

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Committee on Foreign Affairs

2007/0145(COD)

5.6.2008

OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries (Erasmus Mundus) (2009-2013) (COM(2007)0395 – C6-0228/2007 – 2007/0145(COD))

Draftsman (*): Samuli Pohjamo

(*) Procedure with associated committees – Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

PA_Legam

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The second phase of the Erasmus Mundus programme (2009-2013) will continue the activities of the first Erasmus Mundus programme (2004-2008), with the exception that the new programme incorporates its External Cooperation Window, extends its scope to all levels of higher education, and improves funding opportunities for European students, as well as offers enhanced possibilities for cooperation with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Whereas the main objective of the Erasmus Mundus programme continues to be the promotion of "excellence", its second phase adds through the incorporation of the External Cooperation Window a foreign policy dimension to the programme. The funds for this part of the programme will be drawn from external assistance instruments, including the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and Pre-Accession Instrument (IPA), which support the European Neighbourhood Policy and Accession Process, respectively.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs is the lead committee for the democratic scrutiny of the ENPI and IPA, meaning in practice that it receives all relevant strategy papers at the same time as they are transmitted to the Member States. The Parliament and the Commission then engage in a dialogue on the strategy papers the Parliament wishes to discuss.

Promotion of people-to-people contacts, research, and educational and youth exchanges lies at the core of the ENP and the EU's enlargement strategy and the amendments seek to ensure that the objectives of the relevant actions of the programme reflect the priorities of the above-mentioned policies.

However, he believes that the cumbersome visa policies that the Erasmus Mundus students have to face are major obstacles towards making full use of the opportunities of the programme. Since the visa policy is a Member State competence, your draftsman calls on the Member States to take all possible steps to simplify the obtaining and renewing of visas.

Finally, your draftsman believes there is a clear need for better coordination of information on the programme in third countries, for example via the delegations of the Commission and the Embassies of the Member States.

AMENDMENTS

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following amendments in its report:

Amendment 1

Proposal for a decision Recital 2 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(2a) In the course of negotiating the external assistance instruments and the Interinstitutional Agreement on budgetary discipline and sound financial management, the European Parliament and the Commission reached a number of understandings on democratic scrutiny and the coherence of external action, set out in the declarations annexed to the Interinstitutional Agreement. The consultation process and dialogue with the European Parliament will operate in parallel with the latter's rights under Council Decision 1999/468/EC of 28 June 1999 laying down the procedures for the exercise of implementing powers conferred on the Commission¹, and in particular Article 8 thereof.

¹ OJ L 184, 17.7.1999, p. 23. Decision as amended by Decision 2006/512/EC (OJ L 200, 22.7.2006, p. 11).

Justification

The agreement on the new external assistance instruments (the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument - ENPI, the Instrument for Stability - IfS, and the Pre-Accession Instrument - IPA) grants the European Parliament increased scrutiny over the implementation of Community assistance.

Amendment 2

Proposal for a decision Recital 10 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(10a) The promotion of European common values and people-to-people contacts in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in particular through educational and youth

exchanges, must lie at the core of the Erasmus Mundus programme, supported by a policy dialogue aimed at reinforcing modernisation and reform efforts by the partner countries in the area of education, and must contribute to an improvement in knowledge of foreign languages and cultures and to the fostering of intercultural dialogue, as well as to convergence with EU policies, including the Bologna and Copenhagen processes. Mobility of teaching staff and researchers is an essential part of increasing research cooperation between the EU and the ENP countries and improving excellence, but it is also important to take measures to prevent a brain drain in this field.

Justification

This year is the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, and the European Union should also make use of the Erasmus Mundus programme to promote the learning of foreign languages and familiarisation with foreign cultures and to foster intercultural dialogue. At the same time, the importance should be stressed of moving ahead with the Bologna and Copenhagen processes and encouraging mobility and exchanges among the teaching profession to help improve the quality of education. Finally, emphasis should be placed on the need to avoid brain drain.

Amendment 3

Proposal for a decision

Article 3 – paragraph 1

Text proposed by the Commission

1. The programme's overall aim is to enhance the quality of European higher education and to promote dialogue and understanding between peoples and cultures through cooperation with third countries as well as to promote EU external policy objectives and the sustainable development of third countries in the field of higher education.

Amendment

1. The programme's overall aim is to enhance the quality of European higher education and to promote dialogue, ***common European values*** and understanding between peoples and cultures through cooperation with third countries as well as to promote EU external policy objectives, ***including the fostering and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including equality between men and women,*** and to assist the sustainable development of third

countries in the field of higher education.

Justification

It is important to incorporate the gender aspect across all policies.

Amendment 4

Proposal for a decision

Article 3 - paragraph 2 - point d a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

da) to achieve a regional balance in the support provided for partnerships with third countries, as set out in the Annex.

