

Erasmus Mundus

Graduate Impact Survey 2007-2009

Executive Summary



ERASMUS MUNDUS

Survey Results

This survey was conducted by ICU net.AG between October 2007 and February 2009, with the aim of analysing the impact of Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses on graduates since 2005. The following summary gives an overview of the main results.

Research Design and Participants

The survey consists of qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative part was conducted online and addressed first year students from 2007 and 2008 as well as former students having graduated between 2005 and 2008. Altogether, 1524 people participated in the quantitative evaluation, of whom 68.8% were students and 31.2% graduates.

Impact of Erasmus Mundus on Graduates - Results

GREATEST IMPACT OF ERASMUS MUNDUS

The graduates perceive the greatest impact of Erasmus Mundus to be on their attitude towards Europe and the EU (44.6%), followed by the estimated effect on their career and subject-related skills (42.5% and 40.2%). The influence on their personality is generally seen to be lower (32.1%), but in the years after graduation the estimated impact rises (37.6%). Those who observe an impact on their career come particularly from non-EU European countries (64.9%) and Africa (60.7%), while among Asians (54.9%) the estimated impact on the attitude towards Europe and the EU is bigger.

DOMICILE OF ERASMUS MUNDUS GRADUATES

International study programmes often face criticism of fostering “brain drain”. However, Erasmus Mundus graduates tend to return to their home countries within a year after graduation. 81.3% of them have returned to their home regions two years or more after having graduated.

ERASMUS MUNDUS AND STUDENTS' CAREERS

Apart from the fact many participants (42.5%) perceive that Erasmus Mundus has an impact on their career in general, 84% of graduates are also convinced that the programme will positively influence their future career prospects. This is borne out by the fact that participants who secure permanent employment are searching, on average, for less than 4 months, with a positive trend from 2005 to the present. Furthermore, graduates, particularly those from Africa (94.1%) and Latin America (82.1%) are convinced that their Erasmus Mundus experience had an influence on their employer's decision to hire them.

Compared to the prior job positions of Erasmus Mundus students, graduates do not tend to have more staff responsibility or higher management positions, which indicates that students are already very well-qualified when they start their Erasmus Mundus course. However, compared to students who had been working previously, graduates are more satisfied with their current job (72.8%) and their yearly income is also significantly higher (e.g. 29.1% of the graduates in the first year after graduation earn more than EUR 30 000 per year compared to 6.2% of the students in their former job). Furthermore, the organisations for which Erasmus Mundus graduates are working are more international (62.0% compared to 48.7%) and the graduates have many international contacts in their workplaces (58.4%).

Though the career situation of those in permanent employment can be judged as very positive, there is a high percentage of graduates who are not permanently employed (40.5% still not permanently employed two years or more after graduation). Some of those are doing another masters degree or PhD (32.4%), but many (54.1%) are still searching for a job up to two years after graduation. The unemployment rate is not related to any particular field of study. For those in the second year or longer after graduation, it is quite difficult to make statistically relevant differentiations, as the sample group becomes quite small. Yet the unemployed graduates are often from Africa (71.4%), non-EU European countries (62.5%) and Asia (57.5%).

ERASMUS MUNDUS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Most graduates and students view Europe and the EU positively (74.1%) and agree that they have gained much benefit from their time there (76.7%). Though graduates and students do not differ in their positive estimation of Europe, graduates even say that their attitude towards Europe/the EU changed in a positive way during their stay. Those from North Africa/Middle East (82.3%) and Africa (81.6%) are most positive, followed by EU citizens (76.0%), Latin Americans (74.6%), Europeans from non EU-countries (73.3%) and Asians (72.1%). Only North Americans/Australians tend to be a little less enthusiastic (55.7% see EU as a good thing).

For the majority, especially for Asians (93.4%) and North Americans/Australians (73.0%), the EU represents an economic union. Comparably high percentages perceive the EU as an important political player (37.8%) and as a union with common values (32.5%).

