

Project Fiche: No. 7

Erasmus Mundus – Action 2: Partnerships, Lot - Western Balkans

1. Basic information

- 1.1 ABAC Number:** SI2.537815
- 1.2 Title:** Erasmus Mundus - Action 2: Partnerships Lot - Western Balkans
- 1.3 ELARG Statistical code:** 02.26 - Education and culture
- 1.4 Location:** Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro and Serbia as well as Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99

Implementing arrangements:

- 1.5 Contracting Authority (EC):** European Community represented by the Commission of the European Communities on behalf of the Beneficiaries
- 1.6 Implementing Agency:** The programme will be implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
- 1.7 Beneficiary:** Graduate and under-graduate students from the Western Balkans

Financing:

- 1.8 Overall cost (VAT excluded)¹:** EUR 12 000 000
- 1.9 EC contribution:** EUR 12 000 000
- 1.10 Final date for contracting:** 30 November 2010
- 1.11 Final date for execution of contracts:** 30 November 2012
- 1.12 Final date for disbursements:** 30 November 2013

¹ The total cost of the project should be net of VAT and/or other taxes. Should this not be the case, the amount of VAT and the reasons why it should be considered eligible should be clearly indicated.

2. Overall Objective and Project Purpose

2.1 Overall Objective

Contribute towards the development of human resources and the international cooperation capacity of higher education institutions in the Western Balkans.

2.2 Project purpose

Enable the exchange of academic staff and students at all levels thereby enhancing their knowledge and skills.

2.3 Link with AP/NPAA / EP/ SAA²

Higher Education is an issue mentioned in all the European / Accession Partnerships (except Montenegro) as a medium priority. The AP for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the EP for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo also indicate higher education as a sector for promoting regional cooperation.

2.4 Link with MIPD

This programme has been designed on the basis of the IPA Multi-beneficiary Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document (MIPD) 2009-2011³ in which education is a priority under Section 2.3.2.3. As noted in the MIPD, the objectives of aid in the area of education is to: Support the development and the quality of the higher education systems through balanced cooperation between local higher education institutions and those of the EU Member States; Enable mutual enrichment and better understanding between the EU Member States and the IPA beneficiaries through the exchange of academic staff and students at all levels and through the provision of postgraduate studies to highly qualified students in EU universities.

2.5 Link with National Development Plan

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, priorities for higher education are identified in the Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS) which apart from the adoption of the Higher Education Law, aim at establishing entity-level higher education funds as well as public and transparent mechanisms of quality assurance, including the procedures for periodic external assessment of universities. In addition, there exists a set of priorities for the implementation of the Higher Education Law in relation to the harmonisation of lower level of legislation with the state law, institutional development in particular the establishment of relevant agencies for the recognition of qualifications, quality assurance and accreditation; the transformation of public universities from loose associations of faculties to being integrated institutions.

² AP = Accession Partnership; NPAA = National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (for Candidates), National Action Plan (for Potential Candidates); EP= European Partnership; SAA = Stabilisation and Association Agreement

³ C(2009)5418

The key priorities of the National Programme for Croatia's Accession into EU for 2009 referring to higher education include the increase of mobility of students and teaching staff, increase of access to higher education as well as the strengthening of academic recognition of the Croatian higher education institutions outside Croatia. The Programme also foresees that Croatia will eventually join the Erasmus Mundus programme. Higher education is also a key priority in the Croatian Government's strategic document for education development "Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010" whose priorities and activities are in line with the National Programme for Croatia's Accession into EU.

3. Description of project

3.1 Background and justification

The European Union recognises the importance of higher education for economic and social development. Higher education plays a crucial role in producing high quality human resources, in disseminating scientific discovery and advanced knowledge through teaching and educating future generations of citizens, high level professionals and political leaders, who in turn can contribute to better governance and social cohesion.

The increasing speed at which existing knowledge becomes obsolete, and the rapid changes in the means by which it is delivered and renewed will require high adaptability of the educational sector to meet the needs of the economy and of society as a whole. In the context of globalisation, Beneficiaries that are only weakly connected to the global knowledge economy will find themselves increasingly at a disadvantage and will not be able to generate adequate socio-economic conditions for the population.