Justification

The programme should seek to achieve a regional balance and support educational exchange with regions with less "excellent" HEIs and offer special support for these regions.

Amendment 5

Proposal for a decision

Article 6 - paragraph 2 - point b a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(ba) in particular, take steps to simplify the obtaining and renewal of visas for Erasmus Mundus students;

Amendment 6

Proposal for a decision

Article 6 - paragraph 3 - point a

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(a) appropriate information, publicity and follow-up with regard to actions supported by the programme;

(a) appropriate information, publicity and follow-up with regard to actions supported by the programme, ***and in particular the visibility of the programme in the third countries concerned;***

Justification

More focus should be put on the visibility of the programme in the third countries and availability of information on it.

Amendment 7

Proposal for a decision

Article 7 - paragraph 3 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

3a. The Commission shall consult the European Parliament in line with the Interinstitutional Agreement on budgetary discipline and sound financial management and Council Decision 1999/468/EC, in particular Article 8 thereof.

Justification

The agreement on the new external assistance instruments (ENPI, the Instrument for Stability - IfS, and IPA) grants the European Parliament increased scrutiny over the implementation of Community assistance. The consultation process and dialogue with Parliament will operate in parallel with Parliament's rights under Council Decision 1999/468/EC of 28 June 1999 and in particular of Article 8 thereof, which provides that the Parliament may pass a resolution to the effect that the Commission has exceeded the implementation powers conferred on it.

Amendment 8

Proposal for a decision

Annex – Action 1 – Section A – paragraph 2 – point j

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

j) shall establish a joint tuition fee regardless of the actual place of study of the students within the masters programme;

j) shall establish a joint tuition fee regardless of the actual place of study of the students within the masters programme.
The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency will deduct the consortia fees from the student scholarships and remit them to the coordinating institution, which will pass them on to the member universities in accordance with the consortia agreement;

Justification

If the consortia fees are collected by the Agency by deducting them from the student scholarships, the consortia could then divide the fees among the participating universities in accordance with the consortia-agreement. As Finnish and other Scandinavian universities, which are prohibited by law from taking fees for study programmes, are not claiming fees under the agreement, they would not take part in the division of consortia fees. This would also benefit other universities.

Amendment 9

Proposal for a decision

Annex – Action 1 – Section B – paragraph 2 – point j

Text proposed by the Commission

j) shall establish a joint tuition fee regardless of the actual place of study and research of the doctoral candidates within the doctoral programme;

Amendment

j) shall establish a joint tuition fee regardless of the actual place of study and research of the doctoral candidates within the doctoral programme. ***The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency will deduct the consortia fees from the student scholarships and remit them to the coordinating institution, which will pass them on to the member universities in accordance with the consortia agreement;***

Justification

If the consortia fees are collected by the Agency by deducting them from the student scholarships, the consortia could then divide the fees among the participating universities in accordance with the consortia-agreement. As Finnish and other Scandinavian universities, which are prohibited by law from taking fees for study programmes, are not claiming fees under the agreement, they would not take part in the division of consortia fees. This would also benefit other universities.

PROCEDURE

Title	Erasmus Mundus programme (2009-2013)
References	COM(2007)0395 – C6-0228/2007 – 2007/0145(COD)
Committee responsible	CULT
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	AFET 3.9.2007
Associated committee(s) - date announced in plenary	13.3.2008
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Samuli Pohjamo 12.9.2007
Discussed in committee	1.4.2008 3.6.2008
Date adopted	3.6.2008
Result of final vote	+: 45 -: 0 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Monika Beňová, André Brie, Colm Burke, Philip Claeys, Véronique De Keyser, Hanna Foltyn-Kubicka, Bronisław Geremek, Maciej Marian Giertych, Ana Maria Gomes, Alfred Gomolka, Anna Ibrisagic, Ioannis Kasoulides, Maria Eleni Koppa, Helmut Kuhne, Willy Meyer Pleite, Francisco José Millán Mon, Philippe Morillon, Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, Alojz Peterle, Tobias Pflüger, João de Deus Pinheiro, Samuli Pohjamo, Raúl Romeva i Rueda, Libor Rouček, Christian Rovsing, Katrin Saks, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, György Schöpflin, István Szent-Iványi, Inese Vaidere, Ari Vatanen, Jan Marinus Wiersma, Luis Yañez-Barnuevo García, Zbigniew Zaleski, Josef Zieleniec
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Maria Badia i Cutchet, Alexandra Dobolyi, Árpád Duka-Zólyomi, James Elles, Martí Grau i Segú, Jaromír Kohlíček, Doris Pack, Rihards Pīks, Jean Spautz, Karl von Wogau