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# Evaluation of the EU Development Co-operation Support to Higher Education in Partner Countries (2007-2014)

**Final Report  
Volume I – Main Report**

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Co-operation and  
Development

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The opinions expressed in this document represent the authors' points of view, which are not necessarily shared by the European Commission or by the authorities of the concerned countries.



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# Evaluation of the EU development co-operation support to higher education in partner countries (2007-2014)

## Final Report

The report consists of five volumes:

### VOLUME I: MAIN REPORT

1. Introduction
2. Key methodological steps
3. Overall policy framework
4. Intervention logic analysis
5. Inventory analysis
6. Answers to the evaluation questions
7. Conclusions by evaluation criteria
8. Overall conclusions
9. Recommendations

### VOLUME II – DETAILED EVALUATION MATRIX BY EQ

1. EQ1 on relevance/strategic orientation
2. EQ2 on alignment
3. EQ3 on management, teaching, learning and research
4. EQ4 on reform of higher education policy
5. EQ5 on inclusiveness
6. EQ6 on responsiveness to labour market needs and brain circulation
7. EQ7 on intra-regional harmonisation
8. EQ8 on modalities and instruments
9. EQ9 on coherence and synergies

### VOLUME III – DESK PHASE ANALYSIS – ELECTRONIC DATA

1. Desk programme and country case studies
2. CSP/RSP/RSE/MTR analysis
3. Tracer study
4. Survey to Higher Education Institutions (methodology, analysis, questionnaire)

### VOLUME IV – FIELD PHASE ANALYSIS - COUNTRY NOTES – ELECTRONIC DATA

1. Synthesis Note presenting findings and conclusions of the field country notes
2. Cameroon
3. Dominican Republic
4. Egypt
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7. Mexico
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### VOLUME V – CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY – ELECTRONIC DATA

1. Terms of Reference
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2. Intervention logics by programmes
3. Final evaluation matrix
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## List of acronyms and abbreviations

ACBF	African Capacity-Building Foundation
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
ALFA	América Latina Formación Académica
ANACIP	Profesional National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education in Moldova
ANQAHE	Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ANU	ASEAN University Network
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CLAR	Latin American Reference Credit
CRIS	Common RELEX Information System
CSE	Country Strategy Evaluation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
CSUCA	Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DCI	Development Co-operation Instrument
DFID	UK's Department for International Development
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Co-operation and Development
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education and Culture
DG ELARG	Directorate-General for Enlargement
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG ENTR	Directorate-General Enterprise and Industry
DG INFSO	Directorate-General Information Society and Media
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement
DG RTD	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training, South Africa
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EACEA	Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
ECI	External Co-operation Instrument
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ECW	External Co-operation Window
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EM	Erasmus Mundus
EMECW	Erasmus Mundus External Co-operation Window
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQ	Evaluation Question
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ET	Strategic Framework for European Co-operation in Education and Training
EUA	European University Association

EUD	European Union Delegation
FA	Financial Assistance
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations
FP7	Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development
FTI	Education for All Fast Track Initiative
HDI	Human Development Index
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HERE	Higher Education Reform Experts
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HUST	Huazhong University of Science and Technology, China
ICARE	EU-China Institute for Clean and Renewable Energy
ICI	Industrialised Countries Instrument
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IL	Intervention Logic
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
ISG	Inter-service Steering Group
JC	Judgement Criterion
KFW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KFW Development Bank)
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LA	Latin America
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MS	Member State
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGU	New University Governance
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
PAU	Pan-African University
QA	Quality Assurance
RG	Reference Group
RSE	Regional Strategy Evaluation
RSP	Regional Strategy Paper
SBS	Sector Budget Support
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SG	European Commission – Secretariat-General
SIDA	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
SJ	European Commission – Legal Service
SM	Structural Measures
SQL	Structured Query Language
TA	Technical Assistance
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Note: The Evaluation uses the common acronym “EC” to refer either to the “Commission of the European Union” (post-Lisbon Treaty) or to the “European Commission” (pre-Lisbon Treaty), as applicable.

## Executive Summary

### Evaluation objectives and methodology

This evaluation examines European Union (EU) support to Higher Education (HE) in partner countries during the period 2007-2014. It is thus a thematic evaluation, which provides overall judgements, and not an evaluation of individual programmes. The evaluation follows these twofold objectives:

- Providing the relevant external co-operation services of the EU and the wider public with an independent assessment;
- Identifying key lessons and forward-looking recommendations.

The evaluation covers activities in the HE sector supported by the EU within the framework of the following instruments: the European Development Fund (EDF); the Development Cooperation Instrument – thematic and geographic components (DCI); and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)<sup>1</sup>.

### EU support to HE: Key Figures

- The EU's development co-operation support to HE amounted to EUR 1.5 billion during the period 2007-2014.
- Out of this, 44% were financed by DCI, 43% by ENPI, and 3% by both DCI and ENPI, while only 10% were financed by the EDF.
- 90% of the EU's HE support was channelled through one of its major higher education programmes: Erasmus Mundus (56%), Tempus (24%), ALFA (5%), Edulink (3%) and the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme (3%). 10% of the funds were not related to any of these programmes.
- 93% of all funds were channelled through universities /research institutes.

Six programmes fall within the scope of the evaluation: *Erasmus Mundus (parts of the programme under development co-operation)*<sup>2</sup>, *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, *Tempus IV*, *ALFA III*, *Edulink*, and the *African Union Support Programme 2 (Pan-African University)*. The design of Erasmus+ programme (since 2014) is taken into account regarding the forward-looking objective of the evaluation.

<sup>1</sup> Contracts funded by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance and the Industrialised Countries Instrument, were excluded

<sup>2</sup> EM Action 2, Strand 1 (student and staff mobility), Action 1 (only scholarships funded by Heading 4) and Erasmus Mundus External Co-operation Window.

Respecting the guidelines of the European Commission for strategic evaluations, the evaluation is question-driven adopting a theory of change and a contribution analysis approach.

Data collection and analysis tools included: document review and interviews in Europe, a web-based survey of Higher Education Institutions in partner countries, a tracer study of former beneficiaries and eight field missions.

### Policy framework of EU support to HE

Based on a number of policy documents, the EU's support in the field of HE is part of a comprehensive approach to education, which is seen as an important prerequisite for social and economic development. The overall objectives of the EU's HE programmes are:

- The promotion of intercultural understanding and the promotion of inter-societal co-operation between regions.
- The strengthening of sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development.
- The enhancement of political and economic co-operation.

These goals are to be achieved by promoting student and staff mobility, as well as by developing HE systems in partner countries and regions, while addressing cross-cutting issues such as promoting gender equality and preventing brain drain as well increasing the responsiveness to the labour market needs.

### EU support to HE: some output figures

- 90% of EM Action 2 alumni consider that the exchange programme helped them to get better exposure to an international research environment.
- 80% of EM A2 alumni and 90% of students who participated in the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme considered that their first job matched their degree fields. 70% of EM A2 alumni found their first job within three months after graduation.
- 79% of polled departments/faculties stated that employability of their students had increased "to a great extent".
- 89% of polled departments/faculties of partner countries have monitoring and performance assessment systems in place of which many were established with the support of EU-funded projects

## Conclusions by Evaluation Criteria

Conclusions by evaluation criteria are based on the findings presented in the answers to the evaluation questions.

**Relevance:** EU support for HE was relevant as a contribution to achieving socio-economic development objectives. The EU support had a strong focus on enhancing the responsiveness of degree programmes to the needs and requirements of national labour markets. It gained relevance with regard to the design and implementation of national reform processes in HE, and to promoting equitable access to HE for different groups in society. Furthermore, the EU's explicit emphasis on furthering regional approaches for the harmonisation and standardisation of HE made a substantial contribution to advancing regional integration.

**Effectiveness:** At the level of HE Institutions – and, more broadly, in national higher education systems – EU support has strongly contributed to:

- Increasing the quality of teaching and learning through curriculum development;
- Improvement of management practices of HE institutions as a result of strengthened administrative, institutional and financial practices;
- Creating a fertile ground for greater inclusiveness of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups by drawing attention of HE institutions to development priorities. However, the contribution to the participation of these groups was limited.

Through project-based support, which required the participation of universities from different countries and regions, the EU contributed decisively to internationalisation and to “South-South” co-operation in higher education. Generally, approaches to harmonisation and standardisation by partner countries' universities have played an important part in achieving the overall effectiveness of the support.

**Efficiency:** The general finding is that the delivery of support, mainly via projects under regional and global programmes, provided a suitable framework for achieving the expected outcomes. This included, but was not limited to: policy and institutional reforms at both national and universities levels – including improved quality assurance; harmonisation and

standardisation of HE; internationalisation of HE institutions; strengthened capacities of individual students and scholars.

The evaluation did not find any differences between the level of efficiency of EU support provided through major regional and global HE programmes and EU support provided bilaterally. Across the entire portfolio, support to HE in partner countries was delivered in a timely fashion in most cases, with the exception of some delays at operational level that were not, however, perceived as being highly critical. Overall, EU support was well aligned with national policy priorities. With the exception of South Africa partner country, procurement systems were not applied in HE support.

**Impact:** EU support to HE has contributed to narrowing the gap between the qualifications of university graduates and the needs of national, regional and global economies and labour markets.

This was mainly achieved through the development of new degree programmes oriented to the labour market, and increasing interaction between HE Institutions and the private sector. One of the most visible impacts is improved employability and acquisition of relevant skills for the socio-economic development of partner countries, as a direct result of broad-scale brain circulation within the framework of the EU-funded mobility programmes. At the same time, brain drain could be avoided to a large extent. Even when it happened, partner countries did not perceive its extent as being a problem.

Furthermore, the EU achieved the envisioned strengthening of inter-cultural understanding and inter-societal co-operation between regions. However, a robust and direct link between support to HE and sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development cannot be established in measurable terms.

**Sustainability:** EU support has yielded sustainable benefits at the level of partner countries and regions, as well as at the level of individuals. Major reforms were introduced as part of, and a result of, projects, and/or supported through bilateral co-operation. Partnerships and networks of HE institutions strengthened their internationalisation. Both achievements are highly unlikely to be reversed.

It can reasonably be assumed that the changes are sustainable wherever Bologna principles have been fully or partially adopted, or where other EU-supported policy and institutional reforms have been implemented with a view to improving the quality of teaching and learning, the employability of students, and the capacities of academic staff. In these instances, solid and durable structures have been created.

**Coherence, EU Added Value and the 3Cs (co-ordination, complementarity and coherence):** EU support to HE has been largely coherent in its approach and implementation. The clearest evidence of coherence is available for the individual programmes funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Co-operation and Development (DG DEVCO) – Erasmus Mundus, Tempus IV, ALFA III, Edulink, and the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme. Evidence for coherence and synergies was also found between interventions funded by DG DEVCO and the support provided by DG RTD (Research and Innovation) and DG EAC (Education and Culture).

The evaluation did not find any instances of notable inconsistencies between the support provided by the EU on the one hand and Member States (MS) on the other. However, given the broadly similar objectives and targeted beneficiary groups of the EU programmes and those of the MS, it is surprising that only very limited effort was made to create synergies through pooling of resources and funding. Outside the Higher Education Donor Harmonisation Group, the lack of formalised co-operation and co-ordination at the level of partner countries constituted a missed opportunity in terms of achieving coherence or synergies.

The added value of the EU support has been high. Probably no single EU Member State or even group of Member States on their own would be sufficiently well placed to take the lead in organising and managing a highly complex programme in support of global HE.

## Overall conclusions

The Conclusions are divided into three clusters relating to: (1) Policy and Strategic Focus; (2) Achieving Results; (3) Co-ordination and Synergies.

### Cluster 1 – Policy and strategic focus

**Conclusion 1:** *EU support to HE lacked a clear overall strategic approach outlining the pathways to expected development impacts.*

The EU's approach to HE lacked an overarching strategy – and related intervention logic – with a strong and comprehensive rationale and assumptions on how to achieve the expected impacts and overarching development goals towards sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development and, ultimately, poverty reduction. The evaluation found that the design of programmes and of bilateral assistance was based only on implicit assumptions. A more explicit link between the benefits of investing in HE and broader development goals could have had the potential to increase the relevance and eventually the impact of the EU support to HE even further.

**Conclusion 2:** *The strategy of supporting HE mainly through projects under regional and global programmes was effective.*

The EU's approach to supporting HE was flexible and responsive to key national and regional development priorities as it embedded its support within the specific development contexts of HE in the respective countries and regions. Although the EU's approach to HE is best described as the sum of its parts, its common feature was the practice of channeling funds mainly through regional and global programmes for the benefit of universities, academics and students. This placed HE Institutions at the centre of the support. This approach constituted a bottom-up process that was initiated and effectively implemented at the institutional level and then often spilled over to the national level, resulting in reform initiatives benefitting the entire sector.

### Cluster 2 – Achieving Results

**Conclusion 3:** *EU support to HE improved the framework conditions for enhanced teaching and learning.*

Across all regions, universities benefited from EU support in terms of often substantially improved enabling conditions for more effective and better quality teaching and learning. The strongest impact was evident in countries where EU-funded projects promoted the Bologna Process, but results were also evident in

partner countries or other countries that have chosen to follow other guidelines. For instance, the creation or expansion of e-learning programmes at a wide range of HE Institutions that participated in *ALFA III*, *Tempus IV* and *EduLink* projects, was possible thanks to EU support.

**Conclusion 4:** *EU support to HE generated employability effects.*

EU-funded projects that were directed at creating and improving degree programmes and curricula, and related mechanisms to better align university education with the labour market trends and needs, contributed to improved employment opportunities and prospects for graduates. For instance, it has been evidenced that most of the students and particularly those who participated in mobility programmes, through their acquisition of “soft skills”, were helped in finding their first job that matched their degree fields in their home countries.

**Conclusion 5:** *EU support to HE did only make a limited contribution to increasing inclusiveness.*

All EU-funded programmes promoted inclusiveness in HE from a gender perspective, and some promoted other under-represented, disadvantaged groups. The major mobility programmes succeeded only partly in achieving equitable participation. External factors in the participation of vulnerable and under-represented groups in EU programmes include their limited access to information about the opportunities, and their ability to take them up. The EU support as a whole has not been very successful in ensuring better access to HE for these groups. However, some EU projects had an indirect influence by drawing attention to greater inclusiveness at the level of HE institutions.

**Conclusion 6:** *EU support has strengthened intra-regional co-operation.*

EU support has fostered co-operation in HE between, and among, partner countries, and also strengthened intra-regional co-operation mainly as the result of:

- Network-building among HE Institutions within the same region;

- Intra-regional mobilities within the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme, and indirectly *EduLink* and *ALFA III*;
- EU-supported harmonisation based on governmental agreements,

The merger of *Tempus*, *Alfa III* and *EduLink* into the Erasmus+ Capacity Building action allows for a strengthening of co-operation between different regions; however, the focus on intra-regional co-operation for partner countries remains limited.

### **Cluster 3 – Co-ordination and Synergies**

**Conclusion 7:** *EU support to HE produced some linkages with the EU's assistance to research and innovation, but synergies could have been higher..*

The EU's approach to supporting HE on the one hand and research and innovation on the other was complementary and has created some synergies, for example:

- Links between Erasmus Mundus and Tempus IV with the Seventh Framework Programme (FP 7), the EU's main instrument for funding research;
- *EduLink*'s connection with the ACP Science & Technology Programme.

However, formal and institutionalised attempts to connect the major programmes targeted at universities were very limited (they existed only in the case of ACP HE Institutions); there would have been room (and demand) for creating more synergies.

**Conclusion 8:** *Formal co-ordination of the EU and Member States support to HE exists at a high political level, but is largely absent at partner country and regional levels.*

Since 2010, the Higher Education Donor Harmonisation Group has annually exchanged information on the members' respective policies, strategies and programmes for their support to HE.

However, in more practical terms the EU and MS embarked only on a small number of jointly-funded programmes (most importantly, the *Pan-African University*) and joint projects (mainly EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region/EU Share).



## Recommendations

Corresponding to the organisation of the Conclusions into three clusters, the same format is used for the Recommendations.

### Cluster 1 – Policy and strategic focus

**Recommendation 1:** *Formulate the overall strategic approach to the support of HE in the EU's development co-operation relations.*

*Very high importance in the short-term horizon.*

The EU should elaborate a strategy that is clear with regard to “what” and “how”, in terms of achieving overarching development objectives. This strategic approach should address the main shortcomings of the previous programming period.

**Recommendation 2:** *Deepen the alignment with partner countries' policies and priorities in HE through jointly-funded academic mobility programmes.*

*Medium importance in the long-term horizon.*

While the EU's commitment to alignment is undisputed and clearly visible, it should be strengthened further through joint EU and partner country initiatives. The Commission and other EU stakeholders should explore the possibility of academic mobility programmes jointly funded by a partner country and the EU or, more specifically, joint programmes that would fund double degree study courses between the partner country's and EU's HE institutions. Joint programme funding would also make a contribution towards meeting the requirements of systems alignment under the Paris Declaration.

### Cluster 2 – Achieving Results

**Recommendation 3:** *Realign the support to HE with the objective of strengthening intra-regional co-operation.*

*High importance in the medium-term horizon.*

Erasmus+ provides a framework for intra-regional and inter-regional co-operation, but the latter is more pronounced than the former. *The Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, which did not merge into Erasmus+, became the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme. Under this programme, only African applicants can apply, which naturally strengthens intra-regional co-operation. Therefore, the EU should explore the possibility of replicating the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme in other

regions or introducing similar regional mobility programmes outside the scope of Erasmus+.

**Recommendation 4:** *Develop and implement an approach towards strengthening inclusiveness.*

*Very high importance in the medium-term horizon.*

The recommendation directly addresses the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4.a<sup>3</sup>, 4.3<sup>4</sup> and 4.5<sup>5</sup>. Equally important, strengthening inclusiveness is directly related to the EU commitment of “leaving no one behind” in development co-operation, which creates a clear mandate for DG DEVCO. While the EU mobility programmes, in the main, achieved equitable gender balance, it should now develop a clear concept of inclusiveness that will form a basis for an implementation and performance measurement. DG EAC and EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) should monitor the performance of Erasmus+ and other EU support to partner countries against clear performance targets for inclusiveness in HE, and they should take steps if the targets are not met. Putting special emphasis on inclusiveness seems mandatory in view of both the requirements of the Erasmus+ programme and overall development objectives.

**Recommendation 5:** *Create “dual” study courses oriented to the labour market.*

*Medium importance in the long-term horizon.*

EU support to HE aims at linking degree programmes and study courses with the labour market and thus it contributes to achieve SDG 4.4. DG EAC and DG DEVCO should encourage the creation of “dual” degree courses, either as a special action under Erasmus+ or through a new programme to further strengthen the positive effects that have already been achieved with regard to employability. Dual programmes have a stronger vocational approach than traditional academic study courses.

<sup>3</sup> 4.a “Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all”

<sup>4</sup> 4.3 “By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”

<sup>5</sup> 4.5 “By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations”

es, and combine a university course with practical training. Unlike in the case of part-time courses, the employment and/or training element in a dual programme is an integral part of the course.

### **Cluster 3 – Co-ordination and synergies**

**Recommendation 6:** *Expand formal mechanisms to facilitate the co-ordination of EU and Member States support to HE.*

*Very high importance in the medium-term horizon.*

Regular dialogue mechanism with MS to increase synergies and facilitate joint programming should be established at the strategic level. In partner countries and regions, HE sub-sector, should be included in the formal co-operation and co-ordination agenda of the EU Delegations and Member States.

**Recommendation 7:** *Strengthen the links between support to HE and support to research and innovation.*

*High importance in the long-term horizon.*

The EU support to HE, in particular to better quality teaching and learning, should be continued and further enhanced through the creation of stronger links with support to research and innovation provided by DG RTD. No solidly-developed formal and institutionalised links exist between the two areas of support that would allow for a stronger co-ordinated approach and the creation of synergies. The EU should therefore develop a more integrated approach that treats learning and teaching on the one hand and research on the other hand in a holistic way, and allows for more cross-fertilisation between the two mutually-dependent areas of HE. This would contribute towards achieving SDG 9.5.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> 9.5 “Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries,”

# 1 Mandate and scope of the evaluation

*A broad evaluation scope covering a seven-year period of EU support in partner countries, regions and through relevant global, regional and bilateral programmes and various instruments*

The evaluation has two main objectives:

- To provide relevant external co-operation services of the EU and the wider public with an independent assessment of the development co-operation support provided to higher education (HE) in partner countries during the period 2007-2014;
- To identify key lessons and forward-looking recommendations to improve current and inform future EU development co-operation support to Higher Education.

The scope of the evaluation is delineated by the activities in the HE sector supported by the EU within the framework of the following *financing instruments*: European Development Fund (EDF), Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI) – thematic and geographic components, and European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). Since Tempus and *Erasmus Mundus* were partly financed through other instruments, such as the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and the Industrialised Countries Instrument (ICI), contracts funded by those instruments were excluded. For more information, please refer to the inventory methodology.<sup>7</sup>

The temporal scope of the evaluation is the *period 2007-2014*, with the following programmes covered: *Erasmus Mundus*: Action 2, Strand 1 (student and staff mobility) and Action 1 (only scholarships funded by Heading 4)<sup>8</sup> and *Erasmus Mundus* External Co-operation Window, *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* (Nyerere Programme), *Tempus IV*, *ALFA III*, *EduLink*, and the *African Union (AU) Support Programme 2 (Pan-African University)*.

The strategy and design of the Erasmus+ programme (since 2014) and those components of the programme that cover the co-operation with partner countries and regions (but not intra-EU co-operation on HE – that is, the de facto successor of Erasmus) are taken into account for findings, conclusions and recommendations on the EU's overall support to HE. The EU's activities in HE under bilateral and regional co-operation (Asia, Central Asia, Middle East, Latin America, and European Neighbourhood) also fall into the scope of this evaluation. Last but not least, particular emphasis is put on assessing policy coherence of EU interventions and coherence with partner countries' priorities.

The evaluation is evidence-based, using the standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability). In addition, attention is paid to the assessment of the added value of the EU, as well as to the 3Cs – co-ordination, complementarity and coherence.

The evaluation serves both policy decision-making and programme management purposes. The aim is to produce a set of reliable and well-founded conclusions, in addition to useful, usable and specific "operationalisable" recommendations. The main users of the evaluation will be the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC), Directorate-General for International Co-operation and Development (DG DEVCO), the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Union Delegations (EUDs) in the countries covered by this evaluation.

<sup>7</sup> Section 5.1 of volume V.

<sup>8</sup> For the 2007-2013 Multiannual Financial Framework, the official definition was: "Heading 4: establishing a coherent role for Europe on the global stage – inspired by its core values – in the way it assumes its regional responsibilities, promotes sustainable development and contributes to civilian and strategic security... Covers all external action ("foreign policy") by the EU. Does not include the European Development Fund ([http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/budg\\_system/fin\\_fw0713/fin\\_fw0713\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/budg_system/fin_fw0713/fin_fw0713_en.cfm)).

## 2 Key methodological steps

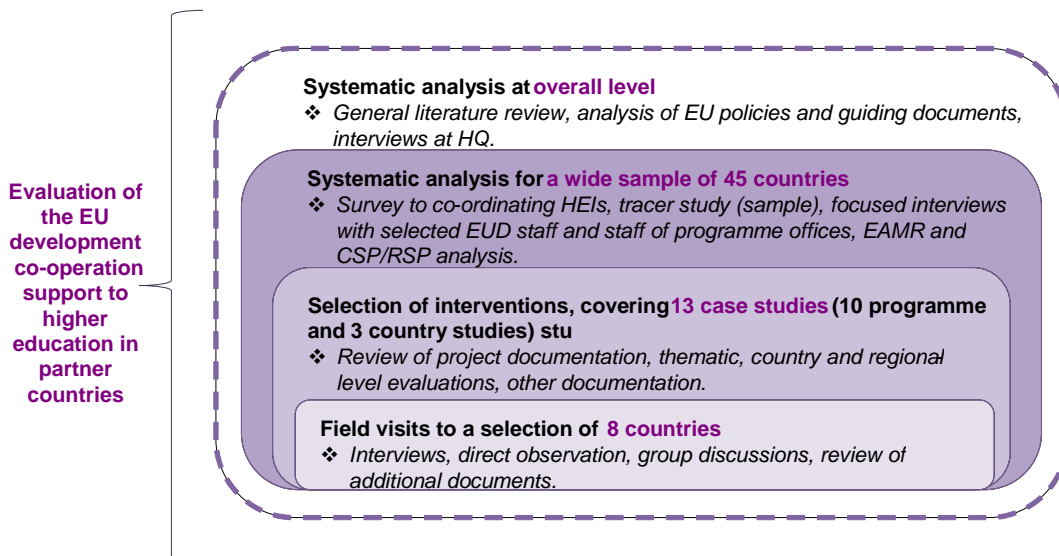
### 2.1 Overall methodological approach

The methodology for this evaluation is based on the guidelines developed by DG DEVCO<sup>9</sup>. It is a *question-driven evaluation* that adopts a *theory of change approach* visualised through intervention logics (ILs). The process is embedded in a *contribution analysis framework*, which implies taking into account the context-specific factors, in which EU support operates and requires analysis of observed results within the sphere of the EU support's influence, as well as the external environment. This leads to an increased understanding of why observed results have occurred (or not) and the roles played by support and other internal and external factors. The evaluation process uses different building blocks to gradually construct answers to Evaluation Questions (EQs) and to formulate key conclusions and recommendations<sup>10</sup>. Given the purpose and conditions of the evaluation, the most appropriate design for the evaluation was considered to be a *multiple case study design* based on the use of a *mixed-methods approach*.

### 2.2 Steps for data collection and analysis

In-depth analyses cannot be carried out for all interventions related to EU development co-operation support to higher education. It is important to reach a balance between a realistic approach based on a limited focus and an approach covering a range of interventions and contexts wide enough to allow for generalisation. Countries and interventions were systematically selected to obtain a relevant and representative portfolio for in-depth study. The figure below shows the methodological design for this evaluation.

Figure 1 Levels of analysis and data collection tools



#### 2.2.1 Selection of countries

The country selection took place in three steps. First, a list of criteria was developed to pre-select a wide sample of 45 countries,<sup>11</sup> for which an analysis was conducted along the following lines:

<sup>9</sup> See [https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/evaluation\\_guidelines/minisite/en-methodological-bases-and-approach](https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/evaluation_guidelines/minisite/en-methodological-bases-and-approach)

<sup>10</sup> The analytical tools used for the evaluation process are summarised in part 2 Methodology in Volume V

<sup>11</sup> Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Congo, Cuba, Dominican Republic, DRC, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Senegal, South Africa, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam.

- Identification of HE-specific evidence in Country/Regional Strategy Papers (CSPs/RSPs), Country Strategy Evaluations (CSEs) and Mid-term Reviews (MTRs);<sup>12</sup>
- An online survey to Higher Education Institutions in partner countries that acted as the co-ordinating organisations<sup>13</sup>;
- A tracer study to measure former beneficiaries' perception of mobility programmes in relation to their labour market prospects;<sup>14</sup>

Subsequently, out of these 45 countries, a narrower sample of 13 cases was selected (see Table 1) for in-depth desk analysis at programme and country level based on several criteria.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, eight countries were selected for field missions, covering the Neighbourhood South and East (Egypt, Moldova), Latin America (Mexico, Guatemala), the Caribbean (the Dominican Republic) and English- and French-speaking Africa (Kenya, South Africa and Cameroon).<sup>16</sup>

### 2.2.2 Programme and country case studies

A serie of criteria was used to select the programme and country case studies<sup>17</sup>. This process led to the identification of ten programme and three country case studies.

Table 1 Overview of programme and country case studies

CS#	Case study	Sub-regional representation	# of interventions selected	Amount of aid in EUR
1	ALFA III case study	Latin America	13	21,848,011
2	Tempus IV regional: ENP East	ENP East	5	7,494,979
3	Tempus IV regional: Central Asia	Central Asia	6	9,438,164
4	Tempus IV country Egypt	ENP South	6	5,529,767
5	EduLink Caribbean	Caribbean	5	2,107,076
6	EduLink Eastern Africa	Eastern Africa	6	2,941,989
7	Intra-ACP	Multiple regions	5	11,716,400
8	EM Asia Regional West	Mainly South Asia	4	10,518,850
9	EM Latin America	Latin America	6	21,230,650
10	EM South Africa	Southern Africa	5	11,764,825
11	Algeria	ENP South	1	19,427,592
12	DRC	Central Africa	1	9,959,500
13	China	China	1	9,360,230

### 2.2.3 Web-based survey to Higher Education Institutions

An online survey was conducted at the HEIs in partner countries from the wide sample that were project co-ordinators (or co-co-ordinators, in the case of *Erasmus Mundus* projects in 2013-14). In total, 84 departments across 58 different HEIs were invited to take part in the online survey, with 41 departments across 33 different<sup>18</sup> HEIs completing the online questionnaire. It helped explain changes at the institutional level, such as internationalisation of the universities with regard to staff and students involved, and networks created and sustained. It included topics that fed primarily into EQ3 (management practices, quality of teaching and learning, and research), EQ4 (national HE institutional frame-

<sup>12</sup> See part 2 in Volume III.