IMPACT OF ERASMUS MUNDUS ON PERSONALITY AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Well over half of all graduates (62.3%) chose “intercultural competence” as the greatest personal benefit gained from their Erasmus Mundus experience, followed by “communication competence” (26.5%) and “self-confidence” (25.4%). In addition, graduates perceive a great increase in subject-related skills (68.2%) and rate their knowledge of English significantly higher than students (70.5% compared to 56.7%). However, this is not true for host languages other than English.

Apart from representatives of engineering and natural sciences, who particularly developed their social competences (46.4% and 51.9%), graduates from all other study fields agree that they have mostly developed methodological skills (49.2%). Language competences are regarded as being the least developed (25.4%).

IMPACT OF ERASMUS MUNDUS ON SOCIAL LIFE

During their Erasmus Mundus course, students establish many international friendships and some even find a partner. Yet contact with students from the host countries is less frequent. Especially in France (43.3% spend free time every day/several times a week), Germany (30.8%), the United Kingdom (42.3%) and the Netherlands (38.6%), graduates do not often spend their free time with host-country students, whereas in countries like Italy (55.0%), Portugal (54.3%) or Spain (53.2%) the contact is more frequent. As the integration activities in the “low contact” countries are often rated to be very positive, possible reasons could be cultural differences which make it more difficult to build friendships in countries like Germany or the United Kingdom.

Evaluation of Various Aspects of the Erasmus Mundus Programme

PROMOTIONAL ASPECTS

The three most frequent ways to find out about Erasmus Mundus are through the Internet (37.9%), friends (30.1%) and university (20.2%). But the way of getting to know about the programme depends as well on the region of origin: participants from North America/Australia (41.2%) and EU countries (38.5%) are often informed by their universities, in Africa (42.9%) and North Africa/Middle East (40.0%) friends are important promoters and in non-EU European countries (50.7%), Africa (42.9%), Latin America (35.9%) and Asia (37.1%) the Internet is a crucial source of information.

MOTIVATION TO DO A MASTERS DEGREE AND TO STUDY ON ERASMUS MUNDUS

The vast majority of students and graduates want, or wanted, to do a masters course in order to improve their knowledge and skills. Another motivation that many participants share is that a masters degree might result in better career prospects.

Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses in particular are chosen because students receive a scholarship (68.2%), because of the academic level of EMMC universities (35.1%), the availability of a suitable degree subject (30.6%) and the award of a multiple degree (20.0%). The attraction of the scholarship does not vary with the region of origin of participants. Only among students from EU countries does the motive to get a multiple degree dominate, as they have had no access to the Erasmus Mundus scholarship in the first phase of the programme.

EVALUATION OF THE MOBILITY ASPECTS OF ERASMUS MUNDUS

A significant majority of graduates (82.5%) rate the mobility aspect to be (very) valuable in academic terms. This appreciation even rises in the years after graduation.

SATISFACTION WITH ERASMUS MUNDUS

The satisfaction rate appears to be (rather) high (89.6%). Furthermore, nearly all participants (97.2%) would recommend the programme - without, or with only some, reservations.

EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY OF COURSES

Most graduates are not only satisfied with Erasmus Mundus in general (89.6%), but with the quality of their courses as well (76.8%). Nevertheless there has been a significant drop in satisfaction between graduates from 2007 (86.2%) and 2008 (72.5%). This is particularly pronounced among graduates having studied humanities and social sciences (27.3%).

This development, as well as the reasons for this result, will need further investigation. It might be that, at the launch of the programme, students were more forgiving in the event of inconveniences and that expectations have risen as Erasmus Mundus has become better established.

GREATEST CHALLENGES

According to graduates, administrative (59.4%) and mobility (29.5%) issues are the greatest challenges in Erasmus Mundus. Mobility issues were of most concern among those graduating in 2005-2006, while graduates from the years between 2007 and 2009 rate administrative problems like visa issues to be most dominant, whatever their region of origin. In addition, Africans and Asians regard their limited host-country knowledge and lack of host-country language skills to be problematic.

Generally, we conclude that graduates are very satisfied with Erasmus Mundus, which has had a highly positive impact on their career, on their attitude towards Europe and on their personal development. At the same time, there should be an increased focus on the administrative and organisational side of Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses.