

Online Consultation on the Future of the Erasmus Mundus Programme

Summary of Results

This is a summary of the results of the open public online consultation which took place in the initial months of 2007 as part of the impact assessment and ex-ante evaluation of a future Erasmus Mundus (EM) programme.

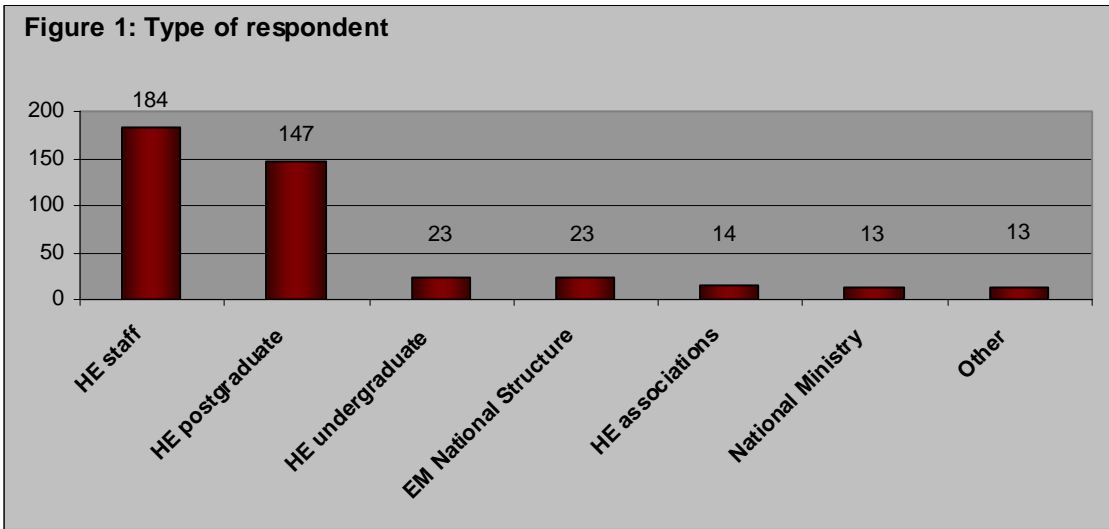
Chapter I concentrates on statistical findings and an analysis of these findings. Chapter II summarises the answers given to the open questions of the consultation.

I. STATISTICAL FINDINGS INCLUDING ANALYSIS

1. Respondents to the consultation answered questions in relation to three main subject areas. These were:

- Needs and programme objectives. Questions pertained to the accuracy of the needs analysis underlying the current Erasmus Mundus programme and the relevance of the current programme objectives, together with any suggestions for change – including discontinuation of the programme;
- The design of a possible future Erasmus Mundus programme. Questions concerned the relevance of the current actions of the programme for the future (i.e. the next ten years) and what changes/new actions would be necessary to better meet future needs in Higher Education (HE);
- Programme funding and implementation. Respondents were asked to express their views as to how well funding is being distributed and to suggest any modifications in this area, the programme management and dissemination of good practices resulting from the programme.

2. A total of 417 responses to the online consultation were received. These were distributed amongst different types of stakeholders as follows:



Source: Online consultation

Most responses, therefore, came from HE staff (44%) and from HE postgraduate students (35%).

3. The majority of respondents (around 60%) had an EU member state as their country of origin – mainly France (21%) and Germany (8%). Around 40% had a non EU state as their country of origin – mainly India (11.7%). The total distribution of respondents by country of origin is provided below:

Table 1: Respondent's country of origin

	Number of records	% Records
FR - France	87	(20.9%)
DE - Germany	34	(8.2%)
ES - Spain	25	(6%)
IT - Italy	15	(3.6%)
UK - United Kingdom	14	(3.4%)
BE - Belgium	12	(2.9%)
FI - Finland	8	(1.9%)
NL - Netherlands	8	(1.9%)
PT - Portugal	8	(1.9%)
PL - Poland	6	(1.4%)
SE - Sweden	6	(1.4%)
AT - Austria	5	(1.2%)
EE - Estonia	5	(1.2%)
EL - Greece	5	(1.2%)
CZ - Czech Republic	3	(0.7%)
DK - Denmark	2	(0.5%)
HU - Hungary	2	(0.5%)
LT - Lithuania	2	(0.5%)
LV - Latvia	2	(0.5%)
RO - Romania	2	(0.5%)
CY - Cyprus	1	(0.2%)
IE - Ireland	1	(0.2%)
SK - Slovakia	1	(0.2%)
Other	163	(39.1%)

Source: Online consultation

4. In relation to the country of residence, around 80% of respondents lived in the EU at the time of the consultation, most of them in France (around 20%) followed by Germany (12%). Overall, the consultation received replies from people living in 24 European countries, and over 50 different Third countries, showing a good geographical spread. Around 20% of respondents lived outside the EU with most respondents coming from India (8%). The total distribution of respondents by country of residence is provided below:

Table 2: Respondent's country of residence

	Number of records	% Records
FR - France	93	(22.3%)
DE - Germany	51	(12.2%)
ES - Spain	38	(9.1%)
UK - United Kingdom	37	(8.9%)
IT - Italy	14	(3.4%)
BE - Belgium	11	(2.6%)
FI - Finland	11	(2.6%)
SE - Sweden	11	(2.6%)
NL - Netherlands	10	(2.4%)
PT - Portugal	10	(2.4%)
DK - Denmark	9	(2.2%)
EE - Estonia	5	(1.2%)
CZ - Czech Republic	4	(1%)
IE - Ireland	4	(1%)
PL - Poland	4	(1%)
AT - Austria	3	(0.7%)
EL - Greece	3	(0.7%)
HU - Hungary	3	(0.7%)
RO - Romania	3	(0.7%)
LT - Lithuania	2	(0.5%)
CY - Cyprus	1	(0.2%)
LV - Latvia	1	(0.2%)
SI - Slovenia	1	(0.2%)
SK - Slovakia	1	(0.2%)
Other	87	(20.9%)

Source: Online consultation

5. As reflected in Table 3, around two thirds of respondents had participated in the Erasmus Mundus programme.

Table 3: Previous participation in the Erasmus Mundus programme

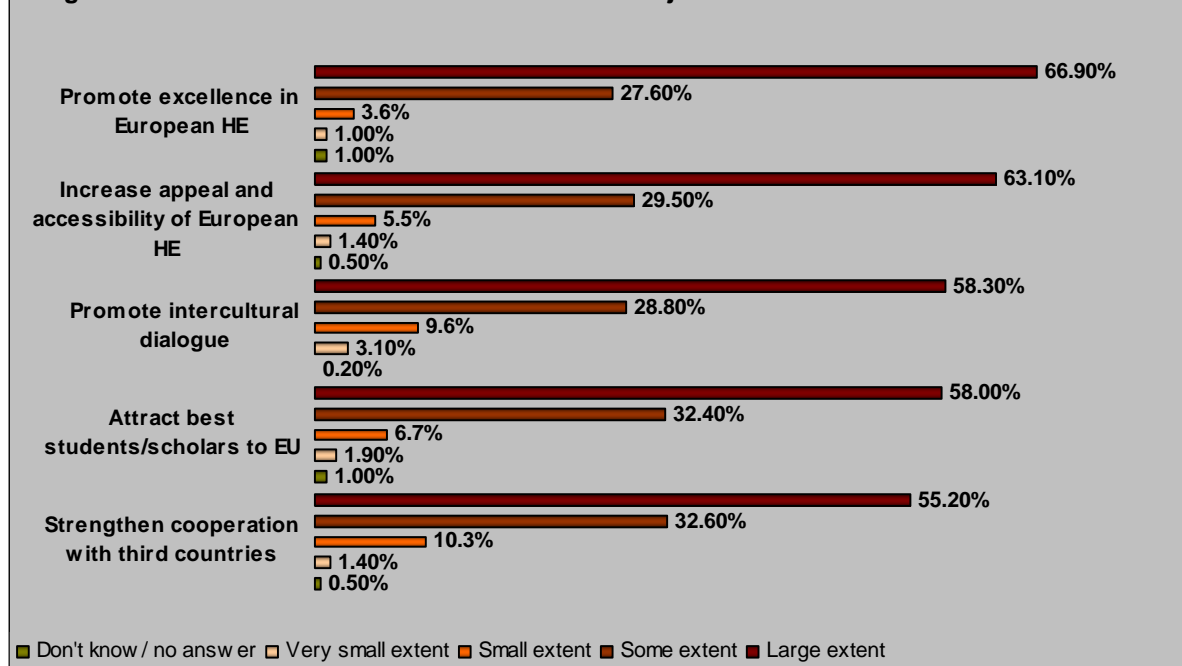
	Number of records	% Records
Yes	263	(63.1%)
No	154	(36.9%)

Source: Online consultation

6. In relation to the **needs and objectives of the current programme**, the vast majority of respondents (around 78% in total) thought the needs analysis presented in the consultation – based on the original needs' analysis produced for the impact assessment of the current Erasmus Mundus programme - to be still accurate. Around 15% of respondents considered that the needs analysis had lost part of its accuracy and 16% of respondents reported that the needs analysis had lost all its accuracy.

7. Regarding the current programme objectives most respondents (between half and two-thirds depending on the particular objective) reported that the programme's objectives were still relevant to a large extent, as detailed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Relevance of current Erasmus Mundus objectives



Source: Online consultation

Thus, between 55% and 67% of respondents, depending on the particular objective, thought that Erasmus Mundus objectives were still relevant to a large extent and between 28% and 33% - again depending on the objective - considered they were still relevant to some extent. Overall, 87% of respondents thought that the objective of promoting intercultural dialogue was still relevant to a large extent or to some extent, while 94% thought that the objective of promoting high quality courses and excellence in European higher education were still relevant to a large extent or to some extent, with the other three current programme objectives falling in between these two figures. A rather small proportion of respondents found the current goals relevant only to a small or very small extent in the current context. This held across the variety of respondents to the survey. The main exception was undergraduate students in relation to the objective of attracting the best international students and scholars to Europe (which around one third of them considered relevant to a small or very small extent).

8. The online consultation also enquired whether any alternative concrete objectives would fit current needs in the European higher education area better than the current objectives. A fifth of respondents – in particular from national ministries and student/academic bodies working in the field of HE - reported some concrete additional objectives (see Chapter II for further details).

9. In relation to the needs and objectives of the programme, the consultation asked how consistent and non-contradictory respondents found the current programme objectives with each other. A clear majority of over 80% of respondents viewed the current objectives of the Erasmus Mundus programme as being consistent and non-contradictory, with only 9% of respondents reporting that the objectives were not consistent and/or were contradictory (see Chapter II for further details).

10. As a **conclusion** it thus appears that Erasmus Mundus was largely viewed as relevant to the needs in the European higher education area. Its various objectives are seen by the majority of the respondents as adequate and helpful to meet these needs.

11. Regarding **the design of a possible future Erasmus Mundus programme**, the consultation asked whether current actions should be modified to better meet future needs in the higher education area or not. Around 44% of respondents reported that current Erasmus Mundus actions, in their present form, would be the best way to address future needs in higher education in Europe. A larger proportion of respondents (around 49%), however, reported that they would want modifications to be introduced to the current programme design.