<sup>13</sup> See part 4 in Volume III. The co-ordinating organisation is the organisation responsible for the overall management of the project in the partnership, consortium or network. The co-ordinating organisation usually acts as beneficiary (or main co-beneficiary) in the contractual and financial relations between the consortium, partnership or network and the Agency" (*Erasmus Mundus Programme Guide, 2009-2013, Version 11/2013, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus\\_mundus/beneficiaries/documents/action2/1813/em\\_programmeguide\\_nov2013\\_en.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/beneficiaries/documents/action2/1813/em_programmeguide_nov2013_en.pdf)*, p. 11

<sup>14</sup> See part 3 in Volume III.

<sup>15</sup> See part 2 Methodology in Volume V.

<sup>16</sup> See country notes in Volume IV.

<sup>17</sup> See part 2 Methodology in Volume V

<sup>18</sup> See the HEI survey report in Vol III for details.

work), EQ5 (enhancing inclusiveness), EQ6 (linkages between HEIs and labour market, internationalisation) and EQ7 (partnerships and networks). During the field phase, the HEIs survey was complemented by key informant interviews to validate some of the survey findings and to capture information on external factors that may have affected results.<sup>19</sup>

#### 2.2.4 Tracer study of former beneficiaries

A tracer study was conducted at the level of former beneficiaries of *Erasmus Mundus* Actions 1 and 2 and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*. Target groups included undergraduate and master's degree students, doctoral candidates, as well as post-doctoral researchers and academic staff who received full-study or short-term scholarships. Nearly 3,000 alumni were contacted for the online survey, and 793 responded (26%)<sup>20</sup>. The aim was to capture their perception and collect feedback on, or "trace", their professional career a few years after the participation in EU-supported exchange programmes. Its findings fed into EQ6 (responsiveness to labour market and brain circulation – that is, the circular movement of skilled labour across nations, as opposed to brain drain). During the field phase, the tracer study was complemented by key informant interviews in order to capture information on external factors that may have affected results.

### 2.3 Challenges and limitations

A number of limitations have been encountered:

- The methodology foresaw evaluation questions that were not programme-specific, and thus did not have equal relevance for each of the programmes. This evaluation was not supposed to replace programme evaluations and was intended to address the overall EU strategy to support HE. The EQs provide answers that are transversal, and address the EU support to HE in a general and holistic manner. The required level of generalisation inevitably means that not all aspects of the respective programmes could be covered in their totality.
- Finalising the inventory: As not all necessary inventory data had been provided to the evaluation team by the end of the inception phase, it was decided to include a preliminary analysis in the inception report; the final inventory analysis was done for the desk report. Even in the desk phase, there were still uncertainties from the side of the client as to which additional data needed to be included in the final inventory.<sup>21</sup> For this reason, and due to clarifications regarding the scope of the evaluation, the finalisation of the inventory was stretched over almost one year. However, all issues were resolved eventually.
- Access to information: the availability of documents on relevant programmes differed considerably. For some interventions, CRIS<sup>22</sup> information and information from EACEA was limited, while others were well documented.<sup>23</sup> Very limited information was available on interventions that have only recently started. Evidence was thin in these cases, yet the tracer study, HEI survey and the field phase were able to close most gaps.
- HEIs in EU, and their role in the evaluated HE programmes, were explicitly excluded from the scope of the evaluation. By excluding the European co-ordinating organisations from the projects, potentially useful information on the management of projects under the individual programmes could not be gathered. In addition, interviews with those HEIs to better understand the synergies created between the EU programmes and the EU Member States mobility programmes (all implemented through HEI in the EU/programming countries) could not be conducted. Future evaluations should take note of this shortcoming and include European HEIs acting as co-ordinating organisations in the analysis.
- The evaluation excludes the projects targeting DG ELARG countries and financed by the IPA and ICI (concerning Tempus and EM programmes in particular).

<sup>19</sup> See part 4 in Volume III for details.

<sup>20</sup> See part 3 in Volume III for details

<sup>21</sup> Inventory as such: see the inventory-specific challenges in Chapter 5 and in part 4 in Volume V.

<sup>22</sup> CRIS: Common RELEX Information System

<sup>23</sup> See chapters 5.1 in this volume and chapter 5 in Volume V

### 3 Policy framework of EU support to higher education

#### 3.1 The growing importance of higher education as a driver of development

Over the last few decades, access to HE has expanded from being a privilege of birth, talent or both (elite phase), to being a fundamental right for those graduating from secondary education (mass phase), to being a requirement for the vast majority of society and occupations (universal). Although access to HE remains constrained in many countries, the last four decades have seen its major expansion in every region of the world.<sup>24</sup> While each country and university faces unique challenges, there are common factors that currently affect most countries around the world. Perhaps the most pressing challenge is to ensure sustainable financing of HE systems in light of decreasing fiscal envelopes and increasing competitiveness for public funding. A rapid rise in the number of students has presented a major challenge for systems where the tradition has been to provide access to free or highly-subsidised tertiary education.<sup>25</sup>

Over the last four decades, global HE enrolment has substantially increased from 32.6 million students in 1970 to 198.6 million in 2013.<sup>26</sup> This expansion was fuelled by a convergence of demographic trends, public preferences, policy decisions and external economic circumstances. Among the key factors driving this growth were higher participation rates in basic education and higher progression rates in primary and secondary schools. A greater number of students were entering and graduating from secondary school and seeking to continue their education.<sup>27</sup>

Overall, there are significant regional differences. While enrolment in HE has experienced explosive growth across most of Asia over the last 20 years, Sub-Saharan African countries' tertiary education systems are still far behind global trends. While there has been an increase in the number of students enrolled, the population growth rate has exceeded the global average, resulting in a stagnant overall enrolment rate. In the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states, the youth population (aged 15-24 years) is increasing due to demographic trends (from 192 million in 2005 to 209 million in 2010 in Africa alone), whereas there is still a shortage of high-performing colleges and universities. For instance, aggregate expenditures in the HE subsector have increased at an average annual rate of 6% – far below the 16% annual increase on tertiary students over the same period.

Another important factor is the necessity to improve the quality of HE, even as the demand for participation is growing. The rising prominence of global university rankings has highlighted the investment attractiveness of nations based upon the capacity of their universities to produce new knowledge and lead innovation. In response, many countries have spearheaded a review of their HE systems. For example, Sri Lanka has announced a strategy to upgrade six universities, while Malaysia and Nigeria have announced similar plans. However, government approaches to assess and improve the research capacities and capabilities of universities to provide the much-needed inputs to these debates are often inadequate to reflect the growing importance of HE in the process of national development.

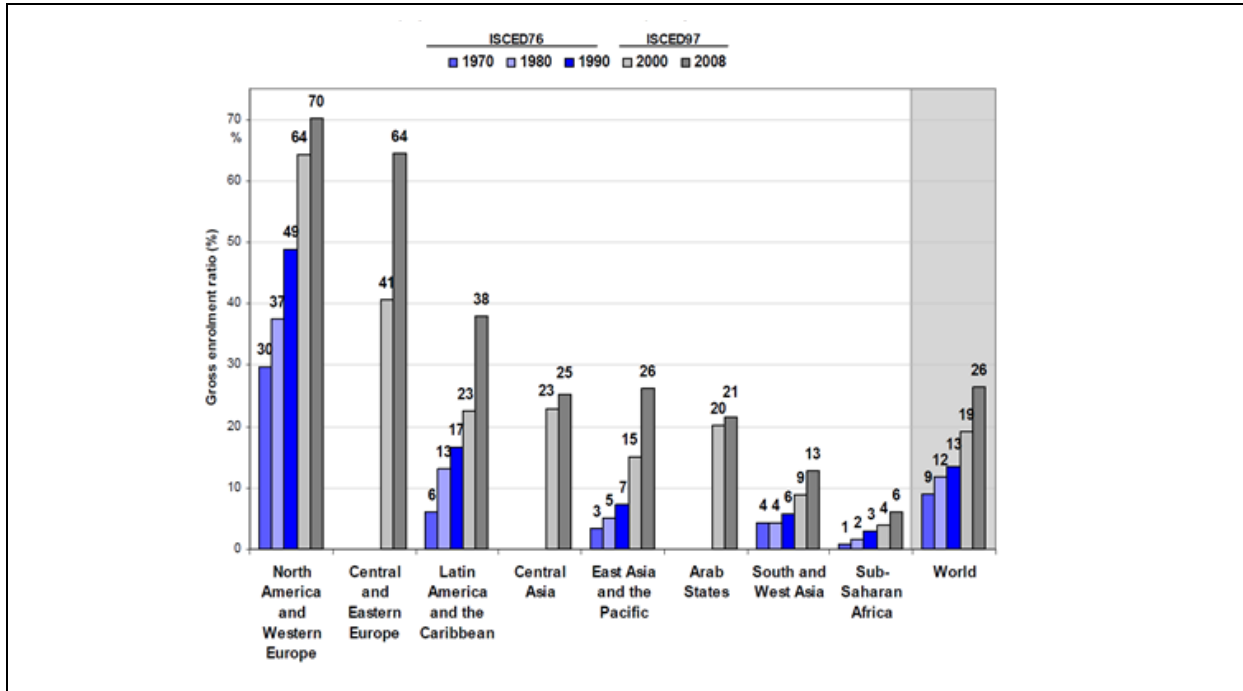
<sup>24</sup> Ellen Hazelkorn (2012): HE's Future: a New Global Order. Dublin Institute of Technology: Centre for Social and Educational Research (CSER), Presentation, 1 September.

<sup>25</sup> Philip G. Altbach, Liz Reisberg, Laura E. Rumbley (2009): Trends in Global HE: Tracking an Academic Revolution. A Report Prepared for the UNESCO 2009 World Conference on HE.

<sup>26</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>.

<sup>27</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2014): HE in Asia: Expanding Out, Expanding Up, p. 16, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/higher-education-asia-graduate-university-research-2014-en.pdf>.

Figure 2 Tertiary gross enrolment ratios by region, 1970 to 2008



Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2010). *Trends in Tertiary Education: Sub-Saharan Africa*, p. 2, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/fs10-trends-tertiary-education-sub-saharan-africa-2010-en.pdf>.

There is often a disconnection between the skills provided and the needs of the market economy, as well as outdated curricula and teaching methods, and insufficient management capacities. In addition, a large percentage of funding received by HEIs is spent on personnel and student costs, at the expense of research. HE in developing countries is therefore under great pressure to provide adequate skills and competencies and to develop stronger governance systems in order to support the increasing students' demand, ease capacity constraints on basic education (quality issues caused by lack of properly trained teachers) and, more generally, to act as a catalyst for economic growth.<sup>28</sup>

At the international level, there are two main challenges. The first is the role of international organisations such as UNESCO in advancing the prospect of enrolment growth and quality improvements, as well as in promoting networking and twinning programmes among HEIs<sup>29</sup>. In this context, institutional change is seen as essential to educational innovation, and information and communication technologies (ICTs) must form part of the teaching and learning process.<sup>30</sup> The second challenge is to encourage international co-operation between and among HEIs in order to share knowledge across borders and facilitate collaboration.

### 3.2 The EU support to higher education in partner countries

The EU's support in the field of HE is part of its comprehensive approach to education, which is seen as an important prerequisite for human, social and economic development. The primary objectives of the EU's HE programmes are:

- promotion of inter-cultural understanding and inter-societal co-operation between regions;
- strengthening of sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development;
- enhancement of political and economic co-operation.

This is to be achieved by promoting student and staff mobility, as well as the development of HE systems in partner countries, while addressing cross-cutting issues such as reducing inequalities for vul-

<sup>28</sup> *Erasmus Mundus* (2009-2013) Action 2 Partnerships. Strand 1 – 10<sup>th</sup> EDF Part 2, Annex 5.

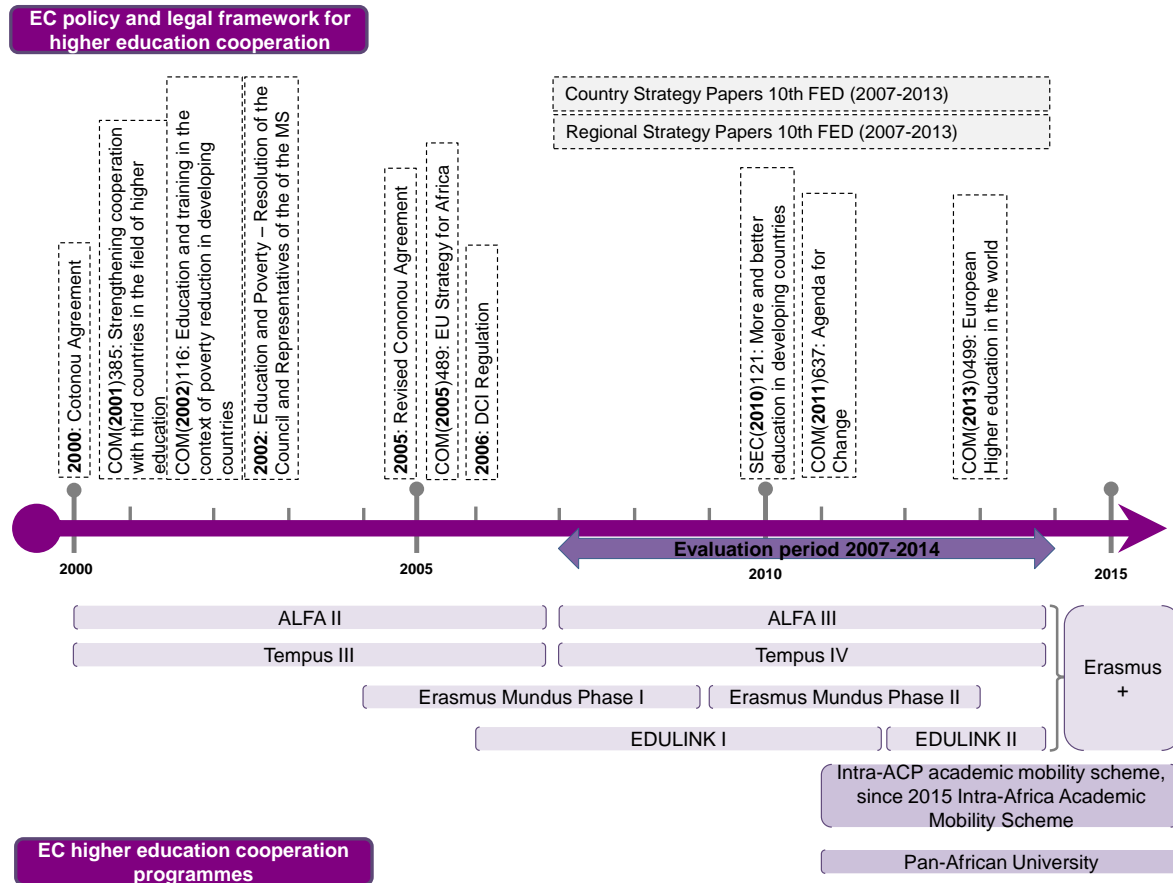
<sup>29</sup> Jesús Granados (2013) *The Challenges of HE in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Global University Network for Innovation.

<sup>30</sup> Cachia, R., Anusca, F., Ala-Mutka, K. and Punie, Y. (2010) *Creative Learning and Innovative Teaching*. Final report on the study on creativity and innovation in education in EU members states, Joint Research Centre (JRC), European Commission, Luxembourg (JCR 62370).



nerable groups, promoting gender equality, and preventing brain drain. The policy framework of the EU development co-operation support for HE in partner countries is based on a number of different policy documents. The following figure depicts the different HE programmes and a number of major policy documents that address HE (among others). Activities supported by DG DEVCO in the field of HE have mainly taken place in the framework of several large programmes aimed at academic co-operation and mobility between the EU and third countries and among third countries, as well as relating to the enhancement of HE quality in these countries.

Figure 3 Policy documents underlying the EU support to higher education



Source: Particip

### 3.3 Policies, instruments and programmes underlying the EU support to HE

EU support for HE is not based on a single strategy, but draws on several key documents, beginning with the Cotonou Agreement (2000) and – for the time being – culminating in the Agenda for Change (2011), which provides the legal and policy framework for the design and implementation of this support.

The *Cotonou Agreement* established a comprehensive partnership between the EU and the ACP states for the countries' economic, social and cultural development, based on three complementary pillars: development co-operation, economic and trade co-operation, and the political dimension. With a focus on reducing and, in the longer-term, eradicating poverty, the co-operation aims to contribute to peace, security and democratic and political stability of the ACP states. In this regard, the Agreement partners made a commitment to act together to gradually achieve the MDGs. The agreement broadly describes "improving education and training, and building technical capacity and skills" as a key objec-

tive under social sector development.<sup>31</sup> The 2005 and 2010 amendments to the Cotonou Agreement are more specific. The 2005 Agreement stipulated, inter alia: “The Parties shall develop co-operation programmes to facilitate the access of students from ACP States to education, in particular through the use of new communication technologies”<sup>32</sup> (Article 13(4)). The 2010 Agreement also stated as a central objective: “Improving education and training at all levels, working towards recognition of tertiary education qualifications, establishment of QA systems for education, including education and training delivered online or through other non-conventional means, and building technical capacity and skills.” (new Article 25(1)a).<sup>33</sup>

*The Communication on strengthening co-operation with third countries in the field of HE (2001)*<sup>34</sup> the Commission’s motivation to launch a debate on international HE collaboration by the EU of HE, and thus determine the position of the Member States with regard to international training market competitiveness. On this basis, the communication made the case for HE to have a more important position in co-operation agreements. The communication essentially identified several objectives for co-operation between the EU and third countries:

- The development of high-quality human resources (in the EU and in the partner countries);
- The promotion of the EU as a leading player in the fields of university training, vocational training and research.
- It also proposed a number of different measures and proposed criteria for international co-operation, including the orientation of programmes towards multilateral networks, partnerships between HEIs as a framework for exchanges, and the use of accreditation systems compatible with the European model (ECTS).<sup>35</sup>

While the Communication also covers co-operation with countries which are not in the remit of development co-operation, it explicitly refers to the latter: “*In the area of development co-operation, the inclusion of higher education in cooperation efforts may, if appropriately designed, contribute to the eradication of poverty in the world, which is the overarching objective of EC development policy.*”<sup>36</sup>

The *Communication on education and training in the context of poverty reduction in developing countries* (2002)<sup>37</sup> acknowledged the “vital importance of education in reducing poverty and in development and to present an overall framework for the objectives, priorities and methods of the Community in education and training in developing countries”.<sup>38</sup> Support to HE, “in particular at the regional level”, is set out as one of three priority areas aimed at:

- Developing information and communication technologies;
- Encouraging co-operation between European and third-country institutions, especially at regional level;
- Ensuring greater vigilance with regard to the impact of brain drain on these countries;
- Enhancing the institutional capacities of developing countries.

This approach is echoed in the document *Education and Poverty – Resolution of the Council and Representatives of the Governments of the Member States* (2002), which identified support for HE as an

<sup>31</sup> Partnership agreement 2000/483/EC between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000

<sup>32</sup> Agreement amending the Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000.

<sup>33</sup> Agreement amending for the second time the Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000, as first amended in Luxembourg on 25 June 2005.

<sup>34</sup> COM(2001) 385 final.

<sup>35</sup> Report on the Commission Communication on strengthening co-operation with third countries in the field of HE, <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/report-on-the-commission-communication-on-strengthening-co-operation-with-third-countries-in-the-field-of-higher-education/167564.article>.

<sup>36</sup> COM(2001) 385 final, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> COM(2002) 116 final.

<sup>38</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on education and training in the context of poverty reduction in developing countries. Brussels, 2002, COM(2002) 116 final, p.2.

important component of a holistic education strategy. More specifically, the Resolution outlined the following: *“Efforts are needed to ensure that sufficient numbers of appropriately trained professionals are generated to support development and achieve poverty reduction. It is important to support universities in developing countries in their effort to improve their efficiency and to contribute to development. The Council agrees that inter-institutional co-operation, which may include scholarship programmes in the area of HE between European and third-country institutions, is an important means of supporting HE in developing countries. Capacity-building, research and training of university teachers are key areas to achieve the policy reforms necessary for HE to make this contribution to development and also contribute to improving primary education. This co-operation is to be promoted at the regional level, in particular through the Commission’s Common Co-operation Framework for HE.”*<sup>39</sup>

The *EU Strategy for Africa: Towards a Euro-African pact to accelerate Africa’s development* (2005)<sup>40</sup> outlined a framework of action for all EU Member States, aimed at supporting Africa’s efforts to achieve the MDGs. The communication stipulated that *“beyond primary education, the EU should support education, research and access to knowledge and transfer of know-how as a lifelong process: from secondary and higher to vocational education. Building on the success of and experience from the Erasmus programme, the EU should support the creation of a Nyerere programme for student exchanges across Africa.”*<sup>41</sup>

Of particular importance for HE is the programme *Investing in People*, for which the priorities for the 2011-13 period included:

- Promoting equal access to quality education for all, namely by contributing to the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI); and
- Improving opportunities for vocational education and skills training, with a focus on addressing the needs of people working in the informal economy.<sup>42</sup>

The *Commission Staff Working Document “More and Better Education in Developing Countries”*<sup>43</sup> (2010) presented a comprehensive attempt to “map the challenges to more and better education in developing countries” prior to the UN General Assembly Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Review Meeting. A second and equally important objective was to establish *“how European Member States and the Commission can more systematically interpret and operationalise [the] European development policy framework under the Lisbon Treaty to address these challenges”*. The document concluded: *“Support for basic (primary and lower secondary) education as the foundation for further learning and skills development is important. But this must not be at the expense of adequate policy and resource engagement in other sub-sectors.”* It stated that:

- Collaborative work on a whole sector approach, which starts with early childhood development, embraces lifelong learning and strengthens links between education and the world of work, should be reinforced.
- Delivering more and better education is complex. Appropriate links must be made with other sectors to address elements that impact upon access, quality and inclusion in education.
- The EU’s considerable experience and influence could enlarge and expand the range of available financing possibilities, mobilising a wider and more predictable resource base to ensure quality education for all, including for those living in countries experiencing fragility.
- More systematic use of EU policies on division of labour, complementarity, coherence and delegated support could ensure that EU aid to education is more effective.

The Communication on the *Agenda for Change* (2011) is based on the concept of “inclusive and sustainable growth”, and identifies education (in general terms) as a key sector for EU support (together with social protection and health).

<sup>39</sup> Education and Poverty – Resolution of the Council and Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, 2429<sup>th</sup> Council meeting – DEVELOPMENT – Brussels, 30 May 2002, p. 29.

<sup>40</sup> COM(2005) 489 final.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/strategy-paper-investing-in-people-2013\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/strategy-paper-investing-in-people-2013_en.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> SEC(2010)121 final.

The EC communication *European Higher Education in the World* (2013) outlines a comprehensive future agenda for the support to HE in Europe and beyond. Major objectives include, but are not limited to, increasing worldwide co-operation for innovation and development – through, for example, joint and double degree programmes and “Knowledge Alliances” (under Erasmus+) – to strengthen links between employers and participating HEIs at international level. The communication highlights policy dialogue as “a system-to-system exchange with non-EU countries or regions about common challenges”, which “should be enhanced as a flexible instrument for co-operation and soft diplomacy”. Furthermore, it states: *“International capacity-building partnerships will be essential to support non-EU countries in improving the quality of their higher education systems, and in their modernisation and internationalisation efforts, to prepare the ground for future academic and research collaboration, to address cross-border issues, and to develop a stronger knowledge of local markets.”* According to the communication, the EC will *“strengthen evidence-based policy making in the field of international education, and will ensure that policies are based on state-of-the-art knowledge relating to cross-border provision of higher education”*.<sup>44</sup>

### *Main results of the review*

The above-mentioned policy documents underlying the EU support to HE provide a clear picture of the EU’s support, and how current concepts and approaches have evolved over the years. There are several recurring themes and propositions, which can be summarised as follows.

- The EU considers HE to be an important area for regional co-operation with partner countries as a means to stimulate more balanced and inclusive economic and social development.<sup>45</sup>
- EU’s support to HE in partner countries and regions is built on the rationale that the sector has a crucial role to play for the social and economic transition and development processes in the EU partner countries, as HE generates the necessary expertise and human resources for socio-economic development.
- The main problem affecting many partner countries is a lack of high-level professionals in areas crucial to the development of these countries, in part due to outmigration for employment and educational opportunities and also due to a severe underfunding of HE in past decades. This has a negative impact on the attainment of the MDGs and on the reduction of poverty as a whole.
- The situation is worsened by the brain drain of skilled graduates and professionals away from most of the regions, caused by the lack of access and quality of relevant HE in the countries concerned and more favourable employment and study opportunities elsewhere.
- Improving access to HE for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups favours their inclusion in society and access to better living conditions. It also contributes to a more balanced and inclusive development of societies.
- Co-operation in the field of HE could potentially have a strong and direct impact on the reform and modernisation of HE systems in partner countries and regions.
- Mobility programmes and generally academic exchanges are intended to enhance the mutual understanding between the EU and partner countries and regions.

### *Sources of funding*

The Financing Instrument for Development Co-operation (DCI) for the period 2007-2013 replaced a range of geographic and thematic instruments that had been created over time, with the objective of improving development co-operation. The European Consensus on Development<sup>46</sup> provided the general framework for action on development matters. The overall objectives were poverty reduction, sus-

<sup>44</sup> COM(2013)0499 final, Communication from the Commission. European higher education in the world, p. 13-14

<sup>45</sup> In the case of Latin America, Higher education is even a “priority area for EU regional co-operation with Latin America and its countries since the EU Regional Programmes for Latin America (LA) were first launched in the early 1990s”, [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/latin-america/erasmus-mundus\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/latin-america/erasmus-mundus_en).

<sup>46</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ%3AC%3A2006%3A046%3A0001%3A0019%3-AEN%3APDF>

tainable economic and social development and the smooth and gradual integration of developing countries into the world economy.

*Geographic programmes under DCI* encompassed co-operation with partner countries and regions determined on a geographical basis. They covered five regions: Latin America, Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and South Africa. EU assistance for these countries was aimed at supporting actions within several areas of co-operation, including but not limited to:

- supporting the implementation of policies aimed at poverty eradication and at the achievement of the MDGs;
- addressing the essential needs of the population, in particular primary education and health;
- promoting social cohesion and employment;
- promoting governance, democracy, human rights and support for institutional reforms.

*Thematic programmes under DCI* complemented geographic programmes. They covered a specific area of activity of interest to a group of partner countries not determined by geography, or co-operation activities focusing on various regions or groups of partner countries, or an international operation that was not geographically specific. Actions encompassed not only the countries eligible for geographic co-operation under the DCI but also the countries and regions eligible under the European Development Fund (EDF) and ENPI countries. Five thematic programmes were covered

- investing in people;
- the environment and the sustainable management of natural resources;
- non-state actors and local authorities;
- the improvement of food security;
- co-operation in the area of migration and asylum.<sup>47</sup>

The 2006 DCI Regulation<sup>48</sup> (Art 5 (2bvi)) establishes the basis for “promoting vocational training, HE, lifelong learning, cultural, scientific and technological co-operation, academic and cultural exchanges as well as enhancing mutual understanding between partner countries and regions and the Community”. Art 6 stipulates the “creation of a common EU-Latin American higher education area”. Art 12 (2bii) outlines “*basic, secondary and higher education as well as vocational education and training to improve access to education for all children and, increasingly, for women and men of all ages, with a view to increasing knowledge, skills and employability on the job market, contributing to active citizenship and individual fulfilment on a life-long basis*” as one of the main objectives of the thematic programmes.

In the current programming period (2014-2020), DCI again comprises geographic programmes supporting co-operation with around 47 developing countries in Latin America, South Asia and North and South East Asia, Central Asia, Middle East and South Africa. Thematic programmes benefit all developing countries (including those covered by ENI and EDF). There are two categories: ‘*Global public good and challenges*’ and ‘*Civil society organisations and local authorities*’.

A newly established *Pan-African Programme* supports the strategic partnership between the EU and Africa. This programme complements other financing instruments which are used in Africa (in particular ENI and EDF) and supports activities of trans-regional, continental or global nature in and with Africa.<sup>49</sup>

The *European Development Fund (EDF)*, created in 1957 under the Treaty of Rome and launched in 1959, is the EU’s main instrument for providing development aid to ACP countries and to overseas countries and territories (OCTs). The EDF was established within the framework of an international agreement between the EU and its partner countries. The ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, also known as the Cotonou Agreement, was concluded in 2000 – its predecessors date back to 1975 – and is revised every five years. The EDF funds co-operation activities in the field of economic develop-

<sup>47</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1905/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 establishing a financing instrument for development co-operation, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/BG/TXT/?uri=URISERV:l14173>

<sup>48</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006R1905&from=EN>

<sup>49</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/dci\\_en.htm\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/dci_en.htm_en)

ment, social and human development, as well as regional co-operation and integration. It is financed by direct contributions from EU Member States, according to a contribution key. It is covered by its own financial rules (i.e. outside the EU budget), and is managed by the European Commission and the European Investment Bank. The evaluation period largely coincides with the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF (2008-2013).

The Cotonou Agreement mentions HE in its section on Social and Human Development. Article 25a stipulates that co-operation is aimed at “improving education and training at all levels, working towards recognition of tertiary education qualifications, establishment of quality assurance (QA) systems for education, including education and training delivered online or through other non-conventional means, and building technical capacity and skills”.<sup>50</sup>

The *European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)*, 2007-2013, supported the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). It was the successor to the former co-operation programmes TACIS (for the Eastern European countries) and MEDA (for the Mediterranean countries), and was based on the following strategic objectives:

- supporting democratic transition and promoting human rights;
- the transition towards market economy;
- the promotion of sustainable development, and policies of common interests (e.g. anti-terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, conflict resolution, rule of international law).

Within this framework, the Commission and partner countries established four principal axes of co-operation based on:

- the implementation of a strengthened dialogue on priority multi-sector reforms;
- the approximation of legislation;
- institutional support;
- the objectives of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals.<sup>51</sup>

HE is included in the sectors of support, and both states and HEIs could apply for support. Article 2 (u) of the Regulation establishing ENPI stipulated the promotion of “co-operation between the Member States and partner countries in higher education, and mobility of teachers, researchers and students”<sup>52</sup>.

### *Six individual HE programmes (global and regional)*

#### *Box 1 Tempus: Programme objectives*

The overall objective of the programme was to support modernisation of HE in the EU’s surrounding area. It focused on the reform and modernisation of HE in partner countries, and it contributed to an area of co-operation in HE involving the EU and partner countries in its wider proximity. In particular, the programme promoted voluntary convergence with EU developments in the field of HE derived from the Europe 2020 strategy,<sup>53</sup> the Strategic Framework for European Co-operation in education and training (ET 2020), and the Bologna process.

The specific objectives of the Tempus programme were as follows:

- To promote the reform and modernisation of HE in the partner countries;
- To enhance quality and relevance of HE in partner countries;
- To build up the capacity of HEIs in the partner countries, in particular their capacity for international co-operation and for a permanent modernisation process, and to assist them in opening themselves up to society at large, the world of work and the wider world in order to:
  - overcome the fragmentation of HE between countries and between institutions in the same country;

<sup>50</sup> The Cotonou Agreement (2010 amendment). [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/cotonou-agreement\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/cotonou-agreement_en.pdf); further revisions took place in 2014, but there was no change to Article 25a, See [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/reviced-annex-4-cotonou-agreement-2014\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/reviced-annex-4-cotonou-agreement-2014_en.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/7433>

<sup>52</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32006R1638>

<sup>53</sup> Communication from the Commission Europe 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Brussels, 3.3.2010 COM(2010) 2020 final

- enhance inter-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity;
- enhance employability of university graduates;
- To foster reciprocal development of human resources;
- To enhance networking among HEIs and research institutions in partner countries and EU Member States;
- To enhance mutual understanding between peoples and cultures of the EU and partner countries.

Source: *Tempus IV, Reform of HE through International University Co-operation Sixth Call Application Guidelines EACEA N° 35/2012, p. 4-5.*

*Tempus*, the oldest HE programme, was started in 1990 and was managed by EACEA.<sup>54</sup> It was directed at neighbourhood countries, and the fourth phase of the programme (*Tempus IV*, 2007-2013) falls within the evaluation period. Funding for the programme was drawn from the financial instruments for external co-operation for the regions involved (ENPI and DCI). *Tempus IV* involved EU Member States and 27 partner countries. Projects were undertaken by partnerships that included HEIs, as well as non-academic partners from EU partner countries and EU Member States.<sup>55</sup>

#### Box 2 ALFA: Programme objectives

The general objective of the ALFA (America Latina Formacion Academica) programme was to contribute to the development of HE in Latin America (LA) as a means of stimulating a more balanced and equitable socio-economic development in the region. The specific objectives of the programme were:

- To help improve quality, relevance and accessibility of HE in LA, particularly for the most vulnerable groups;
- To strengthen the process of regional integration in the area of HE in LA, fostering progress towards the creation of a Common HE Area in the region and promoting its synergies with the EU system.

Source: *Action Fiche ALFA III: Regional Programme for HE in Latin America; ALFA III 3<sup>rd</sup> Call Guidelines for grant applicants, p. 5.*

HE in Latin America (LA) has been supported through two programmes: *ALBAN* and *ALFA*. The *ALBAN* (America Latina Becas de Alto Nivel) programme aimed at the reinforcement of EU-Latin America co-operation in the area of HE, providing scholarships in the EU to senior students, academics and professionals from the 18 countries in Latin America. The scholarships were for master's degrees (six to 24 months) and doctorate degrees (six to 36 months). This programme was a predecessor of *Erasmus Mundus* and was implemented between 2002 and 2010. The EU contribution was €84.7 million, of which €75 million was allocated for scholarships. After the five calls for scholarship, 3,319 grant-holders were selected from the participating countries. As the corresponding decision(s) for *ALBAN* pre-date 2007, the programme was not included in this evaluation. However, it is mentioned here to provide the full picture of EU support to HE in LA.

The *ALFA* programme started in 1994, and the third phase (2007-2013) is covered by this evaluation. *ALFA III*, managed by DG DEVCO, was legally based on the Regulation No 1905/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of the EU of 18 December 2006, establishing a financing instrument for development co-operation. *ALFA III* retained the original objective of the previous phases of the programme. However, its instruments differed from the predecessor Programme *ALFA II* (2000-2006) with regard to the mobility component. *ALFA II* included intra- and inter-regional mobility for students and staff. In *ALFA III*, with some rare exceptions, mobility was not envisaged. Funding was channelled through university consortia that had been selected on the basis of thematic proposals, corresponding to the objectives and priorities of the programme (and outlined in the programme guidelines). The coordinating HEI could either be from the EU or from LA.

<sup>54</sup> See Council Decision 90/233/EEC of 7 May 1990 establishing a trans-European mobility scheme for university studies (TEMPUS); Decision 93/246/EEC of 29 April 1993 adopting the second phase of the trans-European co-operation scheme for higher education (*Tempus II*) (1994-1998).

<sup>55</sup> Mid-Term Evaluation of the TEMPUS IV Programme, Final Report 18 November 2012, p. 20.

**Box 3** *EduLink: Programme objectives*

The overall objective of the EduLink Programme was:

- To foster capacity building and regional integration in the field of HE through institutional networking;
- To support an HE system of quality, and which is efficient and relevant to the needs of the labour market, and is consistent with ACP socio-economic development priorities.

The programme's specific purpose was to strengthen the capacity of ACP HEIs at their three naturally constitutive levels:

1. Institutional/administrative;
2. Academic relevance;
3. Research and Technology development (*only EduLink I*).

*Source: Evaluation of the EduLink Programme and preparation of a new proposal -under the Intra-ACP 10<sup>th</sup> EDF strategy paper, 2010, p. 13.*

*EduLink*, a programme to provide support to HE in ACP partner countries, was set up in 2006 and managed by the ACP-Secretariat. Its second phase started in 2012.

**Box 4** *Erasmus Mundus: Programme objectives*

The programme's objective was to help improve career prospects of students and promote inter-cultural understanding through co-operation with third countries, in accordance with EU external policy objectives, in order to contribute to the sustainable development of third countries in the field of HE. For the part funded under heading 1 (but not heading 4), the programme's aim was also to promote European HE.

The programme's specific objectives were:

- To promote structured co-operation between HEIs and an offer of enhanced quality in HE with a distinct European added value, attractive both within the EU and beyond its borders, with a view to creating centres of excellence;
- To contribute to the mutual enrichment of societies by developing qualifications of women/men so that they possess appropriate skills, particularly as regards the labour market, and are open-minded and internationally experienced through promoting mobility for the most talented students, academics and administrative staff from third countries to obtain qualifications and/or experience in the EU and for the most talented European students and academics towards third countries;
- To contribute towards the development of human resources and the international co-operation capacity of HEIs in third countries through increased mobility streams between the EU and third countries;
- To improve accessibility and enhance the profile and visibility of European HE in the world as well as its attractiveness for third-country nationals and citizens of EU.

*Source: EU: Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013 Programme Guide, p. 9.*

The *Erasmus Mundus* (EM) programme, managed by EACEA, started in 2004. The 2009-2013 second phase of the EM programme was established by the Decision (No 1298/2008/EC) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008.<sup>56</sup>

*EM* comprised three different actions, funded partly by Heading 1 and partly by Heading 4 of the EU budget:

- Action 1: Erasmus Mundus joint programmes of outstanding quality at master's (Action 1 A) and doctoral (Action 1 B) levels, including scholarships/fellowships to participate in these programmes;
- Action 2: Erasmus Mundus partnerships between European and third-country HEIs as a basis for structured co-operation, exchange and mobility at all levels of HE, including a scholarship scheme;
- Action 3: Promotion of European HE through measures enhancing the attractiveness of Europe as an educational destination and a centre of excellence at world level.

This evaluation focuses only on:

- Erasmus Mundus External Co-operation Window (EMECW);
- Erasmus Mundus Action 2, Strand 1 – student and staff mobility;

<sup>56</sup> Decision No 1298/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the *Erasmus Mundus* 2009-2013 action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries, 16 December 2008.



- Erasmus Mundus Action 1: under Action 1, the evaluation covers only scholarships funded by Heading 4.<sup>57</sup>

The EMECW was a co-operation and mobility scheme, which aimed to achieve better understanding and mutual enrichment between the EU and third countries co-operation in the field of HE through promoting the exchange of persons, knowledge and skills at HE level. Actions included the promotion of partnerships and institutional co-operation exchanges between European HEIs and partner country institutions, and a mobility scheme supporting student and academic exchanges.

In the 2004-2008 period, country-specific and region-specific scholarships were funded through the European EC External Co-operation Instruments (ECIs) in order to support the development needs and specificities of those country/regions. These were not covered by the global *Erasmus Mundus I* scholarships programme. In this framework, several specific EMECWs were “opened” for students and staff from targeted third countries, and HE institutions from European and third countries were invited to form partnership projects aimed at hosting students, researchers and academic staff. EMECW mobilities (duration from three months to three years, according to whether the purpose of the mobility was credit seeking or degree seeking) facilitated credit seeking as well as degree seeking mobility. It was initially addressed to Tempus countries (Neighbourhood and Central Asia), but, owing to its success, the geographical coverage of EMECWs was progressively enlarged. Since February 2009, the ECW programme has been included within the umbrella of the wider *Erasmus Mundus* 2009-2013 programme. It became “Erasmus Mundus Action 2 Strand 1 – Partnerships”, funded by Heading 4 and the EDF.<sup>58</sup> Action 2 of Erasmus Mundus will be ongoing until 2018, when it will cease to exist. The last call for scholarships was in 2014.

The *Erasmus Mundus* programme built on existing and recognised European master’s degree courses (EU HEIs were invited to develop joint master’s courses and, on this basis, individual mobility grants are awarded to students and academics to attend these courses, which generally last two years). The EMECW, however, was based on a co-operation model: partnerships of HEIs from the EU (at least five institutions) and from partner countries. The institutions were encouraged to set up durable links and to organise and implement individual mobility flows. They selected and received students and academic staff to attend any existing courses. The categories of students who benefited from this action ranged from undergraduate to post-doctorate.

Another difference, based on the development co-operation characteristics of this programme, is that the EMECW paid particular attention to partner country students in vulnerable situations: refugees or asylum beneficiaries; or who face unjustified expulsion from a university in their country of origin; or suffer any form of proven discrimination on racial, ethnic, religious, political, gender or sexual orientation grounds.

As of 2011, some 25,000 students (three-quarters of whom are from non-EU countries) had received scholarships to study abroad, and some 3,000 academics had the opportunity to teach or conduct research activities in the framework of the joint courses or partnerships.

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<sup>57</sup> Action 1 under *Erasmus Mundus* 2004-2008 and 2009-2013 was funded by Heading 1. However there were some extra funds coming from bilateral envelopes (that is, the bilateral co-operation with certain countries), also called “windows” that were injected in the programme to provide extra scholarships to students from these particular countries to enroll in the EM selected Masters courses.

<sup>58</sup> *Erasmus Mundus* 2009-2013. Programme Guide, p. 48, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/Erasmus\\_mundus/programme/documents/2014/em\\_programmeguide\\_nov2013\\_en.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/Erasmus_mundus/programme/documents/2014/em_programmeguide_nov2013_en.pdf).

Box 5 *Intra-ACP: Programme objectives*

The overall objective of the programme is to promote sustainable development and poverty alleviation by increasing the availability of trained and qualified high-level professional manpower in the ACP countries.

The purpose is to strengthen co-operation between HEIs in the ACP region with a view to increasing access to quality education that will encourage and enable ACP students to undertake postgraduate studies, and to promoting student retention in the region, along with mobility of academics and staff, while increasing competitiveness and attractiveness of HEIs.

The specific objectives are:

- To promote co-operation between sending and hosting institutions;
- To enhance the international co-operation capacity of universities in ACP countries;
- To enable students, academics and staff to benefit linguistically, culturally and educationally from the experience gained in the context of mobility to another country;
- To provide access to HE for students, including those from disadvantaged groups;
- To enhance, in the medium-term, the political, cultural, educational and economic links between the participating countries;
- To facilitate co-operation on recognition of studies and qualifications;
- To contribute to the improvement of the quality of HE through the promotion of internationalisation, and harmonisation of programmes and curricula within participating institutions.

Source: *Action Fiche Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme – 2010 /021-817, Annex 6.*

The *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, set up in 2011, is managed by EACEA. The ACP Secretariat is a member and the chair of the steering committee. The programme follows the rationale that the HE sector in ACP countries “needs to respond to a number of key development issues. First, the need to stimulate potential for economic growth by increasing the supply of high-level qualified human resources available to ACP economies. Second, the need to improve the quality of locally-provided HE in the ACP states. Third, the importance of building local capacity by promoting both co-operation between ACP tertiary education institutions and between ACP and European universities. And finally, the importance of promoting inter-cultural dialogue and understanding among European and ACP countries.”<sup>59</sup> *The Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*-funded partnerships between HEIs from different countries within the ACP region, and grants scholarships for students and academics to carry out studies, research or teaching in other countries covered by the programme (Intra-Africa and Intra-Caribbean/Pacific mobility). The programme built on the African Union’s Mwalimu Nyerere programme for Africa, granting additional funding, and setting up a similar scheme for the Caribbean and Pacific regions. It is funded through the EDF. Further support to the African Union Commission (AUC) has taken place through the *Pan-African University* (PAU), with the aim of stimulating highest quality research in areas critical to Africa’s technical, economic and social development

In 2014, *Erasmus+*, a new programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, was established to streamline the EU support to HE. Erasmus+, which integrated *Tempus*, *ALFA III*, *EM* and *Edulink*,<sup>60</sup> also covers vocational education and training (Leonardo da Vinci programme) and adult learning (Grundtvig), as well as youth (Youth in Action) and sport. One of the main reasons for integrating these programmes was to generate synergy effects between the different lines of action (of the formerly separate programmes), to foster closer links between the Programme and the EU policy objectives, and to create a more flexible and user-friendly approach. The key documents state that the new programme would not only incorporate almost all the lines of action of the former interventions, but would broaden the scope of programme activities. At the same time, the number of Key Actions would be reduced to three, while the seven-year budget of Erasmus+ would grow by 40%, compared with the total combined budget of the predecessor programmes during the period 2007-2013.

In the field of international HE (the Regulation explicitly mentions the need for a “strong international dimension”) and development perspective, Erasmus+ aims at contributing to:

- Strengthening HE systems in the partner countries;

<sup>59</sup> Action Fiche Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme – 2010 /021-817, Annex 6.

<sup>60</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': EU programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC.

- Equity – to ensure the participation of vulnerable groups and individuals, less developed regions, and disadvantaged institutions;
- Support for conflict-affected and fragile countries (which was not explicitly included in the previous programmes);
- Partner country ownership<sup>61</sup> and priorities;
- Geographical balance.

Decentralised actions of Erasmus+ (including the international credit mobility) are managed by the Erasmus+ agencies, in EU and third countries, and the centralised actions (including the *Erasmus Mundus* Joint Degrees and Capacity Building in Higher Education) are managed by EACEA in Brussels. According to information provided to the evaluation team by the EC about Erasmus+, “specific negative priority is given to the graduating countries in Latin America and Asia, and a positive priority for lower income and less developed countries”.

Across all programmes, but particularly in *Tempus IV*, the Bologna Process gained importance as a reference – or at least discussion point – for reform processes in HE.

#### Box 6 *The Bologna Declaration*

The Bologna Declaration is the main guiding document of the Bologna Process. Originally signed by 29 European countries, the Process currently has 47 participating countries and 49 signatories. The main aim was to “establish the European area of HE and to promote the European system of HE worldwide”<sup>62</sup>, with main emphasis given to:

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;
- Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles – undergraduate and graduate;
- Establishment of a system of credits – such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) – as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility;
- Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement, with particular attention to:
  - For students – access to study and training opportunities and to related services;
  - For teachers, researchers and administrative staff – recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights;
- Promotion of European co-operation in QA, with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies;
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in HE, particularly with regard to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes, and integrated programmes of study, training and research.<sup>63</sup>

It should be noted that some countries that are non-signatories of the Bologna Declaration follow selected individual elements of Bologna on a voluntary basis, or have chosen other guidelines. However, the process is not transposable as such to every partner country. *Tempus IV*, for example, describes the Bologna Process as “a common reference point for both EU Member States and Partner Countries”.<sup>64</sup> Hence, Bologna is not a target as such, but a tool to harmonise, and therefore increase, the internationalisation of national HE systems.

The Bologna Process has been supplemented at international level by an increased number of policy dialogues (exchanges of best practice in HE policies) with EU partner countries under the impetus of the international HE programmes listed above and bilateral agreements. Additional input is provided by multilateral policy initiatives, such as the Eastern Partnership, the Africa-EU Strategy, and the Bologna Policy Forum.<sup>65</sup> These “policy dialogues” with partner countries follow the objective of highlight-

<sup>61</sup> According to the Paris Declaration (2005), ownership means that “Developing countries set their own strategies for poverty reduction, improve their institutions and tackle corruption.” The concept is further specified e.g. in <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf>, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education convened in Bologna on 19 June 1999, p.3., [http://www.aic.lv/ace/ace\\_disk/Bologna/maindoc/bologna\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.aic.lv/ace/ace_disk/Bologna/maindoc/bologna_declaration.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> *Tempus IV*, Reform of HE through International University Co-operation Sixth Call Application Guidelines EACEA N° 35/2012, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> Brussels, 23.11.2011 SEC(2011) 1402 final Volume 4 Commission Staff Working Paper: Impact Assessment on International Co-operation in HE, p. 9.

ing the attractiveness of EU education and training worldwide, facilitating the implementation of its programmes, and promoting the sharing of experience, best practices and expertise.<sup>66</sup>

The Bologna process is discussed and analysed mainly in EQs 3 and 4 to determine whether, and to what extent, Bologna has played a role as a reference point for management of HE, teaching, learning and research at universities, and has provided guidance on, or even a model, for EU-supported HE reform processes in partner countries and regions.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.16.

## 4 The reconstructed intervention logic of EU support to HE in partner countries

### *Five specific programmes and one comprehensive EU support to HE in partner countries*

The evaluation team reconstructed six intervention logics (ILs) for the EU support to HE for development in partner countries – one for each of the five programmes, and an overall IL for EU support to HE. The objectives of producing these ILs were:

- To help clarify the objectives of the EU support and translate them into a hierarchy of expected effects/results so that they can be evaluated;
- To help propose evaluation questions to assess these effects;
- To help in assessing the internal coherence of the EU support.

### 4.1 The overall intervention logic

As the EU's strategic approach to HE in development co-operation is not based on a single document, but several documents, a faithful IL could not be drafted. A key challenge was to deduce an overall EU policy and strategic approach for supporting HE from references in a variety of existing policy and programming documents. The evaluation team looked at strategy documents of the EU (such as the Agenda for Change, European Consensus for Development), Communications regarding education (such as on strengthening co-operation with third countries in the field of HE, and the one on education and training in the context of poverty reduction in developing countries), Regulations for Instruments (DCI, ENPI), and different regional strategies (such as the EU Strategy for Africa).

The programme-specific ILs have been derived from strategy documents concerning the programmes. The overall IL for EU support provides the framework for this evaluation (see Figure 4). The aim is not to provide an evaluation of a series of programme-specific evaluations. The overall IL is presented here; the complete overview of ILs of the individual programmes is set out in Volume V of the valuation.<sup>67</sup>

### 4.2 The different levels of the intervention logic

#### *The rationale – from inputs to global impacts*

EU support for HE is based on a broad range of inputs, which are described in detail in the individual programme ILs. Of particular importance are:

- Exchange arrangements for students, teachers and researchers;
- Development of joint teaching and learning programmes, including distance learning;
- Recognition of education undertaken abroad – that is, arrangements for the recognition of courses offered by the home and host universities, based on, or compatible with, the ECTS model, which is the European standard in HE;
- Policy and strategic dialogue on HE with partner countries;
- Integration of HE policies into the partner countries' poverty reduction strategies;
- Participation by education actors and civil society in the broadest sense – including the private sector – in HE reform processes;
- General support for institutional development and capacity-building in HE, and budgetary support.

#### *Three clusters of outputs*

These inputs lead to a series of outputs that can be clustered into three groups.

- The first output cluster is geared towards improving the quality and relevance of HE. This has been achieved through improvements in the ICT infrastructure, development of curricula to re-

<sup>67</sup> See part 2 Methodology in Volume V.

spond better and more explicitly to national and regional development needs, and staff development training with a prominent emphasis on strengthened capacities to design and implement new curricula. Furthermore, the establishment of, or improvement of, standards in teaching and learning, as well as accreditation processes, is a core contribution to better quality and relevance of HE.

- The second cluster is directed at enhancing mobility and linkages between and among students and teachers. Established common standards, accreditation and recognition processes, and, equally important, newly-created or strengthened co-operation mechanisms and institutional links between HEIs are the pillars on which mobility depends.
- The third cluster outputs related to the frameworks for both HE policy-making in partner countries and regions and institutional development and reforms at universities. The specific outputs in this area are the facilitation of policy dialogues and the delivery of FA and TA for institution-building, and the development of management practices and information systems.

### *Results for individuals, institutions and the system*

These outputs lead to the expected results for three stakeholder groups.

- First, for the individual students and researchers, mobility is expected to pave the way for greater cultural understanding and respect for diversity. The multicultural environment in which students and HEI staff will be immersed during their stay in hosting countries is expected to help them to understand and accept differences in attitudes and ways of life. Mobility is seen as both a result and a driver of positive change. Therefore, the relationships between the specific objectives of the EU support to HE are iterative and mutually-reinforcing, rather than purely linear.
- Second, outputs described above are expected to result in enhanced qualifications and competencies of students, and academic and administrative staff, as well as resulting in greater relevance of HE provision for the development needs of partner countries and regions. Particular emphasis is given to inclusiveness – that is, improved access to HE for vulnerable groups (defined in terms of gender, ethnic, faith-based or economic disadvantages). This has to be seen in the context of an underlying understanding that social and economic inclusion is both a driver of poverty reduction and a central human rights concern. In a similar vein, this applies to HEIs as the second stakeholder group. HEIs – particularly those that are disadvantaged due to economic, geographic or institutional constraints – are expected to experience an increase in efficiency, competitiveness and attractiveness. This includes their ability and motivation to respond to the manpower needs within their countries and regions in more comprehensive and effective ways.
- Third, a further central area of expected results can be summarised as “internationalisation”. This not only facilitates the exchange of best practises in HE across borders and drives technology transfers, but also provides a framework for the harmonisation of programmes and curricula within participating institutions, and the mutual recognition of studies and qualifications. This third benefiting stakeholder group encompasses governments and their agencies. Here, the main expectation is the improvement of national policy and legislative frameworks within which HEIs operate. Improving the governance of the HE sector, in turn, makes a potentially strong contribution to enhancing participatory elements, transparency and effectiveness of the public sector in general.

### *Specific, intermediate and global impact*

With regard to both partner countries’ HEIs and European universities, specific impacts materialise:

- First and foremost, as best practices exchanges and synergies in the provision of HE programmes and the creation of collaborative research networks, as well as international

knowledge capitalisation (that is, “the processes of knowledge creation and transmission of knowledge for use and for disciplinary advance”).<sup>68</sup>

- At the same time, students and academics benefit directly by gaining new, additional degrees and qualifications, as well as enhanced capacities. In this context, the improvement of language proficiencies and transversal skills occupies a central position among the specific impacts. At institutional level, the strengthening of HEIs, in terms of their administrative, institutional and financial practices, is expected to make a significant contribution to improving their management structures and processes. Likewise, a key expected impact at state level is strengthened HE governance – that is, the increased ability and capacity to develop and implement policy, strategy and regulation in the HE sector.

The aforementioned specific impacts are expected to lead to a substantial contribution to labour markets at the intermediate impact level.

- As the professional skills of HE graduates do not always meet the needs and qualification requirements of national, regional and global economies and labour markets, EU support to HE is thus ultimately directed towards narrowing this gap. The capacity to import and adapt or generate scientific innovations relevant to the economies and societies of partner countries and regions is an objective to be achieved at this level.
- Training and capacity building for students and academics at EU HEIs might also lead to a situation in which the best foreign researchers are attracted and retained. The potentially resulting brain drain effect would undermine the objective of sustainable HE development in partner countries and regions. Hence, EU support to HE follows the objective of reducing any brain drain effects, and simultaneously to stimulate brain circulation (see the IL for EM for more details). Most policy documents either explicitly or implicitly hint at brain circulation as an expected impact of EU support to EU. It is important to note that impacts are envisaged for both the inter-regional dimension of HE (between the EU and partner countries/regions) and the intra-regional setting (among partner countries). In both cases, the harmonisation of programmes and curricula among participating countries and institutions, and the mutual recognition of studies and qualifications, based on tested European models, feature prominently. Within the intra-regional context (e.g. within sub-regions of Latin America, Asia or Africa), a contribution to the integration – not just harmonisation – of HE systems, comparable to the established intra-European Erasmus structures, is expected.

Finally, at the highest level of intervention, the expected global impacts are threefold:

- *Inter-cultural understanding and inter-societal co-operation between regions promoted.* Fostering inter-cultural dialogue and co-operation is at the core of the EU’s external relations and development co-operation. HE is envisioned as a central pathway towards achieving this objective.
- *Sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development.* Although not explicitly stated, this includes an implicit link with the MDGs. While HE is not part of the MDG agenda, it often has a direct impact on the ability of countries to achieve the MDGs. Unless countries are able to produce and retain a sufficient number of well-educated doctors and teachers, for example, they are unlikely to be able to progress towards health and education MDGs.
- *Political and economic co-operation enhanced.* The whole portfolio of EU-supported HE policies of regional organisations, the establishment and streaming of regional credit transfer systems, promotion and institutionalisation of a mutual recognition of qualifications and generally the fostering of regional approaches towards HE policies, standards and procedures is also expected to make a sizeable contribution towards regional integration in general.

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<sup>68</sup> Pascal Samfoga Doh. The Responses of the HE Sector in the Poverty Reduction Strategies in Africa. The Case of Cameroon.

