

MASTERS

DOCTORAL

DOCTORATES

RESEARCH

PARTNERS

ERASMUS MUNDUS



Graduate Impact Survey

Summary of the results

October 2011





As in the years 2007-2010 the progress and development of the Erasmus Mundus Master Course (EMMC) programme has been monitored on behalf of the European Commission by conducting the Graduate Impact Survey (GIS). An addition to the concept of the Graduate Impact Survey was the conduction of a survey with two control groups, one with a very heterogeneous group with less international experience and one with members of the OCEANS network with more international experience. The online surveys addressed students and graduates. 2.820 Erasmus Mundus students and graduates participated in the survey along with 75 OCEANS members and 61 participants in the other control group. Another innovation in the project of evaluating Erasmus Mundus has been the implementation of focus groups to gather more information about the reasons underlying the survey data. Altogether 4 graduates and 13 students took part in the focus groups.

To summarize the findings of the surveys and the focus groups, it can be concluded that Europe is perceived as an **attractive work and study destination**. Students choose to participate in the Erasmus Mundus Master Courses, because they anticipate an **excellent education** in a highly developed environment and a **highly specialised field** of study and research (18%). The **scholarship** is another strong encouragement to apply for Erasmus Mundus (27%). Furthermore applicants value **mobility** (21%) and the possibility to get acquainted with **various cultures** and perceive EMMC as a **great opportunity regarding their planned career** (34%). Some of the expectations are not met as anticipated. First of all the **quality** of the programme is questioned since it is advertised as academic excellence. The students and graduates perceive their education as mostly satisfactory but not per se as excellent. There seems to be a strong **variation between universities and courses** which we urgently suggest should be compared and evaluated. Additionally, the practical issues of lacking the opportunity to form strong **networks** and get in-depth insights in the research of one study destination accompanying mobility affect the perception of the programme negatively. Furthermore it is perceived as rather difficult to obtain a work permit, so a number of graduates unintentionally have to leave Europe. The European job market is perceived as highly competitive, which necessitates establishing connections and being able to build a network. For graduates from developing countries or third countries, it might be easier to find a job in their home country, because of the comparatively high expertise they gained in the EMMC programme.

The programme's **personal impact** on the participants is diverse. The greatest perceived impact is the acquisition of **specialised knowledge**, which exceeds the level of both control groups. **Impact on career** is the most anticipated gain of the programme by students, but is not as strongly perceived by graduates as the gathering of knowledge. Another benefit from participating in Erasmus Mundus is a broadened mind set, which the participants describe as helpful for 'thinking out of the box'. By far the most benefit is attributed to the professional connections the students make and by the network they build.

The topic of **employability** has been assessed extensively by MKW Wirtschaftsforschung GmbH and Céréq and can be found in 'Erasmus Mundus Report: Thematic Clusters, Lot 2: Employability'. (http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/clusters/employability_en.php). Although the number of internships by EMMC students is by far higher than in the control groups, students and graduates experience a **lack of practical skills** and professional connections to companies and potential employers. Nevertheless the permanent term employment rate is distinctly higher for EMMC



graduates (16%) than for graduates of other programmes (OCEANS: 9%; other control group: 8%). This finding might be restricted to particular courses and should be looked into.

A critical point is the **awareness and visibility** of the Erasmus Mundus programme. The largest proportion of EMMC students and graduates found out about Erasmus Mundus via the internet (40%). Also a common source of information is word of mouth 40% of EMMC students and graduates found out about the programme via the internet. Compared to the control groups the percentage is relatively high, whereas the awareness OCEANS network is much more present in the universities (68% indicated to have heard about their study programme in their former university). The second largest source of information about EMMC with 27% (29% in 2010) is word of mouth, students get information from friends who are EMMC participants. Only 17% of EMMC participants have heard about Erasmus Mundus in their former university, which is slightly less than in 2010 (19%). The information by universities themselves seems rather promising, because this way the key demographic can be directly approached. Achieving a broader visibility of the programme also seems important to enhance the participants' career perspectives.

All in all it can be confirmed that EMMC has an impact on students' and graduates' life as well as on their employability. Nonetheless in some respects the programmes cannot live up to the participants expectations. Therefore the quality of courses and universities should be assessed to achieve a high quality of the programme.

Recommendations based on the results

Regarding the difficulties accompanying **mobility** universities should harmonise the contents and marking schemes of the courses.

For **integration** of the students offering more activities and classes with sedentary students would be helpful.

Since the application process for an **internship** is described as rather complicated, this should be looked into to evaluate whether the process can be simplified.

The advertising of Erasmus Mundus as academic excellence raises **expectations** regarding the quality of the program which are not entirely met. It might be valuable to align the information material of Erasmus Mundus with the realisation of the courses.

There are fundamental differences in the **quality of different courses and universities**. A closer examination of contents and evaluations of the courses might be helpful in keeping the academic standard of Erasmus Mundus.

EMA as well as the regional chapters enable students to stay in touch and strengthen the **network** they built during their study and should be encouraged.

Awareness of Erasmus Mundus could be very efficiently enforced by the partner universities for example through more or different information material.