a result a member of the policy team (Peter Bentley) was recommended by the Policy Coordinator and confirmed by the EMA Steering Committee to join the Steering Group of the assessment.

2.4 Faro meeting

In November 15-16 the policy team carried out a face-to-face meeting in Faro (Portugal) hosted by the University of Algarve. The meeting counted with the following participants from policy team:

- Jean Carlos Pelicano – *Policy Coordinator*
- Tammy de Wright – *Statute & Policies*
- Peter Bentley – *EMMC quality & Survey Project*
- Edlira Alku – *EMMC quality & Survey Project*
- Mateo Botero – *Chapters*

And as special guest:

- Ricardo Chavez – EMA VP (to discuss Chapters' issues)

The following agenda was discussed:

- PT Coordinator report
- Brain storming on Survey; Chapters & CRs; Statute; Statute & Policy documents
- Discussions per topic and document's preparation
- Presentation of draft documents based on discussions per topic (Chapters & CR)
- Presentation of draft documents based on discussions per topic (Survey; Statute & Policy documents)
- How to become active in EMA
- EMA website with PT content
- EMA evolution/structure in 10 years

The results of this meeting may be found across this document

2.5 IFISO (Split, Croatia – 22-26 November 2008)

The Informal Forum of International Student Organizations (IFISO) is a non-political and non-profit forum for various student-run organizations. Currently it consists of 30 student organizations, covering more than two million students all together. Annual IFISO meetings are normally held twice a year, hosted by local committees of member organizations. During these meetings, the most important topics of interest are discussed and often new events being planned. This autumn, the IFISO meeting was held in Split/Croatia between 22-26 November 2008, and was organized by the local group of the Food Industry Students European Council (FISEC). The EMA was represented by:

- **Peter Bentley – EMA Policy team**
- Richard Klein – EMA CAT team

³ Taken from the executive summary of the final report presented by the subcontractor to the Steering Group coordinating the assessment (DGEAC & EACEA)

The IFISO meeting was structured such that the first day and a half was organized around pre-set topics which had previously been identified as important areas for discussion. The later days of the meeting were devoted to "open space", whereby new ideas were proposed for parallel discussion groups which participants moved between. Each topic was chaired or co-chaired by a meeting participant; I offered to co-chair the discussions on "Private Funding". As I co-chaired the discussion on this topic, I also prepared the minutes and section on private funding for the IFISO report (for your information, I have pasted the details of the private funding session below).

Personally I found the IFISO meeting to be a very effective forum for discussion and exchanges of ideas. I was rather skeptical initially about the prospect of a 3 day meeting based on exchanging ideas, but the meeting organizers and all the participants were very professional and the outcomes were valuable. I think that the EMA can learn a great deal from other student associations and likewise they can gain from our experiences. I was most impressed by the enthusiasm and work ethic of the meeting organizers and participants, and I would recommend that the EMA send a representative to future IFISO meetings. The only drawback that I could see from the meeting was that perhaps the EMA President or a member of the Steering Committee could have provided even more information and experiences to the IFISO meeting, as I have been working mainly within the EMA Policy Team. Still, I feel it was a very valuable experience for me personally and for my role within the Policy Team and I would likewise be happy to participate in future IFISO meetings if required.

2.6 EM-2 (Brussels, Belgium – 16-18 February 2009)

Based on the success of Erasmus Mundus I 2004-2008 with its 103 current Erasmus Mundus Master Courses, the European Parliament has decided to continue the program, which resulted in adopting EMII with the goal to reach 150 EMMC by 2013. Besides aiming at continuous high quality in European higher education, mobility, excellence and inter-European as well as international cooperation, the new features of EMII include: joint doctoral programs; scholarships for European students and the inclusion of higher education institutions from third countries and Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window scheme into the program.

EMA had a presentation conducted by Magazine Coordinator, Rikke Anderson and Promotions Team Coordinator, Jennifer Lenhart.

The European Commission has stressed the importance of activities of EMA and has confirmed its support for the further development of our Association – in part because of the strong support and activities of its members!

Policy coordinator participated at the launching of EM-2.

2.7 LG meeting (Brussels, Belgium – 6-7 March 2009)

During the Liaison Group meeting the policy team presented the following points:

- Policy Team Work-streams:
 - Statute & Policies (Tammy de Wright)
 - Survey and EMMC Quality (Peter Bentley)
 - Chapters (Mateo Botero)
- Main activities 2008-2009:
 - Release of new EMA Statute
 - IFISO (Croatia)
 - PT meeting in Faro
 - EM Quality Assessment

Moreover the extension of EMA membership to prospective students, students and alumni of the External Cooperation Window and Joint Doctorate Programs was discussed in order to bring a final proposal to the General Assembly in Vilnius 2009.