Against this background, the promotion of international cooperation between the European Union and Third-Country Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and, in particular, the facilitation of institution-based mobility is a win-win situation not only to improve the results of education, but also to create lasting links and generate mutual enrichment and understanding between peoples. Moreover the mobility scheme envisaged under this specific Lot translates a political choice for the region and is complementary to other actions developed in the area. This programme offers a unique higher education institutional cooperation frame and training opportunities relevant to the skilled manpower needs of the Western Balkans, the students and academic staff benefit from the opportunity to study, teach and research in EU countries and participating universities raise their capacities, build pools of expertise and gain international visibility.

More specifically, the reform efforts of the Candidate and potential candidates for accession include improving the quality of their education systems. This programme aims to build ties at university level through consortia activities and to set up programmes for student mobility between the EU Member States and the Western Balkans.

In 2007, the European Commission proposed to increase the number of scholarships for graduate and undergraduate students in the Western Balkans. This follows both the recommendation of the Salzburg Communication and the Council Conclusions in December 2006 which emphasised the desirability of promoting people-to-people contacts by making more such scholarships available. In addition, according to the Communication of March

2008⁴ "Western Balkans: Enhancing the European Perspective" and following the recommendations of the Council Meeting of January 2008, the Commission has decided to double the 2007 budget for scholarships as from the academic year 2010-2011. Therefore, the budget and the number of scholarships under Action 2 has been doubled from IPA 2007 to IPA 2009.

At the end of 2008, the former External Cooperation Window has been integrated as Action II "Partnerships" under the new Erasmus Mundus II programme⁵ which aims to promote institutional cooperation and mobility activities.

3.2 Assessment of project impact, catalytic effect, sustainability and cross border impact

The programme will have a catalytic effect on the implementation of the Bologna recommendations and will strongly contribute to the promotion of mutual understanding in a multicultural environment and training.

Performance is monitored through desk and field monitoring. The Erasmus Mundus National Structures act as information offices in EU Member States.

For all activities regarding the mobility of students from both partner and non-partner institutions, applicants must explain in which way these mobility exchanges favour the creation of durable links with the Candidate and Potential Candidates for accession, how they can respond to the social, economical and political needs of the Candidate and Potential Candidates for accession concerned and how they will help to disseminate European social and democratic values.

3.3 Results and measurable indicators:

The expected results of this programme are:

- Greater multilateral exchange of students between the European Union and the Western Balkans;
- Enhanced international cooperation capacities of higher education institutions in the Western Balkans through cooperation with high quality European institutions (Erasmus Charter) with extensive experience in European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and in the implementation of the "Bologna process";
- The spreading of the experiences of EU universities in the framework of Erasmus exchanges and in the implementation of the "Bologna process";
- Improved cultural understanding and respect for diversity;

⁴ COM (2008)127, 05.03.08

⁵ Decision N° 1298/2008/EC of 16/12/2008

The main performance indicators for this programme are the number of institutions, students and teachers participating in the programme as well as the impact of their study in the EU on employability and career opportunities. The results of the programme will be evaluated through an assessment and analytical study to be implemented by the Commission services.

3.4 Activities:

Mobility activities include:

(a) Student exchanges

The types of mobility to be funded in this first phase of the programme are: undergraduate students, master, doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships. For academic staff: teaching, practical training and research exchanges;

(b) Partnership activities to organise mobility and the transfer of best practices

The grant awarded also covers the costs of organising student exchanges, work with partners on a credit transfer system, the application of principles such as the diploma supplement and work with partners on quality assurance issues. The exchange of students and academic staff within the programmes can take place between higher education institutions from the EU and higher education institutions from the Western Balkans. The signature of a new specific grant agreement every year is subject to annual renewal and to the requirement of including new partner universities in the consortium.

3.5 Conditionality and sequencing:

This programme will be implemented on the assumption that performing consortia will be selected and that numerous students are interested in exchange activities.