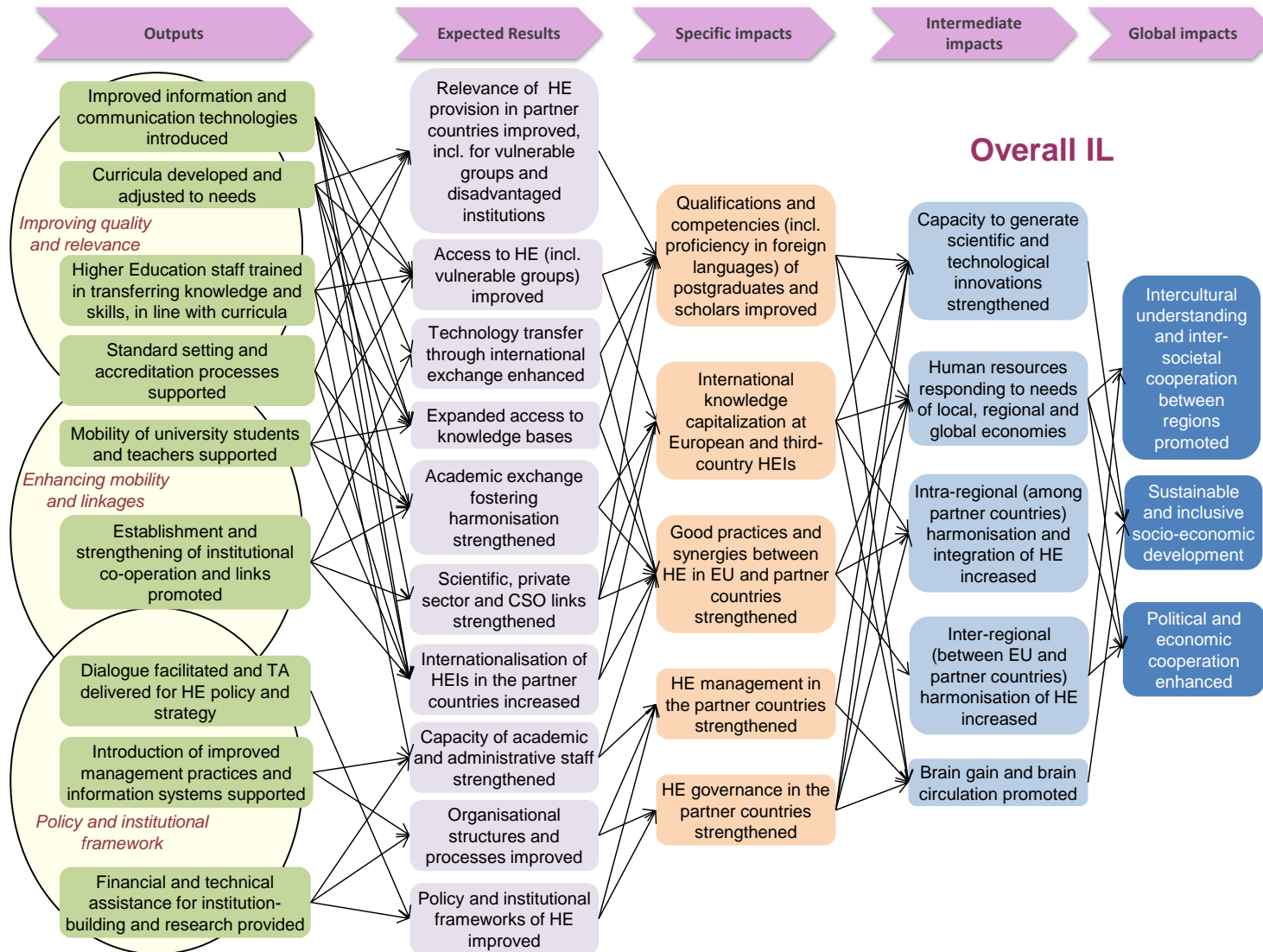
### 4.3 Assumptions, pre-conditions and framework conditions

*The reconstructed IL is informed by a set of assumptions, pre-conditions and framework conditions – as derived from EU documents – that need to be met in order to achieve the above mentioned outcomes and impacts.*

- Mobility streams between the EU and partner countries contribute to the development of human resources.
- International partnerships in HE are an effective instrument to enhance the quality of teaching and research, to improve HE management, to improve student and staff career prospects through, inter alia, inter-cultural skills – and to contribute to brain circulation and, simultaneously, avoid brain drain.
- Partnerships between EU and partner countries' HEIs foster horizontal co-operation, creating a win-win situation that stimulates national reform processes at universities and at national level.
- Improved governance of HEIs – in particular, their financial management capacity – contributes to the sustainability and balanced growth of HE systems at national and regional levels.
- European HEIs and partner country HEIs are largely influenced by the same global factors, which determine their internationalisation activities – that is, increasing competition in the global knowledge economy and the subsequent increased demand for a highly-skilled and adaptable workforce.



Figure 4 Reconstructed overall intervention logic for EU support to HE



## 5 Inventory analysis

This section presents an inventory and analysis of the resources allocated by the EU to support HE in partner countries in the period 2007-2014<sup>69</sup>.

The methodology used to reconstruct the support is presented in section 5.1 of volume V. In general, constructing any inventory of thematic EU support is complicated, due to the nature of the data available. For the inventory of the EU support to HE in partner countries, an additional challenge was the fact that data from three different sources<sup>70</sup> had to be merged, which required a number of explicit choices.

### 5.1 Methodological limits and challenges

*A worldwide inventory reconstructed using a sound methodology, albeit with limitations.*

The specific and systematic approach used for the identification, extraction and analysis of financial contributions is presented in section 5.1 of volume V. Here, special attention is given solely to the limits and choices that needed to be made.

#### Box 7 *Limits and key challenges*

The main challenge in conducting the inventory is that, while the situation has improved for more recent entries, still in many cases the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) sector code for HE has not been attributed to the interventions, even though the contract title or documents suggest that the intervention was targeted at HE. Mainly for this reason, the Commission, evaluators and others have recognised that solely relying on sectoral codes assigned to contracts in CRIS will not yield sufficiently comprehensive outcomes for establishing an inventory in thematic evaluations. Thus, an approach needs to be applied that combines key-word searches via Structured Query Language (SQL) queries with manual line-by-line cleaning and classification of data.

Another challenge is associated with the thematic scope of the evaluation. As opposed to country or regional evaluations, it is not easily possible to create a sample of relevant interventions by filtering fields such as a geographic zone of similar identifiers. The inventory therefore had to be constructed by manually screening thousands of contracts to identify their relevance for this evaluation.

The primary source for the identification of the interventions falling within the scope of the evaluation is the extraction of all CRIS contracts. The results of this extraction suffer from the fact that there is rather limited information available for each contract. This especially relates to any information on the content and/or objectives of any intervention, which is limited to the information given in the decision and contract titles. For selected large interventions, it is possible to find more information (e.g. on the internet), but it is not feasible to carry out such follow-up searches individually over thousands of contracts. Therefore, the decision on the inclusion of a specific contract in the inventory is based on incomplete knowledge, which means that it is unlikely that any inventory can claim 100% correctness.

A considerable part of DG DEVCO's support to HE is implemented through indirect centralised management. This means that three programmes – *Erasmus Mundus*, *Tempus* and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* – are financed by DG DEVCO, but managed by EACEA. While decisions related to these programmes are listed in CRIS, no information at contract level is available. Therefore, the corresponding information (860 contracts covering 82% of the EU's overall support to HE 2007-2014) had to be individually requested from EACEA and inserted into the inventory, based on the information available and provided by EACEA – which was, in many cases, not in the same format as the information from CRIS, and therefore needed to be made coherent.

As the provision of data from the different sources stretched over several months, there is no specific disbursement reference date that is true for all contracts. This was communicated to the DG DEVCO Evaluation Unit, which took the decision that an analysis of available disbursement data (all being from the year 2015) would still be conducted.

<sup>69</sup> Financing instruments covered by this evaluation are EDF, DCI and ENPI.

<sup>70</sup> Data from CRIS and EACEA had to be combined – the data from EACEA coming from two different task managers in two different formats.

## 5.2 Main findings

The main findings are set out in the box below. The following figures and tables show only the most important findings of the inventory analysis. A detailed and more comprehensive inventory analysis is presented in section 5.2 of volume V.

### Box 8 Key findings of the inventory

- The final inventory consists of 1,158 contracts (298 contracts coming from CRIS, 860 contracts coming from EACEA), covering a total amount of €1,505,471,629.
- The EU's development co-operation support to HE amounted to €1.5 billion during the period 2007-2014.
- Out of this, 44% was financed by DCI, 43% by ENPI, and 3% by both DCI and ENPI, while only 10% was financed by the EDF (8% EDF 10, 2% EDF 9).
- 90% of the EU's support to HE was channelled through one of its major HE programmes: *Erasmus Mundus* (56%), *Tempus* (24%), *ALFA* (5%), *Edulink* (3%), and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* (3%). Only 10% of the funds were not related to any of these programmes.
- Of the programme-unrelated support, 71, 38% went to ENP countries, 27% to Asia, 24% to ACP countries, 6% to Latin America, 3% to Central Asia, and 1% to the Middle East.
- 69% of funds were directed at several countries; either from one single region (66%) or from several regions (3%), while 31% of the support was targeted at specific countries.
- ENP countries received 43% of all funds. This is mainly due to the fact that ENP countries received 38% of all *Erasmus Mundus* support and 78% of all *Tempus IV* support.
- The ENP countries were followed by Asia (18%), Latin America (15%), ACP (13%), Central Asia (6%) and the Middle East (2%), with 3% of the support directed at more than one region.
- 93% of all funds were channelled through universities /research institutes. The remaining funds were channelled through the private sector (4%), international organisations, intergovernmental institutions or civil society (each 1%), and to a very marginal amount by EU Member States or non-EU governments (together amounting to 0.17%).
- By the time of completion of the inventory (2015), a total of €939 million was already disbursed, representing 62% of all contracted amounts.

## 5.3 Allocation by instrument

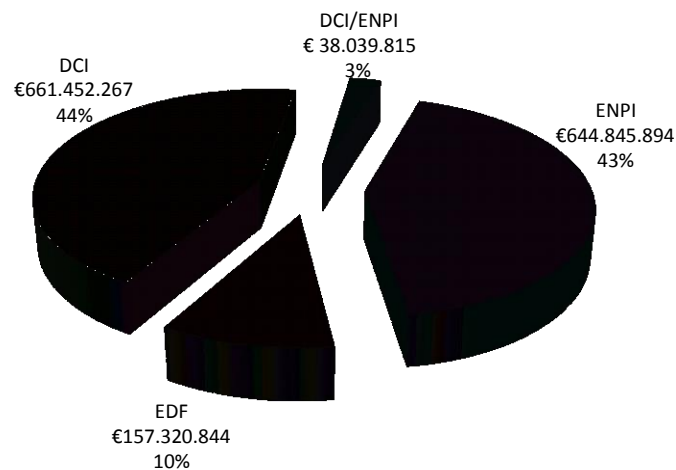
*The majority of higher education support was financed through the DCI and ENPI instruments.*

The EU's support to HE in partner countries between 2007 and 2014 was funded by a variety of instruments. In the framework of this evaluation, only support that was financed by the EDF, the DCI and the ENPI was considered. The figure below shows the allocation of funds to instruments by contracting data. As shown, out of a total €1.5 billion targeted at HE development co-operation support, the majority (€1.35 billion, or 90%) was financed by either DCI or ENPI, with ENPI covering 43% (€645 million) and DCI covering 44% (€661 million) of the support. 3% of the support (€38 million) cannot be clearly allocated to either of the two instruments<sup>72</sup>, and 10% (€157 million) of the HE development co-operation support was financed by the EDF.

<sup>71</sup> "Programme-unrelated support" refers to bilateral and regional support that is not channeled through any of the major HE programmes.

<sup>72</sup> These 3% refer to projects that are targeted at countries from different regions. These projects are financed partially from one instrument (notably for those countries covered under one instrument) and partially from the other (for the other countries).

Figure 5 EU support to higher education 2007-2014: Total contracted amount by financing instrument



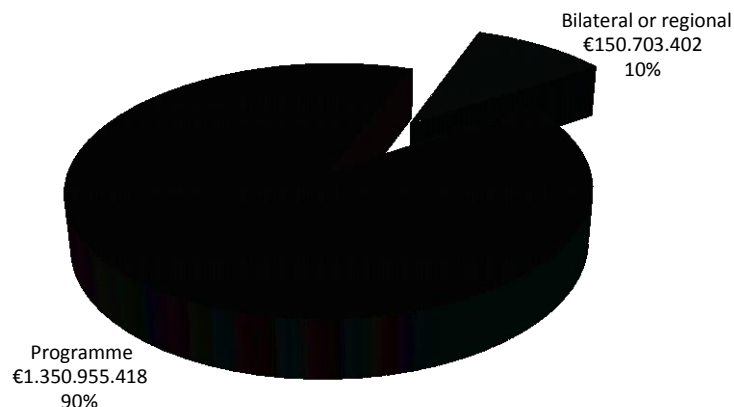
Source: CRIS & EACEA database, Particip analysis

#### 5.4 Nature of support

90% of higher education support was channelled through one of the major higher education programmes.

EU support to HE was mostly channelled through several major HE programmes – namely, *ALFA III*, *EduLink*, *Erasmus Mundus*, *Tempus IV* and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* – and totalled €1.35 billion (90% of total contracted amounts). Only a minor part of the support was channelled bilaterally or regionally outside of these programmes (€151 million or 10%). This is illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 6 EU support to higher education 2007-2014: Nature of support (contracted amounts)



Source: CRIS & EACEA database, Particip analysis

Table 2 Geographical coverage and main characteristics of major programmes

Programme	Geo-graphical coverage	Involv. of HEIs in partner countries	Programme focus	Implementation modality
ALFA III	Latin America	612	Supports co-operation between the European Union and Latin America, by promoting HE as a means of social and economic development and struggle against social inequality.	Managed by HQ. Involves a co-ordinating HEI (EU Member States or partner country) and several participants (EU Member States and partner country).
Tempus IV	ENP East (incl. Russia), South and Central Asia <sup>73</sup>	3,439 (4,106 incl. Russia)	Supports the modernisation of HE in the partner countries, mainly through university co-operation projects.	Indirect centralised management by EACEA. Involves an applicant HEI (EU Member States or partner country) and several participants (EU Member States or partner country).
EduLink	ACP	153	Supports co-operative projects between HEIs in the ACP Group of States, the EU Member States, and other eligible countries.	Implemented by the ACP Group of States Secretariat, and one decision managed by EUD South Africa. Involves a main applicant university (EU Member States or partner country) and several partners (EU Member States or partner country).
Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme	ACP	204	Supports HE co-operation between countries in ACP region. The scheme aims to promote sustainable development and poverty alleviation by increasing the availability of trained and qualified high-level professional manpower in the ACP countries.	Indirect centralised management by EACEA, overseen by the EC, in partnership with the ACP Secretariat. Involves a beneficiary university (partner country) and several partners (EU Member States or partner country).
Erasmus Mundus	Global	3,025 (3,142 incl. Russia)	Aims to enhance the quality of HE and promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through mobility and academic co-operation.	Indirect centralised management by EACEA. Involves a co-ordinating institution (EU Member States), several partners (EU Member States or partner country), and associate partners (EU Member States or partner country).

#### 5.4.1 Programme-related support

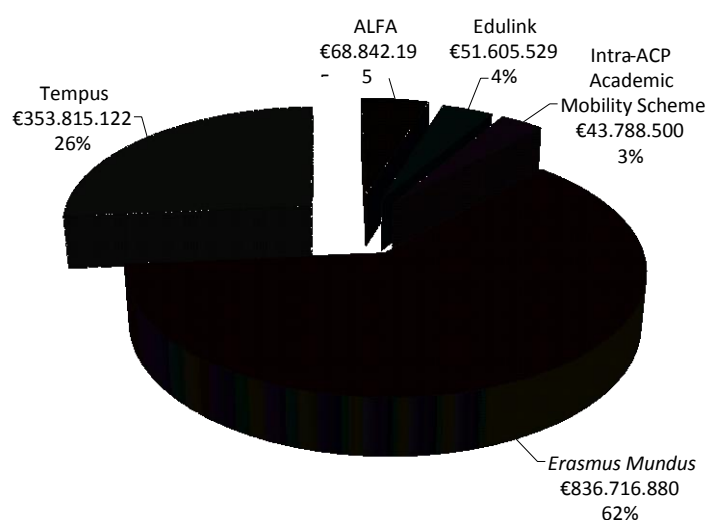
*Erasmus Mundus represented 62% of all programme-related programme support.*

As can be seen in the figure below, *Erasmus Mundus* represented the majority of the EU's higher education programme support, with €837 million or 62% of the total.<sup>74</sup> Just over a quarter (26%) of the programme support was channelled through *Tempus IV* (€354 million), while *ALFA III*, *EduLink* and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* received 5%, 4% and 3% of the support, respectively.

<sup>73</sup> Partner countries also include countries from the Western Balkans. However, as these countries are not in the geographical scope of this evaluation, they are not listed in this overview.

<sup>74</sup> The amount for *Erasmus Mundus* excludes contracts financed by the IPA and ICI instruments.

Figure 7 EU support to higher education 2007-2014: Distribution by major higher education programmes (contracted amounts)



Source: CRIS & EACEA database, Particip analysis; the analysis is based on data as of 2015.

Table 3 EU support to higher education 2007-2014: Higher education programmes by region (contracted amounts)

Programme	ENP	Asia	Latin America	ACP	Central Asia	Middle East	Multi-Region	Level of support <sup>75</sup>
Erasmus Mundus	316 38%	225 27%	151 18%	60 7%	57 7%	23 3%	6 1%	Regional: 75% Country: 25%
Tempus IV	276 78%	-	-	-	33 9%	-	45 13%	Regional: 58% Country: 42%
ALFA III	-	-	69 100%	-	-	-	-	Regional: 100% Country: -
Edulink	-	-	-	52 100%	-	-	-	Regional: 96% Country: 4%
Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme	-	-	-	44 100%	-	-	-	Regional: 100% Country: -
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>592 44%</b>	<b>225 17%</b>	<b>219 16%</b>	<b>155 11%</b>	<b>90 7%</b>	<b>23 2%</b>	<b>51 4%</b>	<b>Regional: 73% Country: 27%</b>

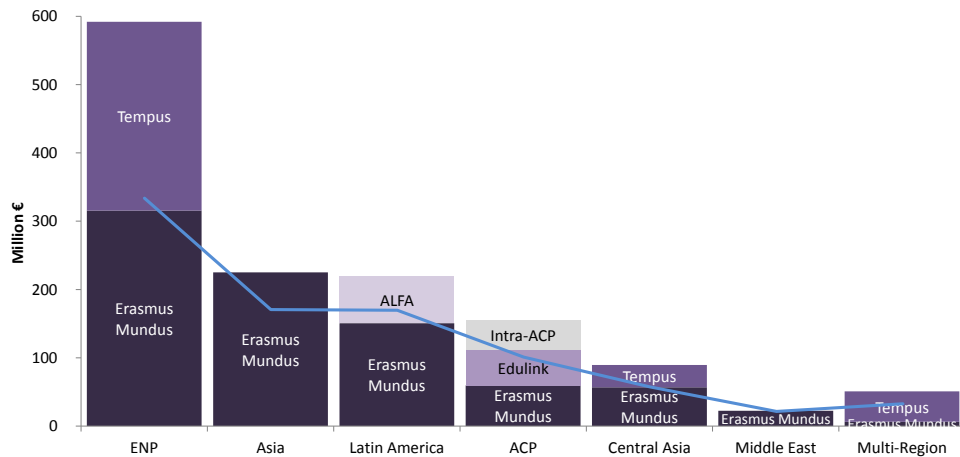
Source: CRIS & EACEA database, Particip analysis; data correct as of 2015

<sup>75</sup> Levels of support: Country = one single country was targeted by the support; Regional = several countries or a region were targeted by the support.

### Higher education support by programme and region.

The following figure provides a breakdown of the support to each of the programmes into the different regions<sup>76</sup>.

Figure 8 EU support to higher education 2007-2014: Higher education programmes by region (contracted and paid amounts)



Source: CRIS & EACEA database, Particip analysis; the analysis is based on data as of 2015.

The above figure shows the distribution of the programme-related HE support to different regions:

- For *Erasmus Mundus*, the majority of funds went to ENP (€316 million or 38%) and Asian countries (€225 million or 27%). 18% of *Erasmus Mundus* funds were directed at Latin American countries (€151 million) and 7% at ACP countries (€60 million) and Central Asia (€57 million). The Middle East received €23 million (3%), while 1% of funds could not be allocated to one specific region (€6 million).
- The majority of *Tempus IV* funding went to ENP countries (€276 million or 78%), the smallest proportion to Central Asian countries (€33 million or 9%), and 13% (€45 million) to countries from more than one region.<sup>77</sup>
- The support to *ALFA III* was entirely targeted at Latin American countries (€69 million).
- Funding from *Edulink* and *the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* went exclusively to ACP countries (€52 million for *Edulink* and €44 million for *the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*).

The blue line shows how much of the overall contracted amounts per region was already paid out by the time of completion of the inventory. On average, 63% of all contracted amounts for the major programmes in all regions was already disbursed, the region with the highest percentage being the Middle East (77% of all contracted amounts) and the one with the lowest being ENP (56%).

#### 5.4.2 Programme-unrelated support

##### Most programme-unrelated support to higher education went to the Asia, ENP and ACP regions.

Even though EU support to HE not channelled through one of the above programmes represents only 10% of the inventory, it is important to take a closer look at the regional distribution of these funds.

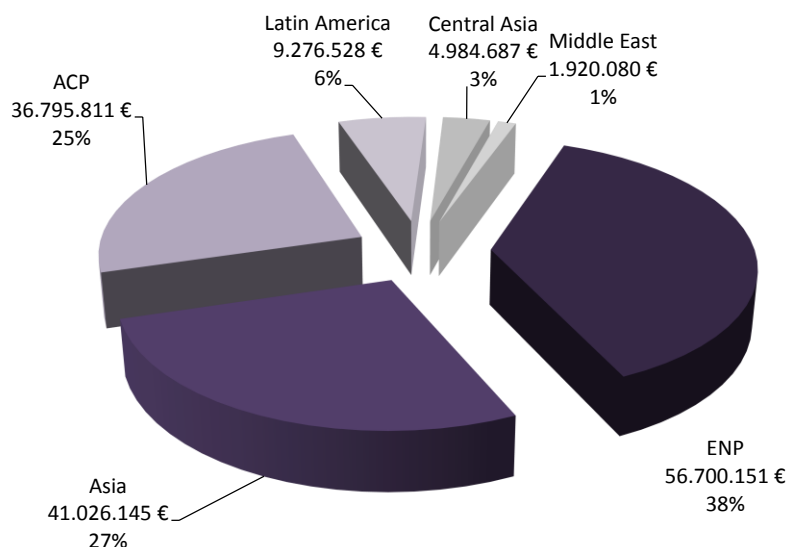
As can be seen in the figure below, most programme-unrelated support (€57 million, or 38%) went to ENP countries. Asia received 27% (€41 million) and ACP countries 24% (€67 million) of the pro-

<sup>76</sup> HE programme support directed at European, ELARG or other industrialised countries (e.g. Oceania, North America) were excluded from the inventory. For more information please refer to the inventory methodology (see section 5.1 of volume V).

<sup>77</sup> While support to ELARG and European countries was excluded from the inventory, interventions targeted at these regions were left in the sample if they also targeted one of the regions within the scope of the evaluation.

gramme-unrelated support, with Latin America receiving 6% (€9 million), Central Asia 3% (€5 million), and the Middle East 1% (€2 million).

Figure 9 EU support to higher education 2007-2014: Programme-unrelated support by region (contracted amounts)

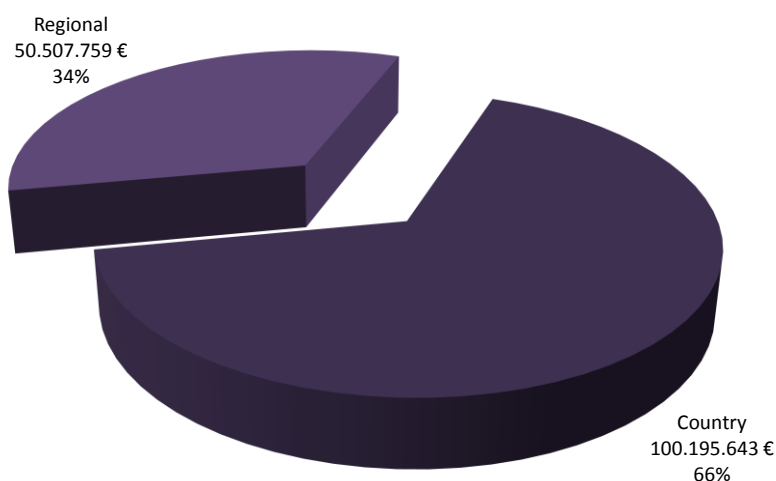


Source: CRIS & EACEA database, Particip analysis; the analysis is based on data as of 2015.

*Two thirds of project-unrelated support to higher education was bilateral support, one third regional.*

The figure below shows the geographic level of programme-unrelated support. In total, €100 million (66%) was channelled through bilateral support, while €51 million (34%) of the funds were regional.

Figure 10 EU support to higher education 2007-2014: Programme-unrelated support by geographic level (contracted amounts)



Source: CRIS & EACEA database, Particip analysis; the analysis is based on data as of 2015.



*In total, 36 countries received bilateral programme-unrelated higher education support, with the five countries receiving most covering 70% of the funds.*

Looking only at country-specific support to higher education, 36 countries received bilateral support targeted at HE. The fund allocation is quite variable, with 17 of these countries receiving 1% or less of the support. The following list shows the six countries that received €5 million or more, combining to represent 70% of all programme-unrelated country-specific support.

It can be seen that there are significant differences in the proportion of funds already disbursed, ranging from 0% (Papua New Guinea) to 90% (Democratic Republic of Congo).

*Table 4 EU support to higher education 2007-2014: Higher education programmes by region (contracted amounts)*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Contracted amount 2007-2014</b>	<b>Percentage of total country- specific support</b>
Algeria	ENP	€19,688,769 <i>Paid: 27%</i>	19.7%
Belarus	ENP	€14,905,826 <i>Paid: 45%</i>	14.9%
Lebanon	ENP	€11,399,668 <i>Paid: 78%</i>	11.4%
Democratic Republic of Congo	ACP	€9,959,500 <i>Paid: 90%</i>	9.9%
China	Asia	€9,360,230 <i>Paid: 41%</i>	9.3%
Papua New Guinea	ACP	€5,113,714 <i>Paid: 0%</i>	5.1%
<b>Total, six countries receiving most</b>		<b>€70,427,706</b> <i>Paid: 48%</i>	<b>70.3%</b>
<b>Total, all country-specific support</b>		<b>€100,195,643</b> <i>Paid: 52%</i>	<b>100.0%</b>

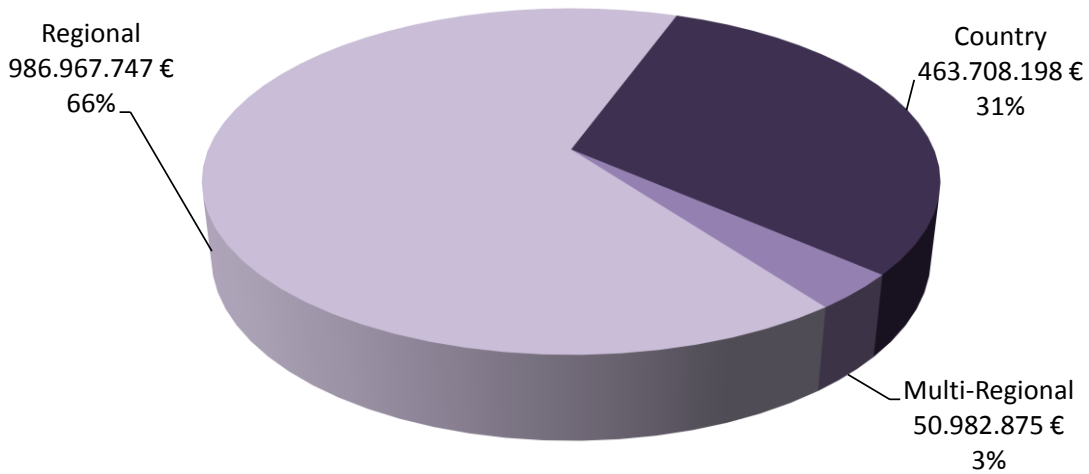
*Source: CRIS & EACEA database, Particip analysis; the analysis is based on data as of 2015.*

## 5.5 Allocations by region

*Two-thirds of all support to higher education was regional, while one-third was country-specific.*

Looking at support to HE as a whole, (i.e. programme-related as well as programme-unrelated support), the figure below shows that the majority of all funds went to more than one country. More than two-thirds (€1.04 billion, or 69%) of funds were regionally distributed, with 66% going to a specific region (or several countries from a specific region) and 3% going to countries from two or more regions. The proportion of country-specific support was 31% (€464 million).

Figure 11 EU support to higher education 2007-2014: Geographic distribution of funds (contracted amounts)



Source: CRIS & EACEA database, Particip analysis; the analysis is based on data as of 2015.

*ENP was the region that received most funds, followed by Asia, Latin America and ACP countries.*

The distribution of funds to different regions is illustrated in the next figure. With 43% of total funds, the ENP region received most of the contracted amounts (27% regional, 16% country<sup>78</sup>). Asia received 18% (12% regional, 6% country<sup>79</sup>), Latin America 15% (11% regional, 4% country<sup>80</sup>), ACP countries 13% (9% regional, 3% country<sup>81</sup>), Central Asia 6% (5% regional, 1% country<sup>82</sup>), Middle East 2% (almost entirely regional<sup>83</sup>).

The blue line shows how much of the overall contracted amounts per region were already paid out by the time of completion of the inventory.

<sup>78</sup> ENP: With 100% of the region-specific and 77% of the country-specific support coming through the major HE programmes.

<sup>79</sup> Asia: With 84% of the region-specific and 87% of the country-specific support coming through the major HE programmes.

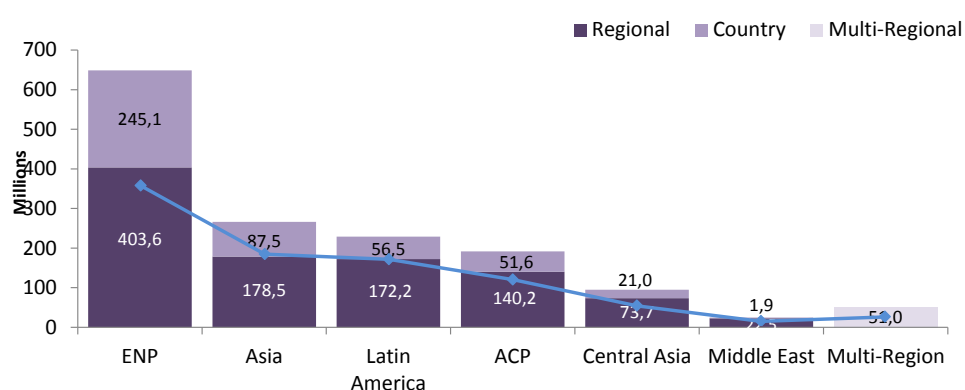
<sup>80</sup> Latin America: With 98% of the region-specific and 91% of the country-specific support coming through the major HE programmes.

<sup>81</sup> ACP: With 91% of the region-specific and 53% of the country-specific support coming through the major HE programmes.

<sup>82</sup> Central Asia: With 93% of the region-specific and nearly 100% of the country-specific support coming through the major HE programmes.

<sup>83</sup> Middle East: With 100% of the region-specific and 0% of the country-specific support coming through the major HE programmes.

Figure 12 EU support to higher education 2007-2014: Geographic distribution of funds by region (contracted and paid amounts)



Source: CRIS & EACEA database, Particip analysis; the analysis is based on data as of 2015.

*In total, 50 countries received country-specific higher education support, with the 15 countries receiving most covering almost 80% of the funds.<sup>84</sup>*

Looking only at country-specific support<sup>85</sup> (programme-related, as well as programme-unrelated), which amounts to €464 million, the table below presents an overview of the 15 countries that received the most support. Among the 50 countries that received support for HE between 2007 and 2014, the distribution is quite variable, with 25 countries receiving less than 1% of the total country-specific support, and nine countries receiving less than 2%. More than half of all country-specific support to HE was distributed to six countries – namely, Russia (16%), India (11%), China (7%), Brazil (7%) and South Africa (6%).

Table 5 EU support to higher education 2007-2014: Top 15 countries receiving country-specific support

Country	Region	Contracted amount 2007-2014	Percentage of total country-specific support
Russia	ENP	€75,689,866 Paid: 64%	16.3%
India	Asia	€51,029,500 Paid: 73%	11.0%
China	Asia	€34,035,505 Paid: 69%	7.3%
Brazil	Latin America	€33,623,214 Paid: 75%	7.3%
South Africa	ACP	€25,651,144 Paid: 59%	5.5%
Egypt	ENP	€24,942,207 Paid: 43%	5.4%
Algeria	ENP	€21,647,007 Paid: 28%	4.7%
Ukraine	ENP	€16,263,978 Paid: 19%	3.5%
Belarus	ENP	€14,905,826	3.2%

<sup>84</sup> During the period 2007-2014, all of these countries, including Brasil and China, were included on the DAC List of ODA Recipients, see <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/41751233.pdf>

<sup>85</sup> Country-specific support was calculated by taking programme-unrelated as well as programme-related support into account. This means that e.g. country-specific *Erasmus Mundus* funds are represented here as well.

		<i>Paid: 45%</i>	
Lebanon	ENP	€13,636,550 <i>Paid: 73%</i>	2.9%
Argentina	Latin America	€11,688,100 <i>Paid: 95%</i>	2.5%
Uzbekistan	Central Asia	€11,073,714 <i>Paid: 20%</i>	2.4%
Tunisia	ENP	€11,067,350 <i>Paid: 28%</i>	2.4%
Morocco	ENP	€11,028,863 <i>Paid: 22%</i>	2.4%
Israel	ENP	€10,717,636 <i>Paid: 42%</i>	2.3%
<b>Total, 15 countries receiving most</b>		<b>€367,000,458</b> <i>Paid: 57%</i>	<b>79.1%</b>
<b>Total, all country-specific support</b>		<b>€463,708,198</b> <i>Paid: 56%</i>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: CRIS & EACEA database, *Particip analysis*; the analysis is based on data as of 2015.

It is noteworthy that most of the country-specific support was provided via the major HE programmes and not via bilateral support. In Russia, 97% of the country-specific support went through *Erasmus Mundus* (49%) and *Tempus* (48%). *Erasmus Mundus* was the main channel for the EU's support to HE, providing 100% of funds in India, 73% in China, 91% in Brazil, and 99% in South Africa. In Egypt, 68% of the support went through *Tempus* and 23% through *Erasmus Mundus*.

In contrast, the majority (88%) of country-specific support in Algeria was channelled through the sector support programme, *Programme d'appui à la réforme de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche scientifique*. For Ukraine, almost all the support was through *Tempus* (99%), while for Belarus most funds (80%) went through the *Open Europe Scholarship Scheme*, and for Lebanon through the *EU Scholarships for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon* (53%) and the *Education, Training and Employment Support for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (30%).

The five remaining countries from the above list all received the majority of their country-specific support through *Erasmus Mundus* (Argentina), *Tempus* (Morocco) or both (Uzbekistan, Tunisia, Israel).

## 6 Answers to the evaluation questions

### 6.1 EQ 1: Relevance

*To what extent has EU support to HE promoted the overall development policy objectives of the EU?*



#### *Rationale and coverage of the question*

DG DEVCO support should be grounded in general EU commitments. Consequently, this EQ asks whether EU support to HE targeted high-level goals related to development needs and global challenges. In this way, the EQ addresses the global impact level of the overall intervention logic. The IL identifies promotion of inter-cultural understanding between regions, sustainable socio-economic development, and enhancement of political and economic co-operation as the highest-level goals of EU support to HE. Ultimately, these intents are seen as enabling vectors for poverty reduction, which is the core of the EU's development objectives.

Key commitments to overarching development goals are included in the European Consensus on Development (2006) and the more recent Agenda for Change (2011), which seeks to focus co-operation more specifically on poverty reduction.

The EQ assesses two inter-related aspects. It first examines whether, and to what extent, the EU strategies and intervention designs in the field of HE have included overall development objectives and linked HE support to the EU's global key commitments. In other words, has the EU given sufficient consideration to the potential of HE to address global challenges to development? It goes without saying that development commitments and objectives as outlined in the Agenda for Change can only be considered for strategies and programmes drafted after 2011. In a second step, we look at the way EU support to HE has addressed, and adapted to, changing contexts in partner countries and regions.

#### *Summary answer to the evaluation question*

##### **Key points:**

- Generally, the design of interventions was based on an assumption that support to HE will always make some decisive contribution to socio-economic development. This might be true in the vast majority of cases, but a more comprehensive and coherent strategy could have had the potential to increase the relevance of the EU's support to HE even further. The lack of a comprehensive strategic approach is also evident with regard to the contribution of HE to political and economic co-operation.
- The support to HE is firmly anchored in the EU's development policy in general, and its specific expected outcomes and objectives in particular. The five HE programmes - *ALFA III*, *Tempus IV*, *Edulink*, *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, *Erasmus Mundus* – could have existed as stand-alone interventions, but gained their particular relevance and significance within the context of the EU's overall development co-operation priorities. Erasmus+, with its credit mobility and capacity building activities targeted at achieving inclusive and sustainable development.
- This link between the support to HE and development policy objectives is mutually reinforcing. Support to HE has directly and substantially promoted and strengthened inter-cultural understanding within and between regions (through mobility programmes and research collaboration between HEIs) and aimed at contributing to sustainable socio-economic

development in partner countries and regions as only quality HE can produce the engineers, health specialists, teachers, policymakers, technologists and scientists whose knowledge and leadership are needed to improve people's lives and ultimately reduce poverty.

- While the existence of a generally reinforcing relationship between the support to HE and the EU's overall development policy is indisputable (and evidently important outcomes have been achieved), the EU has not developed systematic and coherent strategic approaches to create maximum synergies between the support to HE and overarching development objectives as specified in the ILs. How individual country and regional strategies, as well as programme documents, address the link between HE and development in general differs significantly. A clear pattern is not detectable.
- Since support to HE has often been – at programme and project level – linked to specific thematic agendas such as environment, climate change, energy and governance, HE interventions have also strengthened the awareness of EU key development objectives, and have contributed towards achieving these objectives.

### 6.1.1 Support to HE has been linked to EU commitments and development policies (JC 11)

*At the strategic and design level of interventions, HE is strongly embedded in the overall objectives of the EU's development policies.*

There is ample evidence that the EU approached HE in a comprehensive manner. At the strategic level, support to HE has firmly and strongly been embedded in the overall objectives of the EU's development policies. Without any exception, all country and regional strategies, as well as the HE programme documents for *ALFA III*, *Tempus IV*, *EduLink*, *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, *Erasmus Mundus*, elaborated on the links between HE and higher socio-economic, but also governance-related development objectives. For example, *ALFA III* stressed that “higher education institutions are considered to be of particular importance for social and economic development. They also represent pools of expertise and centres for the development of human resources.” Consequently, *ALFA III* strived to make a contribution towards “a more balanced and equitable development of Latin-American society across the board”. In a similar vein, *Tempus IV* emphasised the links between HE on the one hand and international human rights standards, democracy and the rule of law on the other. *Erasmus Mundus* generally aimed at “promoting the development of third countries”, and Erasmus+ focused “on areas that are relevant to the inclusive and sustainable development of developing countries”. (I-111, 112)

*An explicit strategy on how exactly HE contributes to socio-economic development is missing.*

In spite of the prominent attention given to the contribution of HE support to the EU's development policies, the country and regional strategies, and programme and project documents, do not provide explanations as to how exactly HE contributes to socio-economic development. The general assumption seemed to be that a strong link between the two exists almost by default, and therefore did not require further elaboration. (I-112)

*EU support to HE has a strong focus on inter-cultural understanding.*

EU support to HE has been based on a clear vision that inter-cultural understanding is not only a higher-level development objective. but also a precondition for the effectiveness of development co-operation. Partnerships across cultures can hardly work in the absence of mutual understanding. The desirability of a better and deeper inter-cultural understanding is firmly established as one of the key guiding principles of the EU support. Most HE strategy papers include some reference to inter-cultural understanding. The field missions demonstrated that EU-funded grant projects substantially strengthened inter-cultural understanding almost by default, due to the na-

ture of project support based on HEI networks. These networks consolidated and expanded academic cross-cultural collaboration both at the level of universities and individuals. In personal and group interviews, former grantees of mobility programmes, students and scholars alike, almost unanimously described their stays abroad as very enriching personal experiences that enhanced their level of inter-cultural understanding.

According to the *Erasmus Mundus* Impact Study, more than 90% of the students reported an improvement in their “soft” skills, such as knowledge of other countries, their ability to interact and work with individuals from different cultures, adaptability, foreign language proficiency, and communication skills. At the same time, 99% of the HEIs saw a substantial improvement in their students’ confidence and adaptability. (I-111)

*Conceptual linkages between support to HE and the strengthening of political and economic co-operation are largely absent.*

Evidence of linkages between support to HE and the strengthening of political and economic co-operation is weak overall. There is little reference to the enhancement of political and economic co-operation in most country and regional strategy papers. HE programme documents point to the usefulness of HE support for the strengthening of inter-regional and intra-regional policy dialogues. At the same time, most EU Delegations have used HE as one of several entry points for discussions on political and economic co-operation in a general sense. (I-113)

### **6.1.2 EU support has addressed, and adapted to, development contexts in partner countries and regions (JC 12)**

*Support to HE was explicitly linked with the specific needs and challenges of partner countries and regions.*

Often, but not always, the EU took the general education or HE strategies of national governments and regional organisations into account in the design of its support to HE. However, only in a small number of cases was support to HE directly aligned with partner strategies. This was mainly due to the absence of bilateral country-level support to HE in most cases. However, national and regional development priorities were still systematically addressed through grant projects funded under the regional/global programmes. National and regional priorities for these projects (for example, under *Tempus IV*) were often established in agreement with government stakeholders, and thus were in line with the respective country’s development policies and goals. Furthermore, project applications (under *Erasmus Mundus*, *Tempus IV*, *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, *EduLink*, and partially *ALFA III*) had to address national and regional development objectives as a key selection criterion for funding. It should also be noted that the EU’s approach to supporting HE was flexible as the EU did not apply “one size fits all” strategies, but embedded its support within the specific development contexts for HE in the respective countries and regions. (I-122, I-123)

*CSPs and RSPs generally elaborate on HE support – but to varied degrees.*

At the same time, the design of HE support as elaborated in CSPs and RSPs differs markedly.

Detailed elaboration on the needs and challenges of HE in partner countries and related government strategies – as well as clear indications as to how EU support addresses the specific situation in the individual countries and regions – can be found in the cases of the CSP/RSP for China, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Georgia, Lebanon, South Africa, Central Africa, Western Africa, Asia, Central Asia, ENP South and Central America.

Elaboration on the needs, challenges, and national strategies in partner

countries/regions without comprehensive explanations of the links to EU support was evident in the cases of the CSP/RSP for South Africa, Egypt, Brazil, El Salvador, Eastern and Southern Africa, and Indian Ocean, Pacific Region and Southern African Region.

An outline of the EU support to HE that is not embedded in a discussion/analysis of national needs, challenges and strategies can be found in the cases of the CSP/RSP for Andean Community and Latin America

Only brief references to HE are included in the CSP/RSP for Papua New Guinea, Algeria, Ukraine, Caribbean, ENP East and Mercosur. The overall finding is that, between them, the CSPs and RSP for Asia offer the most comprehensive approaches to both the analysis of HE national/regional contexts and to the EU response to the identified respective needs and challenges. (I-122)

*At both programme and project level the EU took newly emerging needs (which are often of a structural nature) into account in the design and partly in the implementation of interventions.*

EU support to HE did not – and possibly could not – immediately respond to suddenly emerging new needs at the levels of partner countries and regions. More often than not, needs and priorities, as well as challenges, in HE are of a structural nature (e.g. access to HE for poor and disadvantaged groups of the population; alignment of HE with labour market needs; internationalisation of HEI; harmonisation and standardisation of HE systems) and do not significantly change in a short term. At the same time, the EU – at both programme and project levels – has responded to new needs in the design and partly in the implementation of interventions. Generally, as confirmed by the field missions, lessons learned were taken into account for individual programmes. One important example, which gives evidence of an evolutionary process in the provision of EU support in HE, is a greater orientation of *Tempus IV* projects towards collaboration between HEI among the countries of the Eastern Partnership. According to stakeholder interviews in Moldova, this stronger emphasis on partnerships within the region was needed and is useful, given the similar challenges that the universities in the region face. In the case of Africa, the regional programmes – with the exception of the PAU, which is the newest – have evolved through lessons learned from evaluations and reviews. For example, the new phase of Tuning Africa has benefited from lessons learned in the pilot phase, which was driven mostly by the efforts of individual faculty members. The EU funded the African Tuning pilot initiative from 2011 to 2013 as a contribution to harmonisation. The traction in harmonisation is taking place during the current full phase. Clear evidence of an evolutionary approach based on lessons learned is Erasmus+, which builds on the experiences of previous programmes. (1-123)

*The EU did not develop a specific approach to directly targeting HE challenges in FCAS.*

From a conceptual point of view, a limitation of the EU support was the lack of a specific approach explicitly targeting HE challenges in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States and Situations (FCAS). Most strategy papers, programme documents, evaluations and MTR, and other key EU documents on HE do not address the link between HE and FCAS in a systematic and explicit manner. This is particularly striking in view of the fact that EU bilateral aid disbursements to FCAS, which amounted to around €2.7 billion in 2012, accounted for more than half of the total EU development aid. The field missions demonstrated, for example, that although Guatemala was a, FCAS case in past decades, no evidence has emerged of a specific EU approach towards the post-conflict situation. Likewise, while all Moldovan universities benefited from the EU support, HEIs in Transnistria did not. However, it should be noted that crises, by their very nature, are clearly exceptional situ-



ations that often require support in an ad hoc manner. For example, the EU Trust Funds can include actions to support HE in crisis and fragile situations, such as in the case of Syria. (I-124)

## 6.2 EQ 2: Alignment

*To what extent has EU support to HE in partner countries been designed and implemented in coherence with, and aligned to, partner countries' and regional priorities?*



### *Rationale and coverage of the question*

In the last two decades, changes in HE systems were particularly thorough and truly global. This “contemporary revolution” in HE<sup>86</sup> includes, inter alia, increasing social mobility, new types of HE funding, and increasingly diversified HE systems. These global developments in HE, particularly the diversification of HE systems, constitute a challenge for the overall strategy of EU support to HE, which is mainly based on co-operation programmes that follow a global or regional approach. The EU support to HE in partner countries has mainly been provided through regional programmes (*ALFA III* for Latin America, *Tempus IV* for European Neighbourhood countries, *EduLink* for ACP, and even through the almost globally-operating programme *Erasmus Mundus* – and, since 2014, Erasmus+). Assessing coherence of these regional or global programmes with the HE development priorities in partner countries is more complex than EU support to HE provided bilaterally.

Against the backdrop of the Paris Declaration<sup>87</sup> on policy and systems alignment, EQ 2 mainly assesses three issues: first, the extent to which EU-supported HE interventions in partner countries have been formulated and implemented, taking into account the respective national HE development strategies, whether the priorities of the partner countries are addressed; second, the extent to which the EU support was implemented taking into consideration the national HE development programmes; third, the extent to which EU support achieved alignment – which is related to complementarity and synergy effects – with the national HE development priorities of the partner countries and their systems.

### *Summary answer to the evaluation question*

#### **Key points:**

- The majority of all funds targeted at HE development co-operation (90% of the total support) was delivered through the major regional and global HE programmes (i.e. *ALFA III*, *Tempus IV*, *EduLink*, *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* and *Erasmus Mundus*). While the focus of these major programmes transcends the concept of country-level support, aiming to benefit a whole region as opposed to being focused on one single country, extensive dialogue and co-ordination with government stakeholders in partner countries and regions ensured that the EU support generally responded well to key national and regional development priorities.
- Individual projects across all programmes – albeit to varying degrees – were aligned with national and regional strategies and policies. Even in cases where the specific nature of a regional approach of some of the HE programmes (e.g. *ALFA III*) limited the potential to directly and

<sup>86</sup> Altbach, Philip G., Reisberg, L., Rumbley, I.E. (2010): Trends in Global HE. Tracking an Academic Revolution, UNESCO Publishing, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> See <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm>

extensively address needs and priorities of individual partner countries, it was precisely the regional approach that provided an added value by fostering regional and inter-regional networking and dialogue between HEIs.

- *Edulink, the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, the ACP window under *Erasmus Mundus*, for the ACP countries, were the result of a joint effort between the EU and the ACP Group of States. This approach substantially aligned the support with the regional development needs and created a strong sense of regional ownership.
- *ALFA III* and *Tempus IV* were based on a process that involved dialogue at the level of the EU and partner countries, with the aim of harmonising the programmes' design with the different partner countries' strategies.
- In the case of bilateral co-operation with partner countries, the EU support was strongly aligned with the strategies, policies and development needs of these countries. This was also evident for the *Erasmus Mundus* programme, which established several country-specific external co-operation windows to build a bridge between the programme's almost-global approach and the needs and priorities of individual participating countries.
- However, the scope of alignment did not go to the extent of joint field missions and shared analytical work between the EU and partner countries in the process of designing and preparing support, at least not in a systematic way, even though these procedures are usual when bilateral support applies. Neither have partner countries markedly contributed to bilateral co-operation with funding or the provision of institutional support. The use of partner country procurement systems in HE did not apply. It was only present in South Africa, where HE co-operation was provided bilaterally (among the sample countries covered by the evaluation).
- While these findings seemingly indicate a lack of alignment requirements under the Paris Declaration, they are put into perspective by the small share (10%) of bilateral support, as opposed to the funds disbursed through programmes that, by their very nature, do not allow for the same rigorous approach to alignment as country-specific support.

### 6.2.1 Responsiveness of EU support to HE, in its design and implementation, to the partner country's and regional priorities

*The EU considered the specific HE policies and priorities of partner countries and regions and incorporated them at least partially into the EU bilateral and regional co-operation strategies.*

An analysis of CSPs and RSPs for Asian, African, Latin American and Caribbean partner countries, and in particular the European Neighbourhood countries, shows that partner countries' specific HE policies and priorities have been considered in most cases. And although information tends to be rather general, they have also been incorporated – at least partially – into the EU bilateral and regional co-operation strategies. Examples of assessments that go beyond a cursory mentioning of partner countries' and regions' HE situation and policies include, among others, China, Thailand,<sup>88</sup> ENP and Central Asia. A rare example of diverging strategies in HE between a partner country and the EU, which led to some political misunderstandings, is the case of Brazil. The CSP Brazil (2007-2013) states that coherence and complementarity will be sought in line with the Latin American Regional Strategy, mentioning inter alia emphasis on the Bologna Process and the common HE area of Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union (ALCUE – (America Latina Caribe Unión Europea). ALCUE was by no means a priority in Brazilian HE policy, mainly because it did not exist, except as a European vision. The necessary first step to create the ALCUE would be the creation of a Latin American and Caribbean common HE space – which until now is

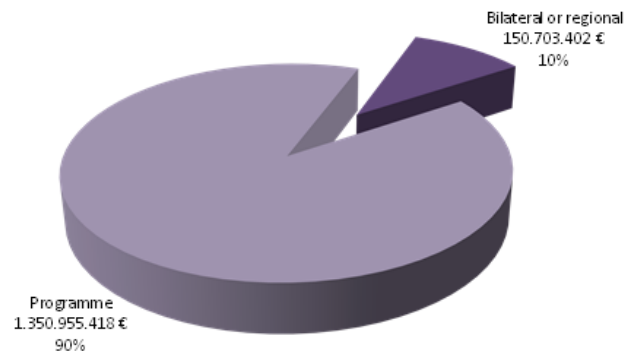
<sup>88</sup> China and Thailand were ODA recipients at that time. See <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DAC%20List%20used%20for%202012%20and%202013%20flows.pdf>

far away from being a reality. Brazilian Government officials were also reluctant vis-à-vis the Bologna Process, and to some extent also to the EU programmes in HE co-operation in general. (I-211)

*Alignment of EU support with the partners' HE strategies and policies was strongest in the case of bilateral co-operation.*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the clearest documented evidence of an alignment of EU support with the partners' HE strategies and policies exists in the case of bilateral co-operation. Examples of a high degree of EU responsiveness to the needs of partner countries and their development and reform strategies include, but are not limited to, Algeria, China and DRC. After the establishment of the global *Erasmus Mundus* programme, the EU started a dialogue with partner countries, related to the *Erasmus Mundus* External Co-operation Windows (Action 2) addressing country-specific needs and priorities. In doing so, the EU combined its worldwide co-operation programme with bilateral action plans devoted to, and agreed with, specific partner countries. Hence, in some bilateral country co-operation agreements additional funds were allocated to *Erasmus Mundus*. This enabled an increase in the number of successful applications of national students (*Erasmus Mundus* External Co-operation Window in the cases of, for example, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico), and also the possibility of agreement on specific subject priorities and special conditions (such as the priority for participants from marginalised or vulnerable groups). For example, the *Erasmus Mundus* single co-operation window in South Africa enabled the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the EUD to shape the programme to a considerable extent to fit the country's priorities. In a similar vein, *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2 in Cameroon responded well to the country's national priorities, particularly the internationalisation of HE. A progressively more explicit approach to alignment is also evidenced by the programming of Erasmus+.

Figure 13 *EU support to higher education 2007-2014: Nature of support (contracted amounts)*



*EU support delivered via global/regional programmes still responded well to key national and regional development priorities.*

The majority of all funds targeted at HE development co-operation went to more than one country and was delivered through major regional and global HE programmes (i.e. *ALFA III*, *Tempus IV*, *Edulink*, *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* and *Erasmus Mundus*). The focus of these major programmes transcends the concept of country-level support, aiming to benefit the whole region, as opposed to being focused on a single country. Yet, it would be wrong to generally assume that the responsiveness to priorities of individual partner countries was *per se* more limited for major HE programmes than interventions delivered via bilateral support. EU support provided via global/regional programmes still responded well to key national and regional development priorities. Individual projects across all programmes were strongly aligned with national and regional priorities. Even in cases

where the specific nature of a regional approach of some of the major HE programmes (e.g. *ALFA III*) limits the potential to directly and extensively address needs and priorities of individual partner countries, it is precisely this regional approach that provides an added value by fostering regional and inter-regional networking and dialogue between HEIs. Both issues are on the agenda of internationalisation strategies in partner countries almost throughout the whole world. (I-211, I-213)

*Joint efforts between the EU and the ACP Group of States greatly fostered regional ownership.*

Edulink, the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme, the ACP window under Erasmus Mundus, as well as Erasmus+ for the ACP countries, were the result of joint efforts between the EU and the 79 countries of the ACP Group of States. The ACP Secretariat, being the executive and administrative organ of the ACP Group of States, was chairing the steering committee of Edulink. This institutional set-up helped substantially to align EU support to HE with the regional development needs, and certainly contributed to creating a strong sense of regional ownership among ACP Group of States. (I-214).

*The EU engaged in dialogues with partner countries before implementing a new programme phase. At the same time evidence for the level of alignment with national priorities is mixed.*

The main documents of *ALFA III*, *Tempus IV*, *Edulink* and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* reflect an intensive dialogue between the EU and partner countries from different regions before implementing a new programme phase. This was also confirmed in interviews in many, but not all, cases. For example, while there was no direct country-level support to Egypt, *Tempus IV* and *Erasmus Mundus* were nevertheless crucial for responding to the needs in the development of HE in Egypt, which urgently required external support to increase the quality of learning and teaching & research, as well as the internationalisation of Egyptian universities. In this regard, *Tempus IV* and *Erasmus Mundus* were the first major programmes to provide support to the HE sector in Egypt. *Tempus IV* also provided a suitable and effective framework for establishing and strengthening intra-regional co-operation with HEI (see EQ7), which was also seen as a strategic objective by key HE stakeholders. Likewise, EU support to Moldova – mainly through *Tempus IV* – was explicitly linked to the government's reform agenda in HE and made decisive contributions towards implementing the comprehensive reform programme at national level (the HE system) and at individual HEIs. Interviewed stakeholders almost unanimously stated that few, if any, reforms would have been implemented without the EU support. However, these findings do not apply to all countries in the same way. For instance, according to stakeholder interviews, it cannot be said that EU support to HE in Kenya is based on the country's national development strategies, institutions and procedures. Yet, there have also been opportunities, particularly through *Edulink*, for individual Kenyan HEIs to ensure that projects reflect certain specific national needs and priorities. In Mexico, some interviewees noted that the country's HEIs had no opportunity to discuss EU programmes and projects in advance of them entering into force. They suggested that probably coincidences between the objectives of the EU programmes and the partner country's own priorities existed, but they did not necessarily have the same priority. (I-211, I-213)

*Joint EU-partner country analytical work and the provision of partner country financial or institutional support*

While there is extensive evidence of the existence of dialogue and co-ordination between the EU and partner countries and regions, this co-operation has not included joint field missions and shared analytical work in a systematic way. As already mentioned, this is not surprising, bearing in mind the fact that 90% of the EU's HE support was channelled through re-

*took mainly place through NEOs.*

gional or global programmes. At the same time, partner countries have contributed to bilateral co-operation with funding or the provision of institutional support to carry out joint programmes and/or action plans only to a very limited extent. Available evidence mainly refers to bilaterally-funded study centres and research centres, which are usually monitored in a joint manner. The National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs) and their predecessors are bodies established by and in the partner countries (funded through the programmes). They contribute to joint monitoring of the activities and QA with the main emphasis on outcome and impact assessment. (I-212, 214)

*The ACP Group of States and the African Union have significantly contributed to attract funding of HE support within the ACP area.*

At regional level, the ACP Group of States presented requests to the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, the ACP Window under *Erasmus Mundus* and *EduLink* for financing HE projects under the 9th (for *Erasmus Mundus* only) and the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF. For the African Union (AU), the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF Intra-ACP Strategy Paper and Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) expressed an aim to strengthen the expansion of the AU Nyerere Programme, an umbrella for implementing scholarship and mobility initiatives (as well as setting up a similar scheme for the Caribbean and Pacific regions). *The Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* built on the African Union's Mwalimu Nyerere programme for Africa, and the EU granted additional funding (as well as setting up a similar scheme for the Caribbean and Pacific regions) rather than providing all of the necessary funds. (I-213, 214)

## **6.2.2 EU support to HE is based on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures (JC 22)**

*Partner countries' key HE strategy and policy papers do not mention EU support.*

If a partner country refers in its national development strategy for HE or other key documents to the EU support as a complementary action, this can be taken as an indicator for a successful aligning of the EU support with the national strategy in this area. According to the Paris Declaration, references to donor support in partner countries strategies showcases good practices in development co-operation. However, the evaluation was unable to find any references in key government papers to the EU support in HE. For example, according to an interview at the Moldovan Ministry of Education, the new Education Code of 2014 "*was triggered and then supported by Tempus*", but there is no explicit mention of the EU support. In Cameroon, apart from references to the Bologna Process in the policy document on the New University Governance (NGU), EU support is not mentioned. Kenya and South Africa both have National Development Plans that start in the evaluation period and extend to 2030, but neither of them mentions the EU in relation to HE. (I-221)

*The use of partner country procurement systems in HE is negligible.*

Given the nature of EU support, with most of it being channelled through the major HE programmes and only 10% disbursed within bilateral co-operation, the use of partner country procurement systems plays only a minor role. among the three countries that are covered as country case studies (Algeria, China and DRC) and the eight field mission countries. Evidence has emerged only in the case of South Africa. Because the EU bilateral support was largely projected by the DHET, considerable use was made of South Africa's procurement systems in this area of EU co-operation.(I-222)

### 6.3 EQ 3: Management, teaching, learning and research

*To what extent has EU support to HEIs in partner countries contributed to enhancing management, teaching and learning, and research?*



#### *Rationale and coverage of the question*

EQ 3 assesses how EU support to HEIs has contributed to improving their management practices, through the strengthening of HEIs in terms of their administrative, institutional and financial practices. It thus explores the improvements of quality and effectiveness achieved by the HEIs in teaching and research. It also addresses how, and to what extent, the quality of teaching and learning has been enhanced as an effect of EU support, and to what extent the quality and relevance of the HEIs research outcomes have been enhanced through the EU support. The question will also assess the conditions under which the research agenda of HEIs have played a role in the society at large, and to what extent.