The following members of the policy team participated at the LG-09:

- Jean Carlos Pelicano – *Policy coordinator*
- Peter Bentley
- Edlira Alku
- Antonius Armanious

3 EMA Statute

One of the most important tasks of the policy team this term was to revisit EMA current Statute and improve it. The Statute contains the “rules of the game” for EMA, so it is both a sensitive and crucial document, especially for a young and dynamic organization such as EMA.

The following two main activities have taken place during 2008-2009:

- Release the new version of the Statute as voted by the GA-08 in Perugia (Italy). This new version has also been posted within the EMA website. Final ballot and results may be found within the following documents:



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- Prepare new amendments of the Statute to be proposed and voted by the GA-09 in Vilnius (Lithuania)⁴

⁴ Documents will be available within EMA website before GA-09

4 EMA Chapters

The policy team has been working together with the recent created EMA Chapters forum in order to establish common procedures and guidance on the following global issues:

- How to create and launch Chapters
- Conceptual framework of Chapters (definitions, geographical coverage, relation with SC, teams and CR...)
- Specific functions of Chapters

This joint collaboration between policy team and Chapters was an initiative launched as an answer to the GA-08 which requested a better integration of Chapters into EMA structure and Statute. This initiative has been lead by EMA Vice-president with the regular follow-up of the Steering Committee.⁵

The policy team has created along with the Vice-president and approval of the Steering Committee the following guidance items for the document prepared between the Vice-president, Chapters (and Team pro-Chapters) and policy team:

- EMA exhorts the spontaneous creation of Chapters upon to members agreement
- EMA will support members on creating Chapters
- The VP will be in charge of networking among Chapters
- Chapters shall be a gathering of members according to cultural, language, geographical location backgrounds
- A minimum number of members are needed to create a Chapter
- Chapters must present a directive board and structure in order to be incorporated within EMA
- Chapter must be compliant with EMA Statutes and policies
- Due to the organic process of creation and growing of Chapters the PT advices the SC and the elected VP to bring Chapters together in order to agree on their integration and participation within EMA structure and activities

⁵ All the information gathering the results of the different discussions may be found within the Vice-President annual report 2008-2009.

5 EMA student feedback project and quality matters

5.1 Background

Currently the EMA Policy Team is aware of two projects related to EMMC quality assessment and student feedback, namely ICUNet's Graduate Impact Survey (GIS) and the European Commission's Erasmus Mundus Quality Assessment Project (EMQAP). Our understanding is that the GIS is an ongoing project focused on the overall goals of the EM in general, such as the image of European education in the eyes of non-European students, cultural exchange and future career outcomes for alumni. While these are valuable goals, they are based at the EM program level, rather than EMMC specific.

On the other hand, the EMQAP is an EMMC level that focuses on the existence of best practices. It is a voluntary evaluation, whereby a small number of EMMCs nominated themselves to be evaluated. Also this project is by and large admin focused on issues such as visas, accommodation and university services.

5.2 Goals of the student feedback project

Many students and prospective students have had difficulty finding out information on student experiences in specific EMMCs. While there is ample survey data that indicates that Erasmus Mundus is working well overall, it is unclear whether this general experience is true for all EMMCs and all universities within them. Having looked at the results of our survey in Perugia, the one thing that surprised me most was the variation in scores given by single respondents based on the universities in question. In other words, while overall satisfaction is high, this was in spite of, rather than because of, some universities within their consortiums which were given poor ratings. Therefore, we think it would be a good idea for the EMA to develop a student feedback tool based at the university level for each program and make such data publicly available, allowing prospective students to know more about EMMCs and which universities they may prefer to nominate for their placements (in EMMCs that allow students to choose).

The goals of the EMA survey and feedback project differ substantially from the existing projects, as it aims to collect information directly from students from all EMMCs and the data will be publically available. Currently prospective students rely overwhelmingly on information from the Commission and the coordinating institution of the EMMC. Through this project the EMA can be utilized as a neutral source of information for prospective students on their EMMC of interest, providing unfiltered student feedback on its website. While the EMA website forum is a valuable addition for current students, it can not currently serve prospective students and is not structured for these goals.