3.6 Linked activities

This programme complements current and previous higher education schemes in the field, building on the positive results that other educational programmes such as the general Erasmus Mundus, Tempus and the Erasmus Mundus Action 1 - Western Balkans – Turkey Windows and, have generated in the region:

- Tempus IV aims at upgrading higher education institutions and promoting regional and multilateral networking between higher education institutions in the EU and the Western Balkans. Tempus programmes relate to curriculum development and institutional development;
- Erasmus Mundus Action 1 – Western Balkans and Turkey Windows, a programme which provides scholarships for students to around 100 Erasmus Mundus Master Courses in Europe. In 2006, a specific Window for the Western Balkans was started under the

Erasmus Mundus Programme to enable the selection of 100 post-graduate students from the region.

In addition and complementing the proposed scholarships, under IPA 2008 the "European Integration Scholarship Programme" aim to strengthen the capacity of relevant public institutions in Serbia, through the provision of specialised academic and professional training programmes for qualified applicants of diverse backgrounds, in areas pertinent for the process of European integration.

The Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes in Croatia, the designated national agency for management of the Life-long Learning Programme, which is undertaking preparatory measures for Croatia's full participation in the Life-Long Learning Programme, launched the Call for Proposals referring to pilot projects for Life-Long Learning Programme in year 2009 funded by IPA 2007 funds. The pilot projects include application of HEIs for Erasmus Charter as well as students mobility for studies and staff mobility under Erasmus.

The Programme shall support and supplement action taken by and in the Member States while fully respecting their responsibility for the content of education and the organisation of education and training systems, and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

The Czech Presidency will co-organise with the European Commission in May 2009 a Pledging Conference which aimed at taking stock of what has been undertaken both by the Commission and the Member States in the provision of scholarships for the students of the Western Balkans. It is now envisaged to create a mechanism of coordination and information between the Commission, the Member States and the Western Balkans beneficiaries.

3.7 Lessons learned

The final evaluation of the second phase of the Tempus programme (1994 - 2000) and the mid-term evaluation of its third phase (2000 - 2006) emphasised the opportunity of increasing support to higher education exchanges and university mobility activities. Since the start of the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window last year, mobility activities have been removed from Tempus IV and are being entirely transferred to Erasmus Mundus II.

4. Indicative Budget (amounts in EUR)

			SOURCES OF FUNDING									
			TOTAL EXP.RE	IPA COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION		NATIONAL CONTRIBUTION					PRIVATE CONTRIBUTION	
ACTIVITIES	IB (1)	INV (1)	EUR (a)=(b)+(c)+(d)	EUR (b)	%(2)	Total EUR (c)=(x)+(y)+(z)	% (2)	Central EUR (x)	Regional/ Local EUR (y)	IFIs EUR (z)	EUR (d)	% (2)
Activity 1	x		12 000 000	12 000 000	100	-					-	
TOTAL IB			12 000 000	12 000 000	100							
TOTAL INV												
TOTAL PROJECT			12 000 000	12 000 000	100							

Amounts net of VAT

- (1) In the Activity row use "X" to identify whether IB or INV
- (2) Expressed in % of the **Total** Expenditure (column (a))

5. Indicative Implementation Schedule (periods broken down per quarter)

Contracts	Launch of Call for Proposals	Signature of contracts	Project Completion
Call for Proposals	Q4 2009	Q3 2010	Q4 2013

6. Cross cutting issues

It is necessary to increase Community efforts to promote dialogue and understanding between cultures world-wide. It is important to bear in mind the social dimension of higher education as well as the ideals of democracy and respect for human rights, including gender equality, especially as mobility fosters the discovery of new cultural and social environments and facilitates understanding thereof. In so doing, no group of citizens or Western Balkans nationals is excluded or put at a disadvantage.

6.1 Equal Opportunity

Over the past few decades increasing attention has been paid to the gender dimension of poverty and development in transition economies, particularly in relation to the role of women in education and the impact of higher education on equal opportunity policies.