12. In term of specific actions, respondents to the consultation showed strong support for Actions 1 and 2, "Erasmus Mundus Master courses" and "Erasmus Mundus scholarships", with almost half of the respondents to the online consultation reporting that they would like these activities to continue in their current form. A further 25% reported that they would like these activities to continue in a modified form – see Chapter II for further details - and around 15% of respondents reported that they would like these Actions to be expanded to include new elements, as reported in Table 4. Less than 1% of respondents considered that these activities should not continue in the future.

Table 4: Level of support to current Action 1 and Action 2 (Masters Courses and Scholarships for Third-country students and scholars).

	Number of records	% Records
A future Erasmus Mundus programme should continue to include scholarships for Third-country students and scholars in their current form.	208	(49.9%)
A future Erasmus Mundus programme should continue to include Masters Courses in their current form.	205	(49.2%)
A future Erasmus Mundus programme should include this/these modification(s) to these actions (please specify below)	107	(25.7%)
A future Erasmus Mundus programme should also cover the following (please specify below)	64	(15.3%)
Don't know/ no answer	3	(0.7%)
These actions should not be included in a future programme (please explain below)	2	(0.5%)

Source: Online consultation.

13. As highlighted above, the consultation asked respondents to explicitly report on whether they would consider that the programme design should be modified to include new types of grants under the present Action 2 (scholarships). Table 5 presents the results obtained. Over three quarters of those who responded that they would like Action 2 to be expanded supported the introduction of scholarships for European students and for doctoral studies. About a quarter of respondents supported the introduction of short-term mobility grants for students and post-doctoral studies, whereas only 14% supported the introduction of grants for undergraduate studies.

Table 5: Additional elements that an Erasmus Mundus programme should cover in the future

	Number of records	% Records
Scholarships for European students	53	(82.8%)
Doctoral studies	49	(76.6%)
Short-term mobility grants for students	18	(28.1%)
Post-doctoral studies	16	(25%)
Undergraduate studies	9	(14.1%)

Source: Online consultation.

14. Support for Actions 3 (partnerships) and 4 (attractiveness projects) in their current form is presented in Tables 6 and 7. Almost half of respondents supported the continuation of these actions in their current form, whereas under a fifth of respondents would like these actions to continue in a modified form (see Chapter II for further details). Less than 4% of respondents indicated that these actions should not continue in the future.

Table 6: Level of support to current Action 3 (Partnerships with Third countries)

	Number of records	% Records
A future Erasmus Mundus programme should continue to include this action in its current form	203	(48.7%)
A future programme should include this/these modification(s) to this action (please specify below)	82	(19.7%)
Don't know/no answer	23	(5.5%)
This action should not be included in a future programme (please explain why below)	4	(1%)

Source: Online consultation

Table 7: Level of support to current Action 4 (Enhancing attractiveness of European higher education)

	Number of records	% Records
A future Erasmus Mundus programme should continue to include this action in its current form	197	(47.2%)
A future programme should include this/these modification(s) to this action (please describe and explain below)	57	(13.7%)
Don't know/no answer	36	(8.6%)
This action should not be included in a future programme (please explain why below)	16	(3.8%)

Source: Online consultation

15. As a **conclusion** it could be said that the level of support for the four Actions of Erasmus Mundus among respondents is high: a significant number of respondents would like the current Erasmus Mundus Actions to continue in their present form. A relatively large proportion of respondents, however, would want modifications being introduced to these actions. The most commonly supported modifications were: the introduction of scholarships for European students and doctoral students.

16. As regards to **programme funding and implementation** the consultation asked whether respondents considered that funds were appropriately distributed amongst the programme actions and beneficiaries. Overall, 55% of respondents considered that funds were appropriately

distributed in the current programme, whereas 30% considered that they should be distributed differently - 15% of respondents did not know/did not answer the question. Differences were however perceived in relation to this issue depending on the type of respondent. Most students (around two thirds) - undergraduate and, in particular, postgraduates - reported to be satisfied with the way funds are distributed. University staff, national/regional authorities and EM National Structures reported lower levels of satisfaction.

Of those that wanted changes to the current funding distribution, slightly under two thirds, across all categories of respondents, wanted funding to increase for various groups of beneficiaries. In most cases European students were mentioned as a type of beneficiary to be included with a more central role in the programme. This was also the case in relation to doctoral students. Also it was suggested that the programme should focus more strongly on attracting Asian students in particular given the likely strategic importance of this geographical area for the EU in the future.

Almost 40% of respondents who wanted changes to the funding allocation reported that they would want funding to increase for various actions in the programme. This mainly referred to Actions 1 and 4. In relation to Action 1 it was mentioned that greater allocations should be made for Universities to be able to more adequately build Erasmus Mundus Master courses.

Around 16% of respondents suggested that changes should be made to reduce the funding allocated to particular groups, mainly reporting that this should be the case in relation to third country students. Around 9% of respondents suggest reducing funding for specific actions namely Action 2 and, interestingly since some respondents had reported that this Action required additional funding Action 4. An overview of the above discussion is given in Table 8.

Table 8: Suggested alterations to Erasmus Mundus funding

	Type of beneficiary/action suggested	Reason given
Increase Funding for Beneficiaries	European Students	EU students under-funded compared to Third Country students
	Doctoral students	To enhance competitiveness
	Students from Asia	Asia is a more important region than other regions
Decrease funding for Beneficiaries	Third Country Students	Funding should be based on needs of students
Increase Funding for Action	Action 1	To more adequately build Master Courses
	Action 4	To able to better promote the European HE area
Decrease Funding for Action	Action 2	Funding should be based on the needs of Third Country students
	Action 4	With clear priorities less funding would be necessary

Source: Online consultation

17. Other questions under programme management and implementation concerned possible modifications in the management of Erasmus Mundus, in particular in relation to: the Erasmus Mundus National Structures, the best dissemination strategies and lastly what element(s) of the programme are more essential for a possible future EM. Only a small minority (17.5%) of the respondents – across all categories - would want changes to the management to be introduced:

Table 9: Assessment of whether changes to the management of the programme should be introduced

	Number of records	% Records
Yes	73	(17.5%)
No	199	(47.7%)
Don't know/ no answer	145	(34.8%)

Source: Online survey

18. In particular, the online consultation asked whether the role of the National Structures should be modified, with broadly similar results: only around 15% of respondents reported that they would like changes to the role of National Structures being introduced.

Table 10: Assessment of whether changes to the role of the programme National Structures should be introduced

	Number of records	% Records
Yes	64	(15.3%)
No	217	(52%)
Don't know/no answer	136	(32.6%)

Source: Online survey

19. The survey also highlighted that the most favoured dissemination method across all categories of respondents is websites and conferences (79% and 63% respectively), followed by publications and newsletter (43% and 41% respectively).