The above topics are explored by adopting a systemic approach to HE development and its impact on the national socio-economic development – HEIs being thus considered as integral actors in this global development process through teaching/learning, research and management, and acting in a comprehensive and intertwined way. EQ3 focuses in particular on key aspects such as:

- In HEIs' management practices, the sets of social norms applied in the relationship between the functions, units and individuals through which HEIs operate;
- How the level and relevance of outcomes achieved by the teaching/learning process correspond to the expressed expectations of the learners and the needs of society at large<sup>89</sup>;
- How the enhanced capacity of researchers and the improved internal conditions for research have been contributing factors to HEIs' research achievements;
- External factors to HEI management include, but are not limited to, national HE policies and legislation, the public or private status of the HEI, personal ambitions of the top management (e.g. presidents, rectors, vice chancellors), and the agenda of external funding bodies (including donors).

#### *Summary answer to the evaluation question*

##### **Key points:**

- It can generally be stated that many EU-funded projects provided suitable frameworks for the initiation or expansion of collaborative research projects. Furthermore, as exemplified by China, DRC and Egypt, they have contributed to the establishment and strengthening of a “research culture” among post-graduate students at many HEIs, evidenced by an increasing number of Master's and PhD theses in priority subject areas. Strong research connections established with leading scientists in Europe and access to world-renowned laboratories provide a fertile ground for future impact. Nevertheless, while the strengthening of institutional research environments is likely to lead to an improved standing of faculties and entire universities, it is impossible to show a causal link between higher HEI rankings and the EU support. In all countries studied and/or visited, HEI administrations benefited from exposure to EU-funded projects resulting in new and improved management structures and procedures. This is illustrated by, for example, the establishment or strengthening of international offices and the creation of monitoring and performance assessment system and procedures, with 89% of departments and faculties of

<sup>89</sup> The specific needs of the world of work and its labour market will be explored through EQ 6.

partner countries HEIs having such a system in place, according to the HEI survey.

- The strongest impact was evident in the countries that applied most of the modalities of the Bologna Process. While the use of Bologna criteria differs between countries and regions, the evaluation finds that Bologna Process features have increasingly been applied in a rapidly-growing number of HEIs, although sometimes only in a “piecemeal” manner. The most important exception is Latin America. *ALFA III* projects did not intend a direct application of Bologna Process guidelines to HEIs’ teaching and learning organisation, modalities and practices. However, the example of the Bologna Process inspired reform processes in Latin American HEIs and was widely perceived as an example of best practices, including in research activities.
- Since EU-funded programmes under evaluation do not provide direct support for research infrastructures in partner countries (taken care of, in several cases, by bilateral co-operations in partner countries through HE support, the research strengthening impact can only be limited. It is entirely plausible that EU support to HE has enhanced the research capacity of HEIs and of individual academics, in the sense that they developed independent research skills and learned new techniques in their respective fields. It has also contributed to research outputs, probably with a net gain in quality and quantity over what would have been produced if the researchers had not had the opportunity and discipline of study in a partner institution – although this cannot be proved, because of the lack of a counterfactual analysis of causation.
- On the one hand, EU-funded programmes in HE did not produce large-scale institutional effects, such as increased budgets for research and improved physical research infrastructures. On the other hand, there were linkages with research programmes, mainly FP7 and, more recently, Horizon 2020<sup>90</sup> as separate but complementary funding sources. Furthermore, systematic institutional linkages with research programmes were established among ACP HEIs.

### 6.3.1 Improved management practices (JC 31)

*Procedures and processes established at the level of EU-funded projects across all programmes often “spilled over” to departments, faculties and central university administrations, resulting in strengthened management practices.*

The management approaches and processes within faculties and central university bureaucracies, including international offices, were strengthened due to their involvement in the implementation of HE projects. Across all EU-supported programmes – in all regions, but to varying degrees – projects put internal monitoring and quality assurance (QA) systems in place to ensure the quality, transparency and accountability of project implementation, including student mobility, the management and governance of degree programmes, and related aspects. In many cases, the structures and mechanisms that had been established at the level of projects inspired, or even directly triggered, the improvement of HE management practice in departments, faculties or entire universities. Examples include, but are not limited to, East African HEIs, where management practices were improved due to the example-setting and triggering effect of the *EduLink*-funded project, which introduced HEIs to alternative and “model” EU practices. In the Southern Mediterranean, *Tempus IV* contributed to the strengthening of university governance. In Moldova, the new National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education (ANACIP) was a “spill over” of *Tempus IV* projects, as interviewees put it. There was general agreement among interviewed

<sup>90</sup> “FP7 is the short name for the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. This was the EU's main instrument for funding research in Europe and it will run from 2007-2013. FP7 is also designed to respond to Europe's employment needs, competitiveness and quality of life” (see [https://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index\\_en.cfm?pg=understanding](https://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm?pg=understanding)). The follow-up programme Horizon 2020 “is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020) – in addition to the private investment that this money will attract. It promises more breakthroughs, discoveries and world-firsts by taking great ideas from the lab to the market.” (see <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/what-horizon-2020>)

stakeholders that Moldova's compliance with the Bologna Principles was mainly due to the *Tempus* programme. (I-311, 312)

*In about half the cases of departments or faculties which developed and introduced new strategies or action plans to teaching & learning and research, changes and innovation are attributable to EU support.*

According to the HEIs survey, 93% of departments and faculties of universities in partner countries that co-ordinated EU-funded projects had an overall strategy or action plan for the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning in place, and 85% had such a strategy for research. Reasons for the lack or underdevelopment of relevant strategies included university restructuring, lack of finance for reforms, staff shortage, and insufficient understanding of the Bologna Process. As far as research is concerned, respondents mentioned the sporadic and short-term nature of donor funding as a reason for the absence of a strategy.

In more than a half of the departments/faculties, a link could be established between the development of the strategies and EU support. Strategies sometimes emerged as part of an EU-funded project and learning and research that brought together relevant stakeholders within universities, and between them at national, regional and international levels. In other cases, EU support was a catalyst – for example, by exposing partners to the international academic world, by capacity-building measures, and various exchanges that helped raise awareness about the importance of modernisation of teaching and learning approaches. (I-311)

*Performance monitoring and assessment systems at HEIs in partner countries were mainly introduced as a result of EU-supported projects.*

Among the most decisive effects of the EU-supported programmes is the harmonisation of HEI management practices and, in some cases, their alignment with national HE policies. EU support also contributed to the creation and development of a monitoring and assessment (M&E) and quality assurance culture among academic staff and university administrators. As the HEIs survey shows, 89% of departments and faculties of project co-ordinating universities in partner countries had a performance monitoring and assessment system in place. In almost every case, it existed for academic staff, and in half of them it was introduced for management/administration staff as well. In cases where it did not yet exist, it was either still being developed or such a system was not favoured because it would imply additional costs for universities.

M&E at the academic level includes development of QA departments and manuals of procedures, monitoring of staff workload and learning outcomes, reporting on the improvement of own qualifications, on publications, research and international co-operation activities. It also includes assessment (internal and external) of academic staff (e.g. linked to promotion), including using key performance indicators (KPIs) based on job description and feedback mechanisms involving students and peers (e.g. timesheets signed by student representatives and sent to QA departments). The systems for management and administrative staff are similar with regard to performance criteria and reporting requirements, but often have different targets. In addition, life-long-learning programmes and programmes of professional training and re-training are embedded in them. However, according to the HEI survey, in only 20% of cases were these systems established as a result of EU support, mainly through capacity-building projects or their components. (I-313)

*The Bologna Process has increasingly developed into a regional or even global para-*

Overall, there is ample evidence of the expansion of the Bologna Process as a management tool for HE in most regions where process principles, criteria and procedures were fully applied or inspired by Bologna. These included the re-organisation of HE programmes into the two-cycle or three-cycle sys-



*digm in HE. In many countries that have not (yet) adopted principles and criteria of the Bologna Process, some principles have been implemented.*

tem, the elaboration and implementation of curriculum frameworks and national qualification frameworks, the introduction of ECTS and diploma supplements, and the mutual recognition of degrees or degree components, as well as the establishment of QA bodies. Guidelines inspired by Bologna were applied for most EU-funded programmes and the majority of the respective projects. Generally, the more that partner countries and regions, and their universities, are focused on and are oriented towards EU HE, the more extensively they have taken the Bologna Process as a reference point. For example, the participation of Egyptian HEIs in *Tempus IV* projects helped to promote Bologna principles and tools and to highlight their usefulness. The national Erasmus+ office estimates that about 60% of all 120 *Tempus* projects introduced Bologna criteria. The Erasmus+ MIP for DCI (2014-2017) confirms that the Bologna Process “provided a shared framework for national reforms” (p. 3). (I-314)

*Even if a formalised and institutionalised system for the recognition of degrees and study components is in place, this system is not necessarily fully harmonised and not always entirely based on Bologna criteria.*

However, even where a formalised and institutionalised system for the recognition of degrees and study components (e.g. ECTS or similar, diploma supplement, joint diplomas) is in place, this system is not necessarily fully harmonised and not always entirely based on Bologna criteria. For example, universities in four South Asian countries – India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal – have no credit transfer systems in place. They do, however, issue Diploma Supplements and Transcripts of Records, which are acknowledged by the partner HEIs. However, the credits are not transferred to the students’ programme of study at their home institution. Likewise, the application of the Bologna Process criteria in China has not yet taken hold. In Africa, QA, harmonisation and credit transfer are interdependent areas that most countries still struggle with. This is despite the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in the African States (Arusha Convention) of 1981, and regional policies for harmonisation, such as that of the East African Community. There has been little progress in regional comparability. In Latin America, several projects focused on topics related to the Bologna Process (e.g. QA, students’ credits, curricula based on students’ competences), which served as examples for developing “Bologna inspired” Latin American solutions (Tuning América Latina and the CLAR credit system, among others). However, in these cases one also has to bear in mind that the topics might be a result of an intra-Latin American dialogue on HE, or be influenced by academic co-operation with US or Canadian HEIs. (I-314)

### 6.3.2 Improved quality of teaching and learning (JC 32)

*The gradual expansion of the Bologna Process is one of the most important and most visible outcomes of the EU support to HE.*

The gradual expansion of the Bologna Process is one of the most important and most visible outcomes of the EU support to HE. The Bologna guidelines as such are not a tool that, if applied, leads to an immediate and quasi-automatic enhancement of teaching and learning. However, as a set of standards that govern the international harmonisation and QA of degree programmes, they provide a tested and effective framework for quality gains. While the use of Bologna criteria differs between countries and regions features of the process have increasingly been applied in a rapidly growing number of HEIs, although sometimes only in a “piecemeal” manner. The most obvious exception is Latin America. None of the reviewed *ALFA III* projects intended a direct application of Bologna Process guidelines to HEIs’ teaching and learning organisation, modalities and practices. However, the

example of the Bologna Process inspired reform processes in some Latin American HEIs as an example of best practices. (I-324)

*An increasing number of countries have implemented M&E and QA mechanisms to improve the quality of teaching & learning. In many cases, these reforms were supported by EU-funded projects support.*

In recent years, more and more countries have implemented M&E and QA mechanisms. In many cases, these reforms were supported by EU-funded projects. In addition, most, if not all, individual interventions supported monitoring and QA systems for the purpose of project implementation, and specifically for the supervision and teaching of degree programmes that were managed within the scope of projects. While there are no direct and systematic assessments available with regard to the concrete effects of M&E and QA approaches on the quality of teaching, evidence gathered during the field phase suggests that EU support did indeed contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning in many cases.

Overall, three factors can be identified as most decisive for the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning:

- The rapid and systemic adoption of the Bologna Process guidelines in the EU-supported projects;
- The creation of new graduate and postgraduate degrees in national priority fields of several partner countries (including, but not limited to, renewable energy, environmental sciences, biotechnologies, transportation safety);
- The introduction of “blended pathways” in the teaching/learning process, together with a growing concern for QA. (I-321 - I-324)

*Particularly ALFA III, Tempus IV, Edulink and partly Erasmus Mundus projects created favourable framework conditions for the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning.*

Some of the *ALFA III* projects resulted in innovative improvements in the quality of learning and teaching of the participating HEIs, as a result of curricula reforms and enhanced QA methods introduced by EU-funded projects. Moldova is a case in point for the role of *Tempus IV* projects. While there are no evaluation reports, surveys or other material available that would allow for an assessment of the quality of teaching at Moldovan universities, there is no doubt that *Tempus IV* helped create framework conditions conducive to improvements in teaching and learning. Likewise for Caribbean HEIs, it can be asserted that the projects contributed to improved quality of teaching and learning due to benchmarking and academic innovation created by *Edulink* projects. Initiatives for developing, experimenting and sharing pedagogical innovations to improve the teaching-learning process in the first and second cycles have also been triggered, mostly thanks to the *Edulink*-funded projects. A definite success story, which would not have been possible without EU support, is the creation or expansion of e-learning programmes at a broad range of HEIs that participated in *ALFA III*, *Tempus IV* and *Edulink* projects. Evidence was also found for some *Erasmus Mundus* projects. (I-321, I-322)

*Principles derived from the Bologna approach are not yet sufficiently disseminated and embedded everywhere in the usual national HEI practices.*

It should be noted that in partner countries, which have adopted the principles derived from the Bologna approach, these principles are not yet sufficiently disseminated and embedded everywhere in the regular national HEI practices, and are not sufficiently monitored systematically by effective and comprehensive M&E instruments. Across all EU-funded programmes, the individual projects put in place include measures for the overall QA of the actions and results obtained – including, but not limited to, internal and external evaluations, monitoring meetings with grantees, as well as staff and student reports. However, QA and monitoring was restricted to the imple-

mentation and direct results of the respective projects, and did not explicitly cover the quality of teaching and learning at HEIs in general terms. (I-321, I-324)

### 6.3.3 Enhanced institutional and human capacity and conditions for academic research (JC 33)

*The mobility programmes had an impact on research capacities and output, but the lack of explicit funding in the evaluated programmes for research-related initiatives constrained a systematic strengthening of research capacities.*

EU support to HE focuses primarily on teaching and learning. However, mobility programmes and often extensive networking between and among universities in the EU and partner countries have provided manifold opportunities for collaborative research, and these opportunities have been seized. According to the tracer study, more than 90% of *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* staff alumni consider that the exchange programme helped them to get better exposure to an international research environment, to increase their research output, and to establish or expand international research networks. Many alumni also perceive these benefits for the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility scheme*, but not to the same extent as in the *Erasmus Mundus* programme. In particular, 41% of *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility scheme* beneficiaries consider that the programme has helped them to increase their research output. At the same time, few projects provided direct support to the improvement of the physical research infrastructure at non-European HEIs. Exceptions could be found with *ALFA III* and *Tempus IV* Central Asia and for a small number of projects in the DRC, and with *EduLink* in the Caribbean. *Tempus IV* projects, particularly in the field of sciences, included support for such aspects as laboratories or computer clusters. However, this did not amount to a systematic strengthening of research infrastructures. The lack of explicit funding for research-related initiatives under the EU-supported HE programmes evaluated by the mission may explain the absence of direct research support in most projects. However, it is necessary to consider that research and innovation (R&I) in partner countries during the evaluation period was supported through separate but complementary sources of development funding, such as the EU R&I framework programme (FP7, H2020). (I-331)

*EU support empowered HEIs at the level of individual academics and institutions and thus contributed to the establishment and expansion of research friendly environments.*

For the first three *EduLink* calls, the programme specifically aimed to strengthen the capacity of ACP HEI at institutional/administrative, academic and research and technology levels. Only later did the research component become a separate programme, Science & Technology (plus ACP Research for Sustainable Development at a later stage), and it was formulated to be complementary to the objectives of *EduLink*, and vice versa. At least within the intra-ACP co-operation context, this shows that a real intention existed to link research with HE and, equally important, to not work too much in silos during the implementation of the projects. Several projects, particularly under *EduLink*, show evidence of improved research capacity of staff members due to the training courses offered as part of the projects. It is possible, and indeed probable, that such capacity-building will result in an increased number of research projects and publications, but results will be known only in the years to come as the strengthening of research capacities is a long-term process. Some project documents – for example, for *Erasmus Mundus* – note that new research approaches or methods were introduced at HEIs as the result of project activities. Overall, the EU contribution to research was mostly indirect, through the creation of research-friendly environments and the exposure of academics in partner countries to international HEI networks

and research facilities at top EU universities. (I-331, I-332)

*EU-funded projects enabled HEIs to forge strong research connections with leading scientists in Europe and gave academics access to world-renowned research facilities and laboratories – providing a fertile ground for future impact.*

It can generally be stated that many projects provided suitable frameworks for the initiation or expansion of collaborative research projects. Furthermore, projects – such as in China, DRC and Egypt – have contributed to the establishment and strengthening of a “research culture” among post-graduate students at many HEIs, evidenced by an increasing number of Master’s and PhD theses in priority subject areas. Strong research connections established with leading scientists in Europe and access to world-renowned laboratories provide a fertile ground for future impact. While the strengthening of institutional research environments is likely to lead to an improved standing of departments, faculties and entire universities, it is impossible to show empirically a causal link between higher HEI rankings and the EU support. This applies even in the case of countries that were heavily supported and where the entire HE system benefited. For example, in Moldova, the country’s top three universities significantly improved their positions in the “Webometrics Ranking of World Universities” between 2013 and 2016.<sup>91</sup>

In any case, building and strengthening research environments is a long-term process. ENP East countries are a case in point, as they have undergone drastic political and economic changes in the past 25 years and so the HEIs need time to adjust. (I-331, I-332)

#### 6.4 EQ 4: Reform of higher education policy

*To what extent has EU support contributed to HE reform processes in partner countries and regions?*



##### *Rationale and coverage of the question*

The state plays an important role in the HE sector through vision, policy, strategy, regulation and support mechanisms. At the macro level, this role is apparent in the overall size, shape and resources of the sector, the regulatory framework, and the degree of autonomy it affords to HEIs.

At a more detailed level, it may control matters such as access, the role of the domestic private sector and foreign HE suppliers, tuition fees, and staff terms and conditions, and may create institutions for such aspects as accreditation, QA, and the steering of research. Some governments have policies and strategies that determine the contribution of open and distance learning, as well as information and communication technologies (ICTs) in HE.

HE languished in many partner countries from the 1980s until recent years, often as a consequence of structural adjustment programmes, but also as a result of the intense development focus of donors on basic education. The period covered by this evaluation, however, has seen a renewed interest in HE, in recognition of its potential role in the knowledge economy – as a driver of innovation and economic growth. At the same time, spreading education among a larger share of the population through the

<sup>91</sup> The Ranking Web or Webometrics is the largest academic ranking of HEIs, prepared by the Cybermetrics Lab (Spanish National Research Council, CSIC) “for the provision of reliable, multidimensional, updated and useful information about the performance of universities from all over the world based on their web presence and impact.”, <http://www.webometrics.info/en/Methodology>

expanded pipeline into HE, coupled with the high expectations of today's youth, has created huge challenges.

Much of this interest, both within countries and from outside, has focused on reform of HE governance – policy, strategy, regulation and institutional support – at national level. The EU has provided support for reform through a number of instruments, including *ALFA III*, *EduLink*, *Tempus IV*, the Pan-African University, and bilateral dialogue and support. EQ 4 will focus on this support.

EQ 4 covers all EU support to policy, strategy and institutional frameworks above the institutional level of HEIs, but does not include intra- and inter-regional integration, which is covered by EQ 7. EQ 4 has potential overlaps with EQ 5 (inclusiveness) and EQ 6 (labour market needs and brain circulation) because these are often the subject of national HE policy, strategy and regulatory frameworks above the level of HEIs.

### Summary answer to the evaluation question

#### Key points:

- The evaluation period saw a considerable number of reforms in HE policy and institutions in partner countries. For example, the HEI survey conducted by the evaluation team found that new national institutions for HE had been established – or existing ones extended – in most countries to implement national HE policies and strategies. EU-funded programmes contributed directly or indirectly to these reforms in several countries. The degree of contribution to outcomes varies from direct triggering by projects in a small number of cases, through substantial influence in a minority, to indirect influence and inspiration in a majority.
- The area to which the EU contributed most widely was internationalisation in general, and credit recognition and transfer in particular. The EU, and EU Member States, are seen by many countries – particularly, but not exclusively, in the ENP East and South – as important sources of benchmarking for internationalisation. The influence was mostly indirect, but EU monitoring of policy dialogue points to Ukraine as an example of where the EU-facilitated debate was translated into law reform, mainly for implementation of aspects of the Bologna Process. Three examples from the field missions illustrate the range of ways in which influence was exerted. In Moldova, the development of the HE system has been directed towards convergence with the Bologna Process – with considerable support from *Tempus IV* – and Moldova's integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has been achieved to a large extent. In Cameroon, HE policy-makers adopted the Bologna principles – alongside British/American practices – with no direct intervention from the EU. In South Africa, EU-facilitated policy dialogue focused on internationalisation, among other areas, but that country has yet to introduce a policy in this area. This is chiefly because it is focused at present on internal tertiary education reforms, such as HE financing and revitalisation of technical and vocational education.
- In Latin America, the *ALFA III* Programme promoted a regional approach to issues such as QA (CINDA project) and credit transfer, in particular through the Tuning project. It was partially successful. Some bilateral agreements – for example, between Argentina and Colombia – were made to put it into practice.<sup>92</sup>
- Beyond the Bologna Process reforms, examples of EU influence on actual reform at national level are harder to find. EU-facilitated national policy dialogue about other national HE reforms – relating to areas such as learning and research mobility, scholarships and other financial support for students, HE infrastructure, and university management and governance – took place in a small number of countries. EU Delegation monitoring reports point to dialogue taking place in only a handful of countries. Apart from Ukraine, there is no evidence of these debates having led directly to substantive reform during the evaluation period. In Central Asia and Asia, the influence of EU regional support on HE policy and strategies was found to be limited.

<sup>92</sup> For more details see the ALFA III Final Evaluation

- *Tempus IV* Structural Measures (SMs) targeted aspects of national HE systems, such as policy, laws, co-ordination, and accreditation. SM projects, however, were fewer in number than those aimed at HEIs, and were said by the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of *Tempus IV* (2012) to have had a lower impact. Notable exceptions are the Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) funded under *Tempus IV*. These were directly involved in the policy-making processes at Ministries or in national Parliaments, contributing to HE reforms in their country.
- In South Africa, bilateral support led directly to national-level reforms in three highly-specific areas of HE: strategies for addressing the HIV-AIDS problem in the HE sector; for Foundation Years (5-9 year olds) teacher training; and for Career Development Services. The evidence of bilateral support in other countries reviewed by the evaluation suggests that the South African example was somewhat exceptional.

#### 6.4.1 HE policies and strategies reflect national priorities (JC 41)

*With a few exceptions, EU programmes tended to influence rather than directly lead to reforms at national level. This is nonetheless an important result.*

The principal party in any national HE reform is the government. The EU and its programmes have created space for dialogue, offered models and support, but where reforms have happened, it is the governments that have made the decisions, ensured that the regulatory framework is in place, and have been in charge of implementation. These actions have been driven by domestic agendas. The evaluation found few examples of HE national policy reforms or strategy development, put in place since 2007, that were a direct result of EU-funded programmes. (I-411) South Africa seems to be an exception; the field visit discovered from interviews and project documents that bilateral support had funded projects that led directly to new strategies for addressing the HIV-AIDS problem in the HE sector, for Foundation Years teacher training, and for Career Development Services. The EU has more typically tended to be an influence on, rather than a direct contributor to, reform at national level, as explained below. This can be seen as an appropriate model of support – an inspiring model, not a dominant and imposing reference.

In some countries, the influence was strong, mainly in internationalisation, which is covered by JC 42.

*EU programmes influenced reforms not only for internationalisation, but in other areas through Tempus IV Structural Measures. These were not widespread and impact was often low.*

At the level of EU programme influence on reforms and strategies that reflect national priorities, there is more evidence. *Tempus IV* provided the strongest engine for policy reform, in the form of SMs that targeted aspects of national HE systems – for example, policy, laws, co-ordination, and accreditation. Measures included thematic national and regional conferences and seminars, research, provision of training, policy advice, and dissemination of information. The ministry responsible for HE had to be a partner in the project. SM projects, however, were fewer in number than those aimed at HEIs, and were said by the MTE of *Tempus IV* (2012) to have had a lower impact. National authorities were “less actively participating and/or supporting than perhaps initially intended”. Although the evaluation said that *Tempus IV* contributed to reform and modernisation of HE systems in partner countries, this was qualified by saying that the SMs “*did not so much [trigger] reform as [help] to realise a process with objectives defined by the partner countries*”. *Tempus* documentation on the nature and location of these reforms is lacking. The field missions identified Moldova as a significant case of influence. In that country, support through *Tempus IV* has contributed to key national policies and strategies, such as the Education Code (2014), the National Education Strategy of 2020 (2012), and establishment of the national QA

agency ANACIP (2013). Again, these reforms could be classified as being inspired by the Bologna Process, and therefore are covered under JC 42. (I-411, I-421)

*The HEREs mechanism provided for direct influence on policy processes in Tempus IV countries.*

In *Tempus IV* countries such as Egypt, the advice given by Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) for national policy reform has been influenced by their involvement in EU projects. Projects have also supported reform implementation through, for example, the operation of the *Erasmus Mundus* eligibility requirements. Thus, HEREs have been directly involved in the policy-making processes at ministries or in national parliaments, contributing to HE reforms in the participating countries. Several HERE teams reported that they collaborated with the HE authorities in their country on policy development. In Ukraine, HEREs were members of the working group on the “Draft Law of Ukraine on Education”, the “Strategy of Development of National Qualifications System” and the working group on “NQF implementation”. They also participated in public hearings on new draft laws on HE. As a result, EU experience was incorporated into the implementation of HE reform there. In Tunisia, the HEREs have taken part in the activities of the various committees under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. (I-411)

*Regional support in Central Asia and Asia had limited effect on national policies and strategies.*

In Central Asia and Asia, the influence of EU regional support on HE policy and strategies was found to be limited. The RSE Central Asia draft final report concluded that the capacity or readiness of national decision-makers to absorb, follow up and capitalise on EU-funded initiatives was not always sufficient, even where government representatives were formal partners of project consortia. In Asia, the evaluation of regional co-operation found no documentary evidence of actual reforms that have resulted from EU co-operation. (I-411)

*EU-facilitated policy dialogues influenced national debates on a wide range of HE issues in a small number of countries only, with the notable exception of Ukraine.*

The EU engages in HE policy dialogue in a small number of countries. EU Delegation monitoring reports identified Trinidad and Tobago, India, South Africa, Thailand, Indonesia and Ukraine as partner countries in policy dialogue. The reports show that policy dialogues were conducted on issues ranging from QA in HE (India) to government-assisted tuition expenses (Trinidad and Tobago) and internationalisation strategy, university management and university governance (Thailand). In these cases, the EU made a direct contribution to national policy debates on HE. (I-411) In Ukraine, the debates contributed to comprehensive reform through the Higher Education Act of 2014. The Act brings Ukraine’s HE system closer to the EU and, more specifically, closer to the provisions of the Bologna Process. (JC 42) However, the lack of progress in granting more autonomy to the universities could become a real problem in the future for a proper implementation of those programmes by all Ukrainian universities. (I-411)

*EU projects at HEI level had an indirect influence at the national level through examples set.*

Key informants in the missions also confirmed that EU projects at HEI level –e.g. under *Erasmus Mundus*, *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, and *EduLink* – had an indirect influence by drawing attention to development priorities such as greater inclusiveness or quality improvements. (I-411)

#### 6.4.2 HE policies and strategies reflect international consensus on good practice (JC 42)

*The Bologna Process is an important source of benchmarking for many countries.*

The EU, and EU Member States, are seen by many countries as important sources of benchmarking for HE good practice in general, and for internationalisation in particular. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a particular beacon. In the field missions, key informants in Cameroon, Moldova and Egypt emphasised this. The field mission revealed that development of the HE system in Moldova has been directed towards convergence with EU HE standards, in particular with the Bologna Process. Moldova's integration into the EHEA has been achieved to a large extent. (I-421) In Cameroon, HE policy-makers have also adopted a wider set of good practices, encompassing not only EU Bologna principles but also British/American practices – resulting from the bilingual nature of Cameroon State and society. (I-421)

*The EU's influence on internationalisation has been exerted through multiple modalities.*

The EU influence on internationalisation is exerted in various ways – through national and regional policy dialogue, projects at HEI level, and by dissemination of examples through less direct channels. The main EU-funded mechanisms were *Tempus IV*, *Erasmus Mundus* in Asia, and *ALFA III* in Latin America. For *Tempus IV* and *ALFA III*, credit recognition and transfer and other aspects of regional HE harmonisation were central objectives of the programme. (I-421)

*Tempus IV has had an impact on national policy reform for internationalisation in many partner countries in ENP East, ENP South and Central Asia.*

The interim evaluation of *Erasmus Mundus* (2009-2013) records that 89% of Action 2 beneficiaries from third countries surveyed thought that *Erasmus Mundus* influenced national strategies, programmes and action plans for internationalisation. According to the *Tempus IV* reports and the RSE Central Asia draft final report, *Tempus* has had an impact on national policy reform in many partner countries in ENP East, ENP South and Central Asia. It was noted that *Tempus* came to the region at the right moment, when most of the countries were beginning to introduce major reforms in higher education. In that sense, *Tempus IV* was considered a useful support mechanism to help implement these reforms, working hand-in-hand with the education ministries. In the particular case of ENP East, evidence provided by the documentation on the six *Tempus IV* case study projects shows that HEIs have responded to the Bologna Process guidelines as the most widely accepted consensus on HE good practices. (I-421)

*ALFA III intentionally promoted recognition and credit transfer based on the ECTS approach and led to several intra-regional agreements.*

In Latin America, a Latin American Credit Reference system (CLAR), inspired by ECTS, was developed through the *ALFA III* Project Tuning Latin America. For example, the Governments of Argentina and Colombia signed an agreement about bi-national mobility that refers to the CLAR-system of academic credits, according to the Final Narrative Report ALFA III Tuning.<sup>93</sup> (I-421)

#### 6.4.3 National HE institutional framework is equipped to implement national policies and strategies (JC 43)

*Although no examples were found of new na-*

The implementation of national policies and strategies in HE requires institutions to intermediate certain aspects with HEIs. These institutions cover are-

<sup>93</sup> See also the „Final Evaluation of the ALFA III Programme” (December 2016), FWC BENEf Lot no 9 (Culture, Education, Employment, Social), EuropeAid/132633/C/SER/multi



*tional institutions being established as a direct result of EU support, the EU did contribute to institutional strengthening to some degree in a range of countries, particularly those covered by Tempus IV.*

as such as accreditation, QA, internationalisation, funding, and the steering of research. (I-432) The HEI survey conducted by the evaluation team found that new national institutions for HE had been established – or existing ones extended – in most countries to implement national HE policies and strategies. Among their most important functions, these agencies co-ordinate development of educational standards and monitor their practical realisation, accredit programmes, monitor the quality of programmes and other aspects of HEI performance, and monitor and disseminate effective practices. However, although selected EU programmes – particularly *ALFA III* and *Tempus IV* – were designed to contribute to institutional reform, no evidence was found, either through documentation in the desk phase or interviews in the field missions, that pointed to new institutions being established to implement national policies and strategies as a direct result of EU support. In contrast, examples of influence on institutional strengthening at national level were widespread. According to a survey conducted by the *Tempus IV* MTE, 77.9% of the respondents considered that the programme had strengthened institutional capacities to a good or even to a great extent. (I-432) The contributions of *Tempus IV* to strengthening were in areas such as internal regulations, and external relations and co-operation. (I-431, I-432)

*ALFA III enabled the National Tuning Centres in Latin America to support reform processes in the region.*

The review of documentation found some evidence from *ALFA III* of improvements in existing institutions, specifically of the National Tuning Centres in Latin America. National Tuning Centres – in which not only the HEIs, but also the Education Ministries and other institutional key stakeholders are represented – have supported the ongoing curriculum reform processes in the participating universities. At the same time, the Final Evaluation Report *ALFA III* states that only a few *ALFA III* projects managed to transcend the limits of the project itself. (I-432)

*As with policy reform, examples of EU direct influence on HE institutional reform in the evaluation period were few.*

The field visits reinforced the desk findings that, as with policy reform, examples of strong EU influence on HE institutional reform in the evaluation period were few. In Mexico, reform processes in Europe were said to provide clear incentives for continuing with Mexico's own institutional reform efforts, but no examples of direct influence were found. In Egypt, EU support to HE did not have a direct stake in institutional reforms, although the creation of the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education was at least partly the result of the increasing internationalisation of Egyptian HE – largely driven by Egypt's participation in EU-supported programmes. In Kenya, the Commission on University Education acknowledged the inspiration of the SUCCEED *EduLink* project for improvements in its approach to QA. (I-432)

*In Moldova and South Africa the EU had direct influence on institutional reform in highly-focused areas.*

The field visits in Moldova and South Africa identified examples of direct influence of EU-funded programmes on institutional reform in highly-focused areas. In Moldova, the high number of universities – 19 public and 13 private – was not seen as sustainable. The EUniAM *Tempus IV* project focused on an optimisation process for the number of HEIs. In South Africa, the HEAIDS and Career Development Services projects led to changes in existing institutions – for example, the then Higher Education South Africa, which has had positive impact in these areas. (I-432)

## 6.5 EQ 5: Inclusiveness

*To what extent has EU support to HE in partner countries contributed to enhancing inclusiveness?*



### *Rationale and coverage of the question*

Most, if not all, partner countries' development policies, and some partner HE policies, refer to social and/or economic inclusion. Inclusion is at the core of the European Social Model and of European values enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty. A number of Communiqués and Conclusions since 2007 have stressed the social dimension of education – including HE. For example, the London Communiqué of 2007 stated: *“The student body entering, participating in and completing HE at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations”*. It emphasised the *“importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background”*. Social and economic inclusion is both a driver of poverty reduction and a central human rights concern. These are both reflected in the EU's Agenda for Change.

Inclusion is an explicit objective of most EU support to HE, but has been approached in different ways. All programmes aimed for equitable gender balance, but *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* and *ALFA III* went further. *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* distinguished between disadvantaged groups – including disabled and economically disadvantaged students – and vulnerable groups (*“Nationals of the third countries concerned by the geographical lot who are in particularly vulnerable situations, for social and political reasons.”*), which were assigned the title of Target Group 3.

*ALFA III*'s objectives, priorities and eligible actions referred variously to the “most disadvantaged”, “the most vulnerable groups” and “less privileged social groups”. Ethnic minorities were included under the term “vulnerable groups”. *ALFA III* also encouraged the participation of HEIs from areas with a low Human Development Index (HDI), and particular attention to the poorest countries in the region.

A special Chapter of the Regulation, which establishes the Erasmus+ Programme, deals with social inclusion. It states that, inter alia, with regard to the selection of participants and the award of scholarships, particular efforts must be made “to promote social inclusion and the participation of people with special needs or with fewer opportunities”.

Inclusiveness in EQ 5 will cover disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, and also institutional disadvantage perspectives.

### *Summary answer to the evaluation question*

#### **Key points:**

- Much EU support to HE in partner countries has purposefully promoted inclusiveness in the form of equitable access to HE for different groups in society. This has applied to gender in all programmes, but in *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* and *ALFA III* it applies also to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, such as disabled people, refugees, or particular indigenous groups.
- In *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* – the two principal mobility programmes – the emphasis has been on ensuring equitable participation in the programmes themselves. Broadly speaking, at Master's level, this has been successful from a gender perspective and has ensured that the opportunities offered by these programmes have been enjoyed by women and men in proportions that would be expected, given the nature of the. Participation of women at PhD level was disappointing, at least in some countries.

- There are indications that EU programmes have been less successful in achieving access (to the programmes themselves) for vulnerable or other disadvantaged or under-represented groups. In some cases – for example, South Africa – the programmes, despite efforts to the contrary, may have entrenched the position of advantaged groups in the programmes, such as through their greater representation in HEIs that have successfully leveraged the opportunities. Overall, between 2007 and 2014, only 5.2% of all students who participated in mobilities funded by EM2 and the External Co-operation Window from 2007 to 2014 belonged to TG3. At the same time, however, EM2 allowed members of disadvantaged groups to gain access to the higher levels of university education – that is, Master’s degree or PhD programmes.
- External factors in the participation of vulnerable & under-represented groups in EU programmes include their access to information about the opportunities, and their ability to take them up.
- Beyond actual participation, *ALFA III* made efforts to promote institutional reforms and development for enhancing equitable access. Several projects led to the establishment of mechanisms such as HEI equity units and staff training courses to promote equity. The two EU mobility programmes – *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2 and *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* – may also have had a demonstration effect in respect of inclusiveness, although hard evidence is lacking.
- Several *ALFA III* projects also contributed to dialogue about policy reforms and strategies for equity. However, documentary evidence of the outcomes of the dialogue has not been found.
- EU support was generally more successful with regard to equitable access to HE than it was for promoting inclusive access to resources for HEIs, especially those suffering from former disadvantage. Defining “former disadvantage” within a country has been challenging. Only in South Africa has such a categorisation been found. In terms of current disadvantage, *ALFA III* targeted HEIs from areas with a low HDI. Internationally, it is a simpler matter to identify poorer and less developed countries in a region, which *ALFA III* also prioritised.
- In one case in South Africa, the Cape Peninsular University of Technology, it was demonstrated that a determined strategic approach to leveraging the EU programmes could work in less advantaged institutions. This would seem like a good model to consider replicating.
- From a national perspective, there is evidence of reforms in HE infrastructure and funding that were designed to help less advantaged HEIs. However, these reforms do not appear to have been directly influenced by the EU.
- From an international perspective, efforts have been made through *ALFA III* and *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2 in Latin America to support HEIs in less developed countries through special incentives to participate.

### 6.5.1 Enhanced equitable access to HE for all groups of society (JC 51)

*Equitable access to HE was an objective of EU programmes.*

EU programmes set out to promote equitable access in two principal ways. One was by promoting gender balance, and, in the cases of *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2 and *ALFA III*, access for disadvantaged, under-represented and vulnerable groups, in relation to the EU-supported programmes themselves. The other was to support institutional change for equitable access both in HEIs and at the level of national policies and strategies. (I-511, I-512, I-513)

*Gender equity was broadly achieved in the mobility programmes, except at PhD level.*

*EM2* and *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* statistics, provided by EACEA, show that gender equity among participants overall was reasonable. Between 2007 and 2014, 47,878 students and staff benefited from funding under *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2 Strand 1 and Strand 2 and the External Co-operation Window; 22,869 (47.8%) of scholarship holders were female. The MTE of *Erasmus Mundus* (2012) concluded that the gender balance of

*Erasmus Mundus* Action 2 flows was somewhat better than the gender-composition at European universities. Equity does not always translate as equal proportions. It implies fairness in the circumstances – the removal of barriers, for example. Not all programmes and projects achieved gender balance. In areas such as engineering, where women are often under-represented, it was improbable that balance would be achieved in mobility flows. Reports of *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* projects show that only 482 (32.6%) of a total of 1,477 scholarship holders (2010-2013) were female. Imbalances towards male participants have been marked in some disciplines, such as engineering, and at PhD level generally. Partnerships have been encouraged to make efforts to correct significant imbalances, and most reported that this was observed and taken into consideration. The Mobility to Enhance Training of Engineering Graduates in Africa project (METEGA), for example, which had an engineering focus, reserved a pool of scholarships entirely for women. Evidence from some field mission countries, such as Kenya and South Africa, and project reports suggested that gender balance was less easy to achieve for PhDs, where women were less inclined to participate because they tend to have more childcare responsibilities than men. (I-511)

*The participation of vulnerable or under-represented groups in programmes was low. The main beneficiaries of EU programmes were often the already advantaged groups. The role of the co-ordinating EU HEI in the choice of candidates can be key.*

Participation of disadvantaged, vulnerable or under-represented groups in programmes was often below expectations. In *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2, where a separate target group, TG3, was created for nationals of third countries who were in particularly vulnerable situations for social and political reasons, results were often disappointing. At the same time, however, EM2 allowed members of disadvantaged groups to gain access to the higher levels of university education, such as Master's degree or PhD programmes. In some bilateral country co-operation agreements – Argentina and Mexico, for example – additional funds were allocated to *Erasmus Mundus*, with the possibility of agreeing special conditions, such as priority for participants from marginalised or vulnerable groups. Overall, however, EAEAC statistics show that only 2,480 students (5.2%) of all students who participated in mobilities funded by EM2 and the ECW from 2007 to 2014 came from TG3.

Reasons for this include: a) HEIs and policy-makers have found it difficult to define and identify this group at country level; b) there is a shortage of applications from members of potentially relevant social groups that meet other acceptance criteria. (I-511) Field visits to HEIs confirmed that gender balance was more easily influenced than participation of disadvantaged, under-represented or vulnerable groups. In fact, there is evidence from South Africa, Kenya, Cameroon and Egypt that the mobility programmes favoured already advantaged groups because they tend to be studying at institutions better equipped to leverage the programmes. From the Cameroon field visit, for example, it is clear that the role and influence of the EU co-ordinating HEI in the choice of candidates – that is, their degree of compliance with the requirement of EM projects to include disadvantaged groups – can be a key factor. The bias of many EU HEI institutions towards excellence over inclusion was a recurring theme in the field visits. Although *the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* aimed at providing “access to HE for students including those from disadvantaged groups”, there are no statistics available showing how many of the grantees came from this group. (I-512)

*The HEI survey suggests a rather modest contribution of the EU to institutional changes for enhancing equitable access.*

As far as EU-influenced institutional changes to enhance equitable access at the level of HEIs are concerned, the evidence is mixed. Based on evidence from the case studies and field visits, it is highly likely that many of the participating HEIs already had policies with gender equality or equity as an objective. For example, this was the case with most of the *Edulink* East African partners. According to the HEI survey, 74% of departments/faculties of coordinating universities in partner countries have taken steps to include vulnerable and/or under-represented students. As for the EU's contribution to these steps, however, only 41% of respondents thought that it was considerable or great. (I-512) The extent to which these steps have been effective is not clear from the documentation reviewed or from the field visits.

*ALFA III has been a strong promoter of institutional reform for equity. Other programmes may have had a demonstration effect or led to more equitable access indirectly.*

The documentary review points to *ALFA III* as a strong promoter of institutional reform for equity. Several projects (e.g. MISEAL and EQUALITY) produced mechanisms such as HEI equity units and staff training courses to promote equity. Several *ALFA III* projects also contributed to dialogue about policy reforms and strategies for equity. However, documentary evidence of the outcomes of the dialogue has not been found. (I-513) The field visits support the conclusion that, in several countries, the prioritising of inclusiveness in EU programmes such as *ALFA III* and *Erasmus Mundus* contributed to the strengthening of a positive socio-political climate that induced HEIs to address the issue of access of vulnerable groups to HE, but this was by no means universal. Evidence from the other programmes is either lacking or suggests that institutional reform for the promotion of equity in access was not attempted. For example, The RSE Asia of *Erasmus Mundus* reported that the evidence did not provide much reason to believe that Asian HEIs have adopted EU practices for protecting minorities and disadvantaged persons in HE. (I-512, I-513) In Moldova, the EU support for HE has not directly focused on enhanced equitable access, but did contribute to an improvement and strengthening of small and regional universities, which mainly admit students from poorer and disadvantaged backgrounds.

### **6.5.2 Equitable access to resources for HEIs, especially those suffering from former disadvantage (JC 52)**

*With a few notable exceptions, identifying institutional disadvantages of HEIs within a country has neither consistently been addressed by the countries themselves nor by EU support.*

There is no definition of institutional disadvantage in any EU programme. For the purposes of the evaluation, it is defined as a state where an institution faces obstacles to achieving its objectives, compared with others with similar objectives. This can happen for a variety of reasons – including weak access to resources. Geographical distance from the economic centre of gravity of a country is another possible reason. Political factors can also play a part. The extent to which governments compensate institutions in this position varies. In some countries – South Africa is the prime example – it has happened because of a deliberate policy to favour certain types of institution, or institutions in certain parts of a country. Identifying institutions as suffering from former or current disadvantage within a country is a highly-sensitive matter, and neither the documentary review nor the field visits identified any clear categorisation in this respect, other than in South Africa.

At the level of regions, it is not so difficult to identify poorer and less developed countries. In Latin America, this was acknowledged in *ALFA III* and *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2. Such categorisation was not attempted elsewhere. (I-522)

*There is little evidence of disadvantaged institutions improving their relative position through EU programmes.*

Some efforts were made by the EU in *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2 to ensure that historically disadvantaged institutions were included in partnerships. Although there was some success with this approach in Moldova, this has proved to be challenging in other countries, such as Kenya and South Africa. One of the reasons for this is that EU partners have tended to focus on excellence. EU programmes may, in fact, have entrenched the position of the already advantaged. (I-522) In South Africa, the field visit found that few historically disadvantaged institutions had managed to benefit from opportunities under *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2 by the end of the evaluation period. The missions also found that *EduLink* was not a strong engine of equitable access, as participation was mostly confined to research-intensive universities. In one case in South Africa, the Cape Peninsular University of Technology, it was demonstrated that a determined strategic approach to leveraging the EU programmes could work in less advantaged institutions.

*ALFA III made efforts to support HEIs in less developed countries in its region.*

From an international perspective, *ALFA III* and *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2 made efforts to support HEIs in less developed countries through special incentives to participate. For example, the *ALFA III* Promotion of Internationalisation in Central America (INCA) project was successful in creating or strengthening International Offices at the participating HEIs.(I-522)<sup>94</sup>

*With some expectations EU influence on measures to shift resources to HEIs suffering disadvantage appears to have been weak.*

The field visits provided examples of countries that have taken steps to shift the balance of national HE resources in favour of less advantaged institutions – for example, those in more remote regions. The EU is not in a position to direct resources to any institutions, with the exception of small amounts of equipment in some projects. In terms of EU influence on the shifting of resources to disadvantaged institutions by government, there was almost no evidence of this happening. The sole example found was the Foundation Years teacher training project in South Africa. (I-521, I-522)

## 6.6 EQ 6: Responsiveness to labour market needs and brain circulation

*To what extent has EU support to HE in partner countries contributed to institutions and individuals better responding to labour market needs and to promoting brain circulation?*



### *Rationale and coverage of the question*

The question of the contribution of HE to development through the teaching and training of skilled manpower is a key one in the quest for a cost-effective enhancement of the teaching/learning, research and developmental roles of HE systems. Consequently, EQ 6 assesses how, thanks to EU support, HEIs and their learners have been able to acquire a level and scope of professional quality that match the expectations of national labour markets. The relevant skilled manpower has professional qualifications of levels 6, 7 or 8, corresponding to the 1<sup>st</sup> (Bachelor), 2<sup>nd</sup> (Master) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (Doctorate) HE academic cycles. Given the specific qualifications that the national and international world of work expects at professional levels to meet its current and medium-term needs, three intertwined issues will be explored under this EQ 6. First, to what extent have the HEIs and their (teaching and

<sup>94</sup> For other examples, see the Final Evaluation of the ALFA III Programme.

non-teaching) staff been able to educate and train the students in such a way that they are prepared to meet labour market needs? Second, to what extent do individuals find adequate jobs after they have returned to their home countries after spending EU-supported periods of training abroad? Third, how and to what extent have the highly-qualified manpower trained by HEIs with EU support been increasingly circulating between partner countries and between partner countries and EU Member States.

The first issue will focus on the institutional capacity of HE systems as a whole and HEIs as acting bodies to respond in real time to the expectations of the world of work and its labour markets, both at home and in the accessible and neighbouring foreign countries. EQ 6 will thus assess the positive impact on this issue of EU thematic programmes such as, primarily, *Erasmus Mundus* and *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, but also of *Tempus IV*, *EduLink* and *ALFA III*, and of other EU interventions – that is, aid projects and, increasingly, sector budget support (SBS) programmes. A key objective of Erasmus+ is to improve the level of key competences and skills, with particular regard to their relevance for the labour market and their contribution to a cohesive society.

The second issue is important for assessing the global impact of EU interventions in tertiary education on “sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development”. EU support to partner countries aims not only at enhancing the endogenous quality of HEIs in the partner countries, but also, and mainly, to increase the number of academically-qualified professionals hired by the national labour markets. On a level playing field, the better equipped graduates – in terms not just of qualifications, but also of experience and soft skills – will succeed better in the labour market than the less well-equipped. Labour markets, however, are not level playing fields and other factors – such as personal connections and timing – play a part.

In addressing the third issue, EQ 6 will explore how EU support to partner countries on the previous issues has triggered an increasing mobility of highly-skilled national professionals between their home countries and partner countries. Mobility of staff, as well as students, from partner countries to Programme countries (EM II) and between partner countries (Intra-ACP) has been an objective of the EU mobility programmes. It is not stated, however, in the EU programme objectives that they favoured continuing “brain circulation” beyond the programme itself. Such a brain circulation can be highly profitable for national economies (through knowledge capitalisation and remittances in particular), provided the individuals return home within a reasonable time period – thus avoiding brain drain by putting their acquired knowledge at the service of their home country. Academics operate in a global market and their movement is governed partly by opportunities in their field in other countries, as well as personal factors.

Erasmus+, with its credit mobility actions aimed at both learners and practitioners from Programme countries to partner countries.

### Summary answer to the evaluation question

#### Key points:

- Several EU-supported programmes had the development of new courses as their principal objective. There is strong evidence that efforts were made in most, if not all, cases to ensure that labour market needs informed the development of these courses. The most common way of achieving this was to open a dialogue with employers, both public and private. In a few cases, employers were also involved in the creation of course content and/or the delivery of courses. Only a few examples were found of *ad hoc* arrangements taking root after the programme activity ceased.
- A small number of programmes and projects – *ALFA III* is the most consistent example – had the objective of creating permanent mechanisms for the observation of labour market trends and/or dialogue with employers and other labour market stakeholders. A few of them succeeded. TEMPUS IV projects reinforced links between HE and the labour market, and to the training and preparation of the staff members and students, as well as professionals from outside the

universities, in line with labour market needs.

- EU mobility programme participants' graduate fields seem to have been a good match with labour market needs. Employability of participants was seen to have increased significantly as a result of participation in EU programmes. This was often through the acquisition of "soft skills". Evidence suggests that *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* graduates experienced faster entry into the labour market than those from the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* – suggesting that the attraction of a qualification from an EU university is greater in general than from an African one.
- The internationalisation of HEIs, academics and students is one of the most visible achievements of EU support to HEIs, and is one possible driver of HEIs' increased ability to respond to the labour market. The main reason for this is that labour markets are increasingly regional, or even global. EU programmes contributed substantially to establishing international links and creating or extending networks. Evidence points to the likelihood of many of these links and networks being sustained or renewed beyond the EU support. The main external factor in realising the programmes' potential to create or extend the networks and links is probably motivation. The evidence suggests that, among the participating HEIs, this motivation was not lacking, although they are of course self-selecting groups. However, the main factor in the sustainability of the networks and links is bound to be funding.
- There is a conflict between brain circulation, which is considered to be positive, and brain drain, which is the negative side of the same coin. Brain circulation – of students and staff – took place on a large scale, by definition, within the mobility programmes. According to the majority of departments/faculties in the HEI survey, a large majority of their postgraduate students returned to their home countries. The tracer study, however, reported a disparity between the mobility programmes, with a higher proportion of *Erasmus Mundus* alumni taking their first job outside their home country than those from the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*. Relative labour market forces are the most potent factor in decisions on whether or not to return to the country of origin. The evaluation found that the negative phenomenon of brain drain is not considered a major issue by HEI management.

### 6.6.1 Strengthened institutional set-up in the HEIs to respond to labour market needs in specific professional qualifications (JC 61)

*There is ample evidence that courses developed under EU programmes routinely made efforts to meet labour market needs.*

This JC is primarily concerned with changes in institutions that help them respond to labour market needs in the design and delivery of professional-level courses. It also encompasses efforts to ensure that courses developed under EU-supported programmes were designed and delivered with these needs in sight. There is evidence that, in some cases, the former were triggered by the latter. There is ample evidence that courses developed under EU programmes routinely made efforts to meet labour market needs. In the HEI survey, 83% of departments/faculties participating said they have mechanisms in place to ensure that degree programmes and related curricula respond to labour market trends. Universities had: conducted tracer studies and labour market surveys; considered research on new trends in evaluation and review of curricula; established student career development centres; liaised with the ministries of labour, labour unions, and alumni; and organised job fairs and regular meetings with employers. Employers were involved in the curricular design and its continuous modification, including delivery of individual courses. The EU contributed by both encouraging and enabling study programmes.



*ALFA III, Tempus IV and Edulink tuned in to labour market needs, while with the mobility programmes, direct involvement of labour market institutions was exceptional.*

Evidence from the case studies and field visits show that *ALFA III, Tempus IV* and *Edulink* projects, and the China bilateral project ICARE, have tuned in to labour market needs – often through co-operation with public and private sector employers in the design and, to a lesser extent, delivery of the courses. With the mobility programmes, direct involvement of labour market institutions was exceptional – partly because the development of new courses was usually not in question. Thematic areas in the *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* calls were chosen through collaboration with DG DEVCO, although this did not guarantee that HEIs in the participating countries were active in this process. *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* partnership themes tended to be oriented around development priorities – agriculture and energy, in particular. Although this was intended to make graduates more employable, the partnerships did not tend to involve employers directly. Individual PhDs pursued under the mobility schemes may have involved employers.

*Permanent mechanisms for dialogue with employers or other means of following and responding to labour market needs are rare. The best examples are from ALFA III and Tempus IV.*

*ALFA III* and *Tempus IV* in particular helped to set up permanent mechanisms for dialogue with employers, or other means of following and responding to labour market needs. Projects such as Tuning América Latina and the Joint European-Latin American Universities Renewable Energy Project (JELARE) led to the establishment of units or other mechanisms for the observation and analysis of labour market trends. The Network of Technology Transfer Centres on Climate Change in Europe and Latin America (CELA) and Conocimiento, Inclusión, Desarrollo (CID) projects led to permanent mechanisms for dialogue with key labour market stakeholders. In ENP East, several HEIs established “relationship with enterprises” units through *Tempus IV*. (I-613). In some cases, such as at Egerton University in Kenya, *Edulink* projects have led to the institutionalisation of labour market approaches in the wider HEI. Apart from these cases, there is no solid evidence that permanent mechanisms either for observation and analysis of trends or for dialogue with were set up through EU-supported programmes during the evaluation period. In some cases, it will take longer to discover whether ad hoc mechanisms established under the projects under study lead to permanent mechanisms. (I-613)

### **6.6.2 Increased ability of HE graduates to find professional positions corresponding to their qualification levels in their home countries (JC 62)**

*Employability of students increased as a result of participation in EU programmes. This was often through the acquisition of “soft skills”.*

There are two perspectives on this JC. The first is prospective: are HE graduates better prepared to find positions that match their qualification levels in their home countries as a result of EU interventions? (I-621 I-622) The other is retrospective: to what extent have HE graduates been able to find positions that match their qualification levels in their home countries, and what was the contribution of EU programmes in this respect? This could apply both to graduates of EU-supported mobility programmes and of country-driven programmes that have been influenced by EU programmes. (I-623) In practice, the two perspectives are not easy to separate.

According to the HEI survey, 79% of departments/faculties found that employability of their students increased “to a great extent” or “to a considerable extent” as a result of participation in EU programmes. Students enhanced their employability because they studied with quality curricula, or their access to and awareness of job opportunities increased. Being able to put an EU university on curriculum vitae is attractive, as is having experience from different African contexts (for African students). Finally, students became

more competitive through enhanced language, communication and adaptability skills. There were many references in project reports, programme evaluations, and *Erasmus Mundus* alumni surveys to the advantages that mobility programmes give to participants. These sources, and informants in the field visits, often referred to “soft skills” – such as international experience and confidence – and language development as being the most important acquisitions in this respect.

According to the Erasmus Mundus Impact Survey, former mobile students are half as likely to experience long-term unemployment, compared with those not going abroad. Of the employers questioned, 64% reported that graduates with an international background are given greater professional responsibility more frequently – a proportion that has increased by 51% since 2006. Of the Erasmus alumni surveyed, 77% held positions with leadership components within ten years of graduation, and Erasmus alumni were 44% more likely to hold managerial positions than non-mobile alumni within 10 years of graduation.<sup>95</sup>

*Opportunities to obtain practical experience were common in courses developed or reformed under Edulink, Tempus IV and ALFA III.*

The opportunities in EU programmes to obtain practical experience were seen as very helpful. (I-621). According to the HEI survey, 85% of departments/faculties of co-ordinating universities in partner countries included internships or apprenticeships – or other opportunities for students to gain practical experience – in degree programmes. For 61% of them, a majority of their degree programmes included such opportunities. These are internships or trainings in companies or public institutions, or practical research at partner organisations. The field visits also found examples of courses, established or reformed under *Edulink*, *Tempus IV* and *ALFA III*, that included opportunities to work with employers. A longitudinal study would show whether these are sustained and/or lead to institutionalisation of this practice in the wider HEIs.