Projects should integrate gender mainstreaming in their aims and activities, specifically in subject matters and areas of study where the presence of women in the economy has traditionally been very low (science and technology). Projects should promote gender balance and identify factors influencing gender discrimination. They should monitor and evaluate the transition from education and training to working life, recruitment and career development of potential female top managers.

Projects in the sphere of education and sciences should promote the change of gender roles and societal stereotypes, avoiding in any sort of cultural prejudice educational materials.

The principle of equal opportunities should be taken into account when evaluating the quality of all projects proposed under the three components. Specific attention will be paid to this dimension when determining the benefit of mobility activities.

While implementing the project activities and, to the extent applicable, the beneficiary will try to assure that gender disaggregated data is made available to carry out an analysis of the social and economic impact of the actions undertaken.

6.2 Environment

The project beneficiaries shall ensure that during implementation of their actions due cognizance is given to the Government's development policy relating to environmental management and that such policy is embodied, as appropriate, within all strategic policy documents they may draft, all training activities they may carry out and new study programmes and curricula that they may design.

6.3 Minorities

Rights of minorities should be taken into account when evaluating the quality of all projects proposed under the programme. Specific attention will be paid to this dimension when determining the benefit of mobility activities.

ANNEXES

- I- Logical framework matrix in standard format
- II- Amounts (in EUR) contracted and disbursed per quarter over the full duration of project
- III- Description of Institutional Framework
- IV - Reference to laws, regulations and strategic documents:
- V- Details per EC funded contract (where applicable)

ANNEX I: Logical framework matrix in standard format

LOGFRAME PLANNING MATRIX FOR PROJECT FICHE	Erasmus Mundus – Action 2: Partnerships, Lot - Western Balkans	
	Contracting period expires: 30 November 2010	Disbursement period expires: 30 November 2013
	Total budget: EUR 12 000 000	IPA budget: EUR 12 000 000

Overall objective	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of Verification	
To contribute towards the development of human resources and the international cooperation capacity of higher education institutions in the Western Balkans.			
Project purpose	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions
To enable the exchange of academic staff and students at all levels thereby enhancing their knowledge and skills.	Number of delivered scholarships	European Commission and EACEA services.	After selection the assumption is that students and academics from Western Balkans are permitted to leave their country and enter the European host country. European Commission Delegations should cooperate if necessary with local EU embassies in the Beneficiaries in order to ease the visa application process.

Results	Objectively verifiable indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater multilateral exchange of students between the European Union and the Western Balkans; - Enhanced international cooperation capacities of higher education institutions in the Western Balkans through cooperation with high quality European institutions (Erasmus Charter) with extensive experience in European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and in the implementation of the "Bologna process"; - The spreading of the experiences of EU universities in the framework of Erasmus exchanges and in the implementation of the "Bologna process"; - Improved cultural understanding and respect for diversity; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of students participating in the Programme - Number of universities / consortia selected through the Call for proposals - Impact of students study in the EU on employability and career opportunities 	<p>Universities and Consortia Commission and EACEA</p>	
Activities	Means	Costs	Assumptions
<p>(a) Student Exchanges</p> <p>The types of mobility to be funded in this first phase of the programme are: undergraduate students, master, doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships. For academic staff: teaching, practical training and research exchanges;</p> <p>(b) partnership activities to organise mobility and transfer of best practice:</p> <p>The grant awarded covers also the costs of organising student exchanges, work with partners on a credit transfer system, the application of principles such as the diploma supplement and work with partners on quality assurance issues. The exchange of students and academic staff within the programmes can take place between higher education institutions from the EU and</p>	<p>The selected consortia will receive a specific grant agreement covering the mobility activities of the call for activities starting in the academic year 2009/2010</p>	<p>EUR 12 000 000</p>	

<p>higher education institutions from the Western Balkans. The signature of a new specific grant agreement every year is subject to annual renewal and to the requirement of including new partner universities in the consortium.</p>			
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ANNEX II: Amounts (in EUR) contracted and disbursed per quarter over the full duration of project

Contracted	Q3 2010		
Erasmus Mundus - Action 2: Partnerships Lot - Western Balkans	12 000 000		
Cumulated	12 000 000		
Disbursed	Q1 2011	Q1 2012	Q4 2013
Erasmus Mundus - Action 2: Partnerships Lot - Western Balkans	4 800 000	4 800 000	2 400 000
Cumulated	4 800 000	9 600 000	12 000 000

ANNEX III: Description of Institutional Framework

The Tempus Offices have been asked to ensure the promotion of the Erasmus Mundus Programme⁶. Every Candidate and Potential candidate for accession has established a Tempus Office.