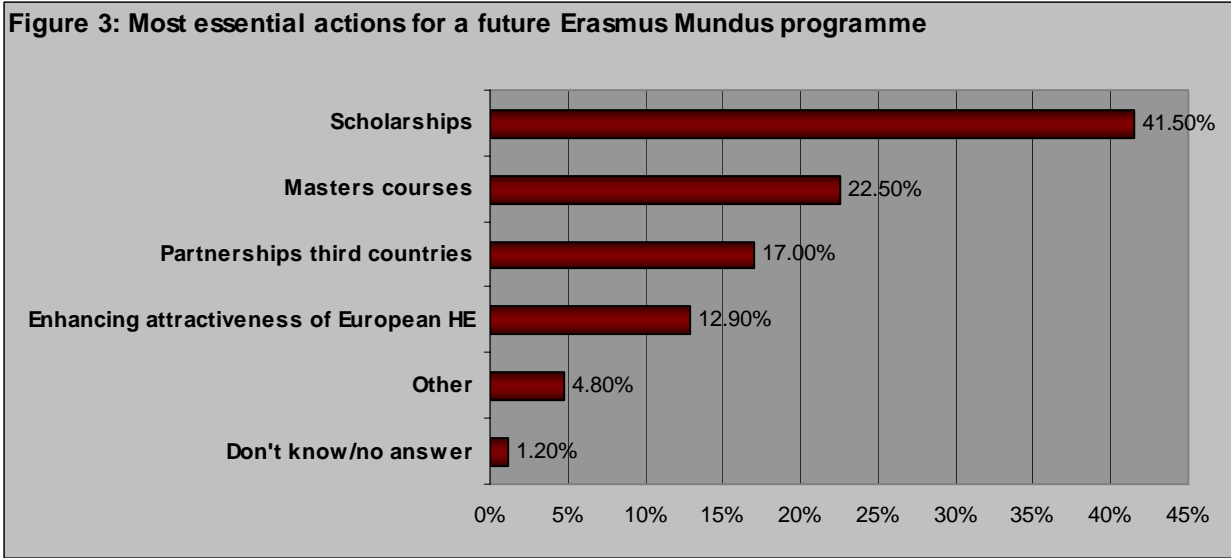
Table 11: Best way to identify and disseminate good practices produced by the programme

	Number of records	% Records
Websites	329	(78.9%)
Conferences	264	(63.3%)
Publications	179	(42.9%)
Newsletters	170	(40.8%)
Other (please specify)	42	(10.1%)
CD ROMs	30	(7.2%)
Don't know/no answer	8	(1.9%)

Source: Online consultation

20. Opinions as to what is the most essential element of the programme differ across categories. Most students and university staff mentioned scholarships as the most essential element; national/regional authorities and EM National Structures mentioned master courses, while bodies operating in HE pointed to enhancing the attractiveness of European Higher Education. Overall, however, scholarships were the most favoured element of the programme (40% of respondents) followed by Masters courses (22%) – as reflected in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Most essential actions for a future Erasmus Mundus programme



Source: Online consultation

21. As a **conclusion** it could be argued that the programme stakeholders are broadly satisfied with the way the Erasmus Mundus programme is implemented and are also supportive of a future Erasmus Mundus programme. A significant proportion of respondents, however, suggested changes in the current allocation of funds. Respondents in management positions (university staff, National Structures and bodies active in HE) most frequently mentioned the benefits of EU students receiving more funding whilst reducing the funding allocation to Third country students within the programme. As regards to particular Actions, Action 1 was frequently reported as being under-funded in the current programme. More funds would be required, according to respondents, to improve the quality and coherence of Erasmus Mundus masters courses. Respondents in management positions were also more critical in relation to the management of the current programme than students. National Structures, in particular, would like to become more involved in the management of EM (see also Chapter II for more details).

The analysis has not revealed significant differences between respondents that had been involved in the programme and those that had not been involved. The reason for this is likely to be that respondents not having participated in the programme are likely to base their opinion on the experience of people that have participated – with which they tended to be familiar, as highlighted by some respondents.

II. SUMMARY OF WRITTEN COMMENTS

22. This summary deals with the answers to the open questions given by respondents to the online consultation. Roughly one-third of respondents provided responses to open-ended questions. They provided comments on three subject areas:

- Needs and programme objectives. Within the context of the closed questions of the survey, respondents were asked to reflect on the relevance of the objectives of the Erasmus Mundus programme, together with any suggestions for change. In the open

questions respondents were asked to list concrete objectives that would fit current needs in the European higher education area better than those currently targeted by the programme and to list any contradictions between current programme objectives.

- The design of the future Erasmus Mundus programme. Within the context of the closed questions respondents were asked to indicate the relevance of the current actions of the programme for the future (i.e. the next ten years) and what changes/new actions would be necessary to better meet future needs in HE. In those cases in which current actions were not considered sufficiently relevant respondents were asked in the open questions to indicate (1) what modification(s) to the actions would be necessary and/or (2) what areas a future Erasmus Mundus programme should also cover.
- Programme funding and implementation. Lastly, in a series of semi-open questions respondents were asked to express their opinion as to how well funding is being distributed and voice any suggestions for change in this area as well as in the areas of programme management and the dissemination of good practices resulting from the programme. They were also asked to report on quality monitoring and the single major change they would introduce to the programme.

23. With regards to **needs and programme objectives**, there was a consensus among respondents who reported to believe that changes in the objectives of the programme should be introduced and responded to the open question following up on this topic: they predominantly felt that institutionalised cooperation based on mutual interest with Third country universities was important in order to meet global needs that the HE area should be trying to address, such as conflict solving, environmental changes, energy management, etc. In line with this is the opinion voiced by a number of students pointing to the need for cooperation between Europe and Third countries as their major goal, which should not be based solely on concerns with competitiveness. As one student puts it: *“The main principles for any kind of educational co-operation with Third countries should be solidarity and reciprocity, but Erasmus Mundus’ aims are all very much one-way oriented and the programme is not based on mutual benefit and partnership. The aim not only to increase the appeal and accessibility of mobility to Europe, but also of cooperation with Third countries needs to be strengthened more in Erasmus Mundus”*.

Some respondents, in particular students, also pointed to the need for a better mutual understanding between peoples and cultures and considered that the programme should especially put a greater focus on European students learning more of the world outside Europe. As one informant put it: *“As the future hub of the world with dynamic economies and large young population may be shifting away from Europe to, perhaps, the East (e.g. Asia), there might be the need for Europe to learn and understand more about the wisdom in those parts of the world”*.

Various quality issues were also raised. Mostly students but also academic staff stressed that there is a need to attract the best international (EU and non-EU) students to achieve internationally competitive world-class research. There is no guarantee that the programme achieves this aim. A second issue concerns the quality of the master courses. Some post-graduate students were not entirely convinced about it.

A number of National Structures pointed to the fact that there is a conflict between the desire to increase access to higher education in Europe in general and the desire to attract top students.

Some respondents held the view that accessibility to EM courses is very difficult for less talented students and it should be expanded.

24. In relation to **programme design** the majority of respondents in all categories would want doctoral studies, short-term mobility grants for students and scholarships for European students equal to those of Third country students added to the programme as new elements. In the view of, mostly, student but also academic staff, giving EU students an equal share of the available grants would generate a wider interest from European students in the programme and improve the relation between students, as frustrations regarding different financial situations between types of students would disappear. Also, in this context, European students would be truly exposed to information regarding the current situations in Third countries. Furthermore, it was argued that the relation between Third country students and the EU institutions where they had studied would be tightened if a doctoral track was to be added to the programme.

Qualitative responses also reported a desire to see fundamental changes to Action 4 as there were concerns that the Erasmus Mundus programme was not being 'marketed' well. The action was reported by some respondents to have a "meta" role in relation to the rest of the actions of the programme that it was not fulfilling completely. Some respondents suggested that professional commercial agencies or broadcasting companies, rather than universities, could be entrusted with Action 4 projects since universities are less familiar with designing and implementing this kind of activity. This would likely require additional resources for the action. Also, quite a number of respondents suggested that bigger and more global projects should be funded under Action 4 and that the action should be used for promoting selected masters courses. Finally, the action should provide funds to National Structures to promote the programme and its masters courses.

A university association highlighted that it considered a good idea to continue to give support to existing Erasmus Thematic Networks to create an international dimension, reporting that *"This is another excellent way to enhance attractiveness and to improve quality through international cooperation on a subject-specific basis"*. It was also suggested in some of the open replies that future programmes should include practical tools for providing advice to future Erasmus Mundus students and scholars.