These ideas have already been presented and discussed with Pedro Martinez-Macias and Jose Gutiérrez Fernández from the European Commission and the EACEA. Both have provided strong support for the EMA to develop such a project and have already identified a good practice used for Erasmus students developed in Norway and Sweden to achieve these goals. The EACEA have been in discussions with ICUNet on the feasibility of using the Swedish and Norwegian models on the following websites:

<http://iris.siu.no>

<http://www.stars.liu.se/inbound/index.html>

My next step for the project will be to continue to work within the Policy Team to review the questions on the paper survey handed out in Perugia and clarify the project goals. The students did find some of the questions in the Perugia survey confusing and we will do our best to ensure that any online questions will be carefully crafted. It will also be important to determine what the goals of an EMA survey will be, as if ICUNet is planning an ambitious online survey and evaluation like STARS (which I think would be a fantastic idea), it would be better for the EMA to complement these efforts rather than try something similar. For example, The EMA feedback system could focus more on open (non-multiple choice)

questions, such as those in the second section of the Perugia survey and work with ICUnet on the framing of its survey questions. We will therefore continue to liaise with the IT team of the EMA and Natalia Spartakova at ICUnet in order to understand what IT support the EMA can provide and what ICUnet have planned for the future.

Hopefully the Liaison Group meeting in Brussels will allow all interested parties (ICUnet, the Commission, EACEA and the EMA Steering Committee) to exchange information and develop the project further.

5.3 Questions to be addressed

- How should the EMA feedback system be structured?
 - o Closed survey questions or open ended questions? (or both?)
 - o EMMC level or university specific level for the EMMC?
- Should the EMA develop this project in-house with support from the IT Team or outsource the IT implementation to a third party?
 - o The benefits of developing in-house would be the cost savings, while outsourcing would ensure continuity once the project is up and running.
 - o Another option would be to lobby the EACEA/Commission to outsource this project to ICUnet, which the EACEA have already communicated interest in discussions with Sebastian at ICUnet. This would mean the budget would be sourced from outside the EMA, but in turn we would lose some control over content.

5.4 Additional projects on the agenda for the Policy Team

The Policy Team has identified the need for an internal feedback system on the performance of the EMA. Therefore we will investigate this issue and develop an internal survey for EMA members, in order to identify where the EMA is succeeding and where it needs improvement.

Currently Hanneke as president of the EMA has been receiving complaints directly from students unsatisfied with different aspects of their EMMC. Conflict resolution remains an ambiguous problem as it is not clear what role the EMA should play in such cases. Accordingly the need arises to identify an acceptable conflict resolution procedure that clearly instructs students as to the appropriate course of action to take based on their specific problem. For example, specific academic concerns are perhaps best addressed first at the university/ coordinating institution level, whereas the non-payment of scholarships should be addressed directly to the EACEA. The Policy Team will in the meantime liaise with the EACEA in order to develop a conflict resolution policy that clarifies the roles of the university, the EACEA and the EMA in responding to student concerns. This will be addressed at the next Liaison Group Meeting in Brussels.

5.5 Results of Policy survey conducted at the GA-08 in Perugia

At the EMA General Assembly in Perugia in June 2008, student and alumni representatives were asked to complete a survey evaluating their experiences at each university they attended within their Erasmus Mundus (EM) consortium. The questions asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 = Poor, 3 = Satisfactory and 5 = Excellent) their experiences on Arrival and Settling, Local Culture, University Experience & Courses and the adequacy of the EM Scholarship. Student and alumni representatives were also asked to answer a series of open-ended questions relating to their overall experiences. The EMA received 59 survey responses and are pleased with the overall positive feedback.

The average rating for Arrival and Settling was 3.6 with most respondents reporting positive experiences relating to their welcoming from the host university. The price of student housing and assistance from the

university in securing appropriate housing (particularly for students with families), were the areas of greatest concern identified in the survey and written feedback. On experience with Local Culture the average response was 3.3 with most students reporting positively on integrating with local culture, but having greater difficulties learning the local language and interacting with local students.

Most students rated highly the academic opportunities in their master's course with University Experience & Courses receiving an average rating of 3.7. In particular, experiences were very positive regarding student-professor relations, academic quality and overall academic experience. The survey found the EM Scholarship to be broadly adequate, receiving an average rating of 3.3. This rating however varied greatly among survey respondents, notably some students in EM master's courses with high tuition fees found the scholarship to be grossly inadequate.

Many prospective students have had difficulty finding information on student experiences in specific EM master's courses. While there is ample evidence from the EMA survey and others which indicates that Erasmus Mundus is working well overall, it is less clear whether this general experience is true for all EM master's courses and all universities within them. As the EMA survey evaluated student experiences at each university, the most interesting finding was the variation in ratings given by respondents across different universities within their consortium.

This initial survey was designed by the EMA Policy Team as a first step towards the involvement of the EMA into course quality and student feedback. The EMA will continue to work closely with the European Commission to develop an online survey and feedback system for the EMA website, which will provide prospective students with more course and university specific information. The EMA has an important role to play in gathering honest, accurate and disinterested feedback directly from its members and would like to thank everyone who took the time to provide critical feedback in Perugia.