At the national level, here are the authorities in charge of the Higher education Sector:

- Albania: Ministry of Education and Sciences
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Federal Ministry of Education and Sciences
- Croatia: Ministry of Science, Education and Sports
- the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Ministry of Education and Science
- Kosovo⁷: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
- Montenegro: Ministry of Education and Science
- Serbia: Ministry of Education and Sports

⁶ In Croatia the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes is responsible for promotion of Erasmus Mundus Programme

⁷ under UNSCR 1244/99

ANNEX IV: Reference to laws, regulations and strategic documents

- Council Decision of 18 February 2008 (2008/210/EC) on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the European Partnership with Albania and repealing Decision 2006/54/EC
- Council Decision of 18 February 2008 (2008/211/EC) on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the European Partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina and repealing Decision 2006/55/EC
- Council Decision of 12 February 2008 (2008/119/EC) on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with Croatia and repealing Decision 2006/145/EC
- Council Decision of 18 February 2008 (2008/212/EC) on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and repealing Decision 2006/57/EC
- Council Decision of 22 January 2007 (2007/49/EC) on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the European Partnership with Montenegro.
- Council Decision of 18 February 2008 (2008/213/EC) on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the European Partnership with Serbia including Kosovo as defined by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999 and repealing Decision 2006/56/EC
- Multi-beneficiary Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document (2009/2011)

ANNEX V: Details per EC funded contract

The programme will be implemented on an indirect centralised basis by the European Commission following Article 53a of the Financial Regulation and corresponding provisions of the Implementing Rules.

Implementation tasks are delegated under Article 54(2) (a) of the Financial Regulation to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, which was created by Commission Decision 2005/56/EC of 14 January 2005. The mandate of the agency was extended by Commission Decision 2007/114/EC of 8 February 2007.

According to Article 12 (3) of the Council Regulation No (EC) 58/2003 of 19 December 2002 laying down the statute for executive agencies to be entrusted with certain tasks in the management of Community programmes⁸, any programme delegated to an executive agency has to contribute to the financing of the administrative budget of the agency.

This programme is to be implemented through a Call for Proposals. The Call requests proposals from consortia of higher education institutions (HE) from the EU and from the Western Balkans to draw up a mobility scheme for students at all levels and academic staff. Higher education institutions from the EU must all have been awarded an Erasmus Charter. Leading applicants may only be HE institutions from the EU. Consortia must comprise at least five European HE institutions from at least three EU countries, plus universities from a minimum number of the Western Balkans to be determined in the Call for Proposals.

Proposals will state the number of mobility activities planned. In their proposal, consortia will demonstrate the mechanisms for the selection of students and of academic staff for the scheme. They must guarantee a transparent and objective selection that takes into account academic merit, socio-economic situation, gender balance, support for disabled students and compliance with regional priorities. Consortia must prove their capacity and experience in hosting students.

The best consortium or consortia will be retained. An evaluation of the quality of the proposals, including the operational capacity and expertise of the applicant and its partners, will be carried out based on a number of evaluation criteria relating to (a) the financial and operational capacity of the consortium, (b) the relevance of the proposal, and (c) the methodology proposed.

The EC will conclude a "framework partnership agreement" with the coordinating institution of each consortium. The other consortium members sign a mandate granting power to the coordinating institution. This is annexed to the framework partnership agreement with the European Commission.

The selected consortia will receive a specific grant agreement covering the mobility activities of the call for activities starting in the academic year 2010/2011.

⁸

OJ L11, 16.1.2003, p. 1.