Some National Structures reported to want to see changes to Action 1 introduced. In Action 1 priority should be given, according to them, to those countries that do not have Erasmus Mundus Master Courses so that the geographical spread throughout the EU becomes more balanced. As regards the disciplines masters courses are operating in, the picture provided by respondents was a mixed one: some pleaded for all disciplines being covered, others for prioritising disciplines which reflect current societal needs best.

Some National Structures reported that they would also like to be more involved in the management of EM, for instance promoting the programme and through monitoring responsibilities. Some students also indicated in their open replies that they find the management of the programme detached and would favour further involvement of National Structures in the management of the programme.

In relation to quality issues respondents would welcome better monitoring of the study programmes offered in Erasmus Mundus. As a representative of a university association put it: "A

pool of subject-specific experts that have also a substantial knowledge of European and international cooperation in higher education should assist the European Commission in monitoring the quality of courses and projects by giving objective and in-depth advice based on a profound understanding of the discipline in question as it is customary within most higher education institutions in the EU". Academic staff voiced similar recommendations. Respondents advanced some methodologies on how this monitoring should occur, mainly by incorporating faculty and students into monitoring activities: regular evaluation of programmes by the students accompanied by periodic external peer review.

No complete new actions for the programme were suggested by respondents to the online consultation, although in some cases the changes suggested by them would in practice constitute a complete new design of a given action. Action 4 is an example of this. Some respondents suggesting changes to this action argued for a complete redesign of the action with commercial marketing organisations taking a more active role in it. A second example concerned respondents' request for funding to EU students to be incorporated as central to the programme. Other respondents reported that Master courses should be built right from the outset in partnership with Third country universities.

25. With regards to **programme funding and implementation** the most salient messages from open responses were that:

- (1) European students should receive grants equivalent to the one received by Third country students for their mobility. It was reported that if this did not happen, European students will most likely, largely opt out of the programme.
- (2) Some respondents reported that the budget for Third country students could be reduced to achieve the increase mentioned in the previous point, or to reallocate this budget to other actions.
- (3) The 15.000 EUR currently available for master courses should be increased (with some suggestions to double this amount).
- (4) Some National Structures would like to be more involved in the management of Erasmus Mundus, including the promotion and the marketing of the programme and its masters courses, selection of universities/students and monitoring.
- (5) Regarding quality and monitoring, a majority of respondents would welcome better monitoring of the study programmes supported by EM.
- (6) It was also repeatedly suggested to make the programme better known (especially in Europe) and to communicate its achievements to the media.
- (7) A frequent suggestion of many respondents was to link the programme up to the labour market and involve the social partners in the programme. It was suggested to organise meetings between employers, students and HE institutions involved in the programme.
- (8) As regards student services, these should be improved, especially as far as visas are concerned.
- (9) In relation to the single major change that respondents would introduce to the programme, most respondents indicated that this would be securing additional funding for it, in particular to fund participation in the programme of EU students.
- (10) Finally, it was suggested that the funding mechanism for scholarships should change, with the amount depending on the needs of students as well as on the cost of living of a country a student is visiting.

26. As a **conclusion**, respondents have, sometimes in quite some detail, commented upon the goals and actions of Erasmus Mundus, its future design and funding issues. Some have suggested changes and some have suggested new elements to be added. The most prominent among the suggestions in the qualitative responses to the online consultation were:

- (1) Changing the goals of Erasmus Mundus from being too EU centred and one-sided to become more co-operative with Third countries.
- (2) Raising quality by ensuring the selection of the best students and stricter monitoring of Erasmus Mundus master programmes.
- (3) Adding doctoral studies as well as scholarships for EU students.
- (4) Changing Action 4 into a “more professional” and targeted action line.
- (5) Creating a better geographical spread of Erasmus Mundus programmes throughout Europe.

27. It must be kept in mind that roughly only one-third of the 417 respondents have responded to the open questions. Two-thirds have not done so mostly because they are satisfied with the programme in its current form.