*Tracer study and HEI survey both point to EU programme participants' graduate fields having a good match with labour market needs.*

In the tracer study, students were asked to what extent their first (or current) jobs matched the study fields of their degree. Approximately 80% of *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* alumni and 90% of *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* considered that their first job matched their degree fields. Although there is no counterfactual evidence, these percentages appear to be high, suggesting that alumni were well-matched to the labour market. Of course, there is a self-selecting bias, in that students were already likely to be studying subjects that were chosen by the mobility programmes because they were considered to be a good match with labour market needs. According to the HEI survey, the learning objectives of the majority of offered degree programmes were aligned with qualifications required by labour market at 93% of departments/faculties. At 8% of universities, a minority was aligned or there was no alignment at all. The EU contributed to this by supporting curricula review, creating new study programmes, enabling co-operation with unions or employers, or by research in support of this goal. As was mentioned under JC 61, partnerships in mobility programmes – particularly *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* – and courses developed under the other programmes, such as *Edulink*, tended to be based on academic themes that were considered to be a good match with labour market needs in the participating countries.

<sup>95</sup> European Commission. The Erasmus Impact Study. September 2014, p. 18

*According to the tracer study, EM A2 graduates experienced faster entry into the labour market than those from the Intra-ACP academic mobility scheme.*

The most systematic evidence for the retrospective view is provided by the tracer study. Student alumni were asked how long they needed to find their first job after graduation. Results vary substantially across the different programmes. In general, *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* alumni experienced the fastest entry in the labour market: 70% found their first job within three months after graduation, and only 11% were currently without their first job. In contrast, only 35% of *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* student alumni found a job within three months after graduation, and 43% were still without job at the time of the survey. No counterfactual data exists to compare these figures, but the contrast between the two programmes is striking. One conclusion that could be drawn is that the prestige of studying at a European university is a key employability factor.

*In the tracer study, between two-thirds and three-quarters of student alumni considered that their participation in the programmes helped them to find their first job.*

Another question examined the perceived contribution of the mobility programmes to the entry of graduates into the labour market. The responses show that between two-thirds and three-quarters of student alumni considered that their participation in the programmes helped them to find their first job. This result is similar across all programmes. These figures are markedly lower than those for a tracer study of beneficiaries of *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* conducted by the EUD in South Africa. This study reported, among other positive findings about *Erasmus Mundus'* effects, that 89% of the respondents felt that *Erasmus Mundus* had had a positive or very positive impact on their employability. The difference is possibly a reflection of the exceptionally high rate of unemployment in that country, where the advantage of studying at a European HEI might make a critical difference. Two questions in the tracer study addressed the sustainability of employment of student alumni. They were asked about their job satisfaction and about whether the EU programme had helped them to perform in their job. In both cases, over 80% of responses were positive, suggesting that advantages in employability gained through participation in the EU programmes are sustainable. There was no significant difference between *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* and *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* in this regard.

*The conclusion that participation in EU mobility programmes helped people find jobs was supported by field visits and case study material.*

HEIs visited during the field missions reinforced the view that participants in EU mobility programmes were at an advantage in the labour market. The information was generally anecdotal and impressionistic, and lacked a control group. There are also occasional references to the labour market experiences of graduates of EU programmes in documents reviewed – for example, in the case study of *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* Asia West, which gave examples of successful programmes. (I-623)

### **6.6.3 Enhanced internationalisation of HEIs and individuals in partner countries (JC 63)**

*Networks and links under EU programmes were prolific. They were the modalities and/or the planned outputs of most programmes.*

Internationalisation of HEIs under JC 63 is expressed as networks and links – those created under the umbrella of EU-supported programmes, and also those that developed outside, but under the influence of, the umbrella. There is ample evidence from all sources accessed in the evaluation that EU-funded programmes contributed significantly to strengthening the international orientation of participating institutions. The case studies and other documentary review during the desk phase demonstrated, unsurprisingly, that networks and links under EU programmes were prolific. They were the modalities and/or the planned outputs of most programmes.

*Evidence is mixed on whether networks and links will continue or be renewed after the EU programmes terminate.*

A total of 418 universities (297 of LA, and 121 of the EU) participated in 51 *ALFA III* academic networks. In almost all of the analysed *ALFA III* case study projects, networks were created at the end of the project's lifetime that should function in an autonomous way – that is, without *ALFA III* financial aid – and continued tackling the goals of the project (for example, former pilot study courses would change into regular courses). As the Final Evaluation of the ALFA III Programme executive summary states, under the heading of sustainability: “The degrees of appropriation vary from partner to partner, but the Networks set up by the Projects don't show the expected continuity, affected on the one hand by legal aspects and on the other by the lack of financial resources”.<sup>96</sup>

*Erasmus Mundus Action 2* Latin America projects contributed significantly to the establishment of new partnerships, or the expansion of existing ones, between European and Latin American universities, as well as among HEIs within Latin America. There is also ample evidence of increased exposure to international research networks for most of the Latin American HEIs. The *Edulink* case study in the Caribbean reported intense interaction. Furthermore, it concluded that most of the co-operation agreements will continue without the EU-project funding. Links under the East Africa equivalent grew steadily in its lifetime. *Tempus IV* projects were based on the establishment of networks and links, and the evidence from the case studies shows that these were numerous. However, the case studies – particularly those from Egypt and ENP East – did not give grounds for optimism that they would be sustained beyond the programme period.

*The HEI survey and the field missions confirmed that internationalisation is one of the most visible achievements of EU support to HE.*

The number and scope of academic networks and links with other universities increased either to a “great” or “considerable” extent at 86% of departments/faculties through participating in EU-funded programmes. The co-operation enabled academic exchanges, joint research, and development of joint curricula, joint papers, and preparation of subsequent joint proposals – regional, inter-regional and international ones. However, the change in the number and scope of networks since EU funding ended cannot be judged because only six respondents answered the question. The informants on the field visits were very positive about the EU programme's effect on internationalisation of their HEIs, their academic colleagues, and on students. HEIs in all countries visited testified to this as both an output of the EU programmes – because, by definition, they involve international partnerships – and an outcome, in the sense that they equip and motivate HEIs to seek further internationalisation opportunities.

*Brain circulation and brain drain are to some degree positive and negative sides of the same coin.*

Internationalisation of individuals under JC 63 is expressed as brain circulation – mobility of participants – of HEI students and staff after completing their exchanges in Europe or elsewhere. There is a degree of ambiguity about brain circulation. On the one hand, it is seen as a positive developmental factor for the individual. It is also seen as positive for the country of origin if the individual returns relatively soon after acquiring further relevant experience beyond that of the study programme or exchange. On the other hand, there is a negative side to the circulation coin, which is known as brain drain. This is usually expressed as the country of origin's permanent or near-permanent loss of talent, even if this is mitigated to some extent by remit-

<sup>96</sup> Final Evaluation of the ALFA III Programme (December 2016). FWC BENEFL Lot no 9 (Culture, Education, Employment, Social), EuropeAid/132633/C/SER/Multi

tances. Arriving at a nuanced assessment of the positive and negative sides of the coin is difficult without longitudinal data.

*According to the majority of departments / faculties in the HEI survey, 80% of their postgraduate students returned to their home countries.*

According to the HEI survey, 60% of the departments/faculties indicated that over 80% of their postgraduate students returned to their home countries. There is only sporadic quantitative data in other documentation reviewed. One example is a survey for grantees under an *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* project in Latin America, which estimated that “brain drain is definitely less than 20%”. This would confirm our findings from the HEI survey. In Asia, none of the *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* EXPERTS III grantees stayed in Europe after finishing their exchange programme.

*The tracer study reported that only 3% of Intra-ACP student alumni took their first job outside their home country, compared with 14% for EM A2 and 54% of EM A1.*

The tracer study looked at international mobility among participating students. The most striking result is that post-programme work mobility among Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme student alumni is minimal, with only 3% taking their first job outside their home country. Results are somewhat different for Erasmus Mundus Action 2 alumni; 14% took their first job outside their home country, and a remarkable 54% of EM A1 graduates started their work career abroad. Among those EM graduates who subsequently changed their job, EM A1 alumni show a slight tendency to move back to their home countries in the long-term, whereas the reverse holds for EM A2 graduates. These results are consistent with those for students from the different programmes who stayed abroad for another academic exchange or work after the programme. EM A1 graduates are the most internationally mobile group (51% did another stay abroad), followed by EM A2 (26%) and Intra-ACP alumni (11%).

*Relative labour market forces are the most potent factor in decisions to return or not to the country of origin, although penalties for not returning were also seen as a deterrent by HEIs.*

Among the most important factors for non-returning given by responders in the Tracer Study was higher attractiveness of the study programme abroad, together with better career prospects; in some cases, foreign universities attracted exchange students for their own degree programmes. Post-programme work mobility is not necessarily tied to the host country of the study programme, but expands to other countries as well. If students prefer to finish their degree programmes at their home universities, it is because they are registered for the degree course in their home country – or, even if not, they prefer to finish their theses with the original thesis director. The most important reason given in the HEI survey for the return of students was motivation to finish their degree programmes at home universities, followed by good career prospects in their home country. The increased marketability of the graduates was seen as an incentive for students to return to their own countries. (I-632) Several programmes and projects put mechanisms in place to deter non-return; penalties for not returning were an “important” or “very important” factor at 12 out of 21 faculties that responded to this question. The movement of students after their studies is bound to be affected by relative labour market factors – either real or perceived. According to the RSE Asia, Asian students realise that the competition for employment in Europe is likely to be far more intense than it may be at home, and are likely to return, at least to their home region. The EXPERTS project report stated: “The brain drain issue at the [Asian] Universities is also addressed through the higher level of incentives for higher studies. One can have quick promotion and career with good quality degrees from reputed institutions in EU. These policies discourage brain drain.” Good prospects are offered mainly for computer science and engineering, and there is generally a high demand

in home countries for graduates with EU experience.

*Brain drain is not seen as a threat to partner institutions.*

Reviewed documentation and key informant interviews during the field visits both left the general impression that brain drain is not seen as a threat to partner institutions. Mobility scheme participants often delay their return, to gain further qualifications or experience, but this is seen as a positive factor for the participants and for the country, even if not for the HEIs directly. Apart from those studying for PhDs, there is not generally an expectation that people will return to the springboard HEI.

*A minority of academics involved in EU mobility programmes participate in another exchange.*

Informants during the field visits reported that many academics involved in EU partnerships tend to look for further opportunities. The tracer study revealed a nuanced picture with respect to the mobility programmes. Relatively more *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* staff alumni (27%) participated in another exchange than their *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* equivalents (11%), even though many eventually go back to their home countries. Out of all *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* staff alumni who did another exchange, 12% stayed again in their first host country. For staff who participated in another exchange, about 40% from both programmes said the new exchange was EU-funded. It could be argued that, from a development perspective, it would be better to give new staff the opportunity of exchange, rather than provide multiple opportunities for certain staff. In terms of programme differences, the pattern of mobility in academic work of staff alumni is the reverse of the situation among students. Here, the proportion of *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* staff alumni currently working abroad is somewhat higher (11%) than in the *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* programme (6%). However, this concerns only long-term mobility (as measured through the current job). In the short term, staff alumni of *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* are more internationally mobile than their *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* equivalents, just as in the case of students.

## 6.7 EQ 7: Intra-regional and inter-regional harmonisation

*To what extent has EU support to HE strengthened intra-regional and inter-regional integration in HE?*



### *Rationale and coverage of the question*

EU support to HE is not restricted to staff and student exchanges between Europe and other regions or collaboration involving EU and non-EU stakeholders. Almost all global and regional programmes in support of HE also aim to build and strengthen regional HE systems outside Europe, and strongly encourage “South-South” co-operation. For example, *EduLink* has the objective of fostering “*regional integration in the field of HE by means of institutional networking and supports a quality HE system that is relevant to the needs of the labour market and consistent with ACP countries’ socio-economic development priorities*”.<sup>97</sup> Erasmus+ supports “*development, capacity-building, regional integration, knowledge exchanges and modernisation processes through international partnerships between HE*

<sup>97</sup> Intra-ACP Strategy Paper and MIP 2008-2013, p. 31.

*institutions in the Union and in partner countries*".<sup>98</sup> *Tempus* "fosters two ongoing 'integration processes', one with the EU and one within the partner countries".<sup>99</sup>

Against this backdrop, EQ 7 examines the ways in which EU support to HE has created new and strengthened existing networks of HE actors at all levels (student, faculty, governance) within and among partner regions. This assessment includes aspects such as EU-supported HE policies of regional organisations, the regional harmonisation of HE through, for example, the expansion of the Bologna system (that is, the establishment and streaming of regional credit transfer systems, promotion and institutionalisation of a mutual recognition of qualifications), and the fostering in general of regional approaches towards HE policies, standards and procedures.

### Summary answer to the evaluation question

#### Key points:

- The multi-faceted EU support to HE has brought HEIs from Europe and other regions closer together, broadened and deepened mutually-beneficial linkages in learning and teaching and in research, and thereby has contributed to the harmonisation of HE systems. Thus, approaches to inter-regional harmonisation and standardisation have effectively been implemented, or are under way, in relations between Europe and partner regions.
- At the same time, substantial progress towards harmonisation and standardisation of HE systems within regions (intra-regional relations) has also been made, albeit in a less systematic manner and with uneven results across programmes and regions. The EU has decisively contributed to the fostering of "South-South" co-operation in HE. *EduLink*, *ALFA III* and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* have been particularly crucial since, due to their specific modalities of European universities involvement, they involved more HEIs from partner regions than from Europe. The joint EU-African Union Harmonisation and Tuning pilot initiative developed graduate competency frameworks and curricula collaboratively for five different university disciplines across Africa, thus contributing to harmonisation in the pilot phase. The traction in harmonisation is planned for the full phase (2014-2017), in which the African credit transfer system is being developed.
- EU-supported intra-regional harmonisation based on governmental HE agreements, formalised or institutionalised partnerships between HEIs, and the mutual recognition of degrees, has advanced particularly in regions that already have a strong tradition of cross-border collaboration in HE (e.g. Latin America, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe) or started from a low level (e.g. Central Asia).
- The merger of *Tempus*, *Alfa III* and *EduLink* into the Erasmus+ Capacity Building action allows for a strengthening of co-operation between different regions: HEIs in partner countries within one region can now work with HEIs in another region. However the focus on intra-regional co-operation for partner countries remains limited. While a smaller number of HEIs in partner regions (in relation to EU HEIs) are required to participate in projects than previously, thus reducing the possibility for intra-regional collaboration.
- If intra-regional harmonisation or even standardisation has taken place, or efforts have at least been moving in this direction, these outcomes in most of the documented cases were achieved due to the dynamics within project networks. In other words, the collaborative nature ("network spirit") of *ALFA III*, *Erasmus Mundus*, *Tempus IV*, *EduLink*, and, to a lesser extent *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* projects, encouraged and often even forced the participating HEIs to think about, and ultimately implement, harmonisation strategies to make the partnership work. The vast majority of departments/faculties that participated in the HEI survey have established formal partnerships based on memoranda of understanding or similar agreements with other HEIs within their respective region.
- The involvement of non-state stakeholders – both NGOs and the business sector – in regional

<sup>98</sup> Regulation establishing Erasmus+, Article 8 (2).

<sup>99</sup> Final Report - Mid-term Evaluation of the Tempus IV Programme 2012, p. 32.

dialogues on HE matters has only been rudimentary. Non-state stakeholders were systematically engaged only in Latin America. In most of the *ALFA III* projects, links were established with civil society stakeholders in order to facilitate closer interaction and a broader dialogue on reform issues between HEIs and society.

### 6.7.1 Strengthened inclusive regional co-operation on harmonisation (JC 71)

*In most regions, the EU-funded programmes provided a suitable basis for fostering regional dialogues on HE and strengthening efforts towards harmonisation.*

EU support to HEI contributed first and foremost to the widening and strengthening of HE networks between Europe and partner regions – with the exception of the *ALFA III* programme – and, to a lesser extent, within regions. In most regions, the EU-funded programmes provided a suitable basis for fostering regional dialogues on HE, as the case studies and field missions demonstrated. The evidence is stronger for dialogues among HEIs than it is for inter-governmental dialogues. In some cases, synergies between *Erasmus Mundus* and *ALFA III* projects were created to strengthen regional dialogues. The dialogues established as part of collaborative projects usually included efforts towards harmonisation. The only exception is the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, in which regional co-operation on harmonisation was not an intentional objective of the academic mobility aspects.

When harmonisation of HE systems is a common agenda for HEI members of a network, concrete results are achieved, provided that the agenda has been agreed among the project members beforehand. In that sense, *ALFA III*, *Erasmus Mundus*, *Tempus IV* and *EduLink* projects played an important role – to varying degrees – in triggering the setting up of co-operation networks, providing at the same time the necessary explanations about the agenda and issues at stake. (I-711, I-712).

*The EU made a strong contribution to “South-South” co-operation in HE.*

Through *EduLink*, *Tempus IV*, *ALFA III* and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, the EU contributed decisively to South-South co-operation. Both programmes not only strongly encouraged such co-operation, but also facilitated intra-regional and, to a lesser extent, inter-regional collaboration. The *Intra-ACP Mobility programme* contributed to harmonisation within Africa as it moved students between different regions (and language systems) of the continent – meaning that HEIs had to deal with recognition (part of the harmonisation process) in the same way that the original Erasmus programme pushed the Bologna Process.

There were no European HEI’s involved in these programmes, but they could be technical partners in the *Intra-ACP Mobility programme*, although only as associates (but still involved), and in *EduLink*, as the main applicant/beneficiary, partner and/or associate, despite there being no obligation for an EduLink consortium to involve EU HEIs.<sup>100</sup> This shows that EU programmes intended to allow, as much as possible, partnerships that contribute to “South-South” co-operation.

EU support was successful in inducing regional co-operation and exchange between HEIs and government representatives of the five Central Asian countries. Despite the difficult – and, in some cases, even conflictive – state of bilateral relations, *Tempus IV* brought regional stakeholders together in conferences, workshops, seminars, training, study courses, where they shared experiences, developed tools, networks and study programmes.

<sup>100</sup> So there are partnerships without European HEIs and, in any case, the number of ACP HEIs (that must come from at least 2 different ACP states) must be greater than the number of institutions from EU or other regions.



These dialogues also provided fertile ground for regional co-operation on harmonisation of HE systems. Triggered by *Tempus IV*, regional dialogue in the ENP region was established between HEIs from, inter alia, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Latvia and Russia. This led to a progressive harmonisation of academic management practices strongly influenced by the Bologna Process. Furthermore, as a result of *Tempus IV*, the Maghreb states developed solid relations with each other, and all of them collaborate significantly with Lebanon. In that way, the EU has made a strong contribution to “South-South” co-operation in HE.

*ALFA III* included minimum requirements for the participation of Latin American HEIs in projects – at least four LA countries (Lot 1) or 16 LA countries (Lot 2). The number of LA partners always had to be double the number of EU participants. This promoted the creation of networks, and also promoted synergies contributing to HE regional integration. In this respect, Erasmus+ represents a step back on the regional component, as the participation in the capacity-building action of partner countries and their HEIs is more limited. In the case of Latin America, only two countries are required as partners, compared with twice that number under the previous *ALFA III* programme. The participation of EU HEIs and countries is higher, but the regional approach is accordingly weaker. At the same time, the merger of *Tempus*, *Alfa III* and *EduLink* into the Erasmus+ Capacity Building action has strengthened the inter-regional dimension: HEIs in partner countries within one region now have the possibility to work with HEIs in another region. However, a smaller number of HEIs in partner regions (in relation to EU HEIs) are required to participate in projects than previously, thus reducing the scope for intra-regional collaboration. (I-711, I-712, I-721)

*ALFA III projects were instrumental in establishing regional dialogues on HE.*

In Latin America, every *ALFA III* project was designed to facilitate a structured dialogue of the network partners (HEIs in LA and the EU) on HE themes. Harmonisation of the HE systems in Latin America was one of the most important issues and covered benchmarking and good practices in, for example, QA, curricula reforms based on competences, special actions to remove access obstacles to HE for vulnerable and marginalised groups (including gender issues), and closer co-operation with labour market forces. *ALFA III* projects thereby contributed greatly to establishing regional dialogues. (I-711)

*Erasmus Mundus projects in Asia and EduLink projects in the Caribbean and Eastern Africa fostered regional co-operation and dialogues on HE.*

*Erasmus Mundus* projects in Asia strengthened regional co-operation and dialogues on HE among Asian partner universities, albeit in a less systematic and visible way than *Tempus IV* and *ALFA III*. Examples include intensified co-operation among Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Thailand, and contributions to student mobility programmes in the Greater Mekong Sub-region and in ASEAN. While *EduLink* has not contributed per se to intra-regional harmonisation on a large scale in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, most projects – through the mobility component of capacity building – fostered regional and, in limited cases, inter-regional dialogue within HEI. In some cases, this resulted in closer co-operation and also harmonisation of specific curricula or study courses. (I-711, 712)

*EU has supported regional organisations and inter-governmental co-*

There is a long history of EU-supported institutionalised inter-governmental co-operation on HE, which in some cases has resulted in approaches towards, or even resulted in, regional harmonisation. For example, as outlined under EQ 2, the EU has – through the co-operation on *EduLink*, the *Intra-*

*operation, but this has not resulted in systematic advances towards harmonisation.*

*ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, and the ACP Window under *Erasmus Mundus*, – strongly supported the ACP Group of States in their efforts to strengthen regional and inter-regional co-operation in the field of HE. Between 2011 and 2013, the EU funded the Joint Africa-EU Harmonisation and Tuning pilot initiative. The EU-African Union programme developed competency frameworks collaboratively for various university disciplines, and helped universities to identify weaknesses, with the objective of increasing transparency for credit transfer and other stimulants to mobility and co-operation. The African Tuning pilot initiative, funded by the EU from 2011 to 2013, aimed at defining the graduate profiles and competences for five disciplines across Africa as a contribution to harmonisation. The traction in harmonisation is planned for the full phase (2015-2018), in which the African credit transfer system is being developed.

In Southeast Asia, HE ranks high on the agenda of ASEAN, which established an ASEAN University Network (ANU) of 30 universities across the region in 1995 to promote regional co-operation in higher education. ANU is probably the most advanced and institutionalised regional HE system outside Europe. Since early 2015, the EU has provided funding through the EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region (EU SHARE) programme, and thereby contributed to ASEAN's regional harmonisation agenda – the most extensive EU collaboration with a regional organisation on HE. However, it is too early to comment on specific results. In Latin America, an active role is played by the Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano (CSUCA), a regional association of state HEIs in Central America. CSUCA is partner in some of the HE networks created through *ALFA III* and *Erasmus Mundus* projects. There is some evidence that these *ALFA III* and *Erasmus Mundus* projects induced regional debates on HE. (I-712)

*Civil society was systematically engaged in regional dialogues only in Latin America.*

Evidence for the participation of non-state stakeholders in regional dialogues, or for an increase in such participation, is weak. Non-state stakeholders were systematically engaged only in Latin America. In most of the *ALFA III* projects, links were established with civil society stakeholders in order to facilitate closer interaction and a broader dialogue on reform issues between HEIs and society (e.g. labour market, NGOs, marginalised groups, educational bodies). In Central Asia, four of the six projects reviewed have, from their start, included the institutional participation of CSOs/NGOs and private sector enterprises in the regional networking dialogue processes. In Eastern Africa, some *EduLink* projects established mechanisms to integrate private employers, farm holders and rural workers as partners in the search for more relevant teaching/learning programmes. (I-713)

### 6.7.2 Advanced standardisation of HE at regional level (JC 72)

*95% of departments and faculties that participated in the HEI survey have established formal partnerships with other HEIs within their respective region.*

There is sound evidence on the great and clearly increasing number and scope of partnerships among HEIs in all regions. In total, 95% of departments/faculties that participated in the HEI survey have established formal partnerships based on memoranda of understanding or similar agreements with other HEIs within their respective region. There were slightly less partnerships for research than for teaching and learning. The partnerships have covered a full range of topics across social and natural sciences (e.g. curricula development, academic visits, provision of learning materials, work in labs abroad, joint publications, patenting and protection of research). Memoranda of understanding usually covered both teaching and learning and re-

search aspects. University faculties created a number of new partnerships, ranging from a just few to 50. In almost all cases, the number of partnerships has increased since their first year of EU funding. (I-721, I-722)

*The degree to which HEIs have signed agreements on mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications differed by region.*

Not all partnerships have as yet resulted in co-operation towards a mutual recognition of degrees and associated qualifications. In cases where this has happened, it was primarily the result of a “networking spirit” created by HEI consortia. *Tempus IV*, *Erasmus Mundus* and other programmes have fostered regional partnerships almost by default as the projects were collaboratively implemented, based on formal co-operation agreements. According to the HEIs survey, 63% of departments or faculties that acted as project co-ordinating universities in partner countries have signed agreements on mutual recognition of academic qualifications. The agreements covered graduate degrees and doctorates.

At the same time, no strong documented evidence for EU-supported regional standardisation has emerged for most parts of Asia, beyond the general notion that HEIs in South and Southeast Asian universities recognise the ECTS credits of their students participating in the mobility *Erasmus Mundus* projects. While this scheme is an important achievement in itself, there is no information available on standardisation agreements that were signed as a direct result of the individual projects. Similarly, most African regions are still at a low level in respect of regional standardisation in HE. Students are not even guaranteed to have the mobility period recognised as an integral part of their studies, and they prefer to apply for degree-seeking scholarships – thus reducing the incentives for developing recognition schemes. (I-721, I-722)

*First concrete results on harmonisation have especially been achieved in Latin America and Central Asia.*

Nevertheless, first concrete results on harmonisation and standardisation were achieved in other regions. For example, an academic mobility programme between Argentina and Colombia, agreed by the governments of these countries, will be based on the Latin American Reference Credit (CLAR) elaborated by the *ALFA III*-supported Tuning América Latina, as the Final Report of *ALFA III* Tuning América Latina explains. While the standardisation of HE in Central Asia still has a long way to go, important steps have been taken, thanks to *Tempus IV* support. First is the mutual degree recognition between Central Asian HEIs, second is the design and implementation of joint degrees and, finally, the establishment of (at least one) partnership between HEIs and business stakeholders for designing and offering to students a postgraduate degree. (I-721; I-722)

*While a good deal of joint or collaborative degree programmes with other universities has been established, evidence is mixed for the respective regions.*

Slightly more than half (56%) of departments and faculties of universities in partner countries that participated in the HEI survey stated that they established joint or collaborative degree programmes with other universities. The scope covered both double and joint graduate degrees and doctorates. For example, the *EduLink II* consortia jointly developed a total of 28 course or modules, and introduced 13 joint degree programmes. Under *Tempus IV*, between 5% and 9% of projects are aimed at developing double/multiple/joint degrees and joint programmes. The data is similar for the Western Balkans, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, South Mediterranean regions, with a slight increase in the South Mediterranean region (10%-14%). In *Erasmus Mundus* Action 1, all mobilities were implemented with the purpose of having joint, double or multiple degrees. In *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2, the establishment of joined or double diplomas was not a require-

ment, but nevertheless was achieved in many cases. According to a EACEA survey launched in May-June 2016 (based on 685 replies from HEIs worldwide), 20% of HEIs established joint degree programmes or joint curricula in co-operation with *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2 partners, while 36% planned to create such programmes in the future. For example, joint programmes and joint degrees in Egypt are allowed in the HE legislation. Several have been created as a result of EU-supported projects.

For example, the School of Engineering at Cairo University currently has three joint degrees, all with German universities. However, there is no detailed information available on the total number and scope of joint and double degrees for the whole country. In Moldova, several *Erasmus Mundus* projects have resulted in collaborative development of degree programmes and joint programmes in which a certain number of credits are completed at a partner university, but joint or double degrees do not currently exist. As a result of *ALFA III*, some joint or collaborative degree programmes were established in Latin America. However, the EU has not systematically contributed to joint or collaborative degree programmes within Africa. This is still a major deficit area. (I-723)

*There is little evidence that institutionalised partnerships between HEIs and the private sector have been established.*

Various projects covered by the case studies aimed to create closer links to labour market and business (in particular, *EduLink*, *Tempus IV* and *ALFA III*), but there is little evidence that institutionalised strategic partnerships with a balanced involvement of business and HE have been established. As shown above under EQ6 (section 6.6.1), the few cases for which specific evidence exists were more the results of initiatives taken by HEI top management. An interesting case in this respect was found in China, where the ICARE Master leads to a double degree awarded both by the Chinese partner HUST<sup>101</sup> and by the French counterpart ParisTech, including strong involvement of business in the programme. (I-723; I-724) This aspect is also covered under EQ 6.

## 6.8 EQ 8: Modalities and instruments

*To what extent have the various instruments, aid modalities and policy dialogue employed by the EU been appropriate and efficient for strengthening HE in partner countries?*



### *Rationale and coverage of the question*

EU support to HE in partner countries has a long tradition – starting in the early 1990s, after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, when EU neighbour countries in Central and Eastern Europe went into a profound transformation process. The *Tempus* programme started in 1990, the *ALFA I* programme (for LA) in 1994, and *EduLink* (ACP countries) in 2006.

Since then, the co-operation instruments in HE have diversified gradually and programmes have expanded continuously. HE has remained one of the important pillars of EU development co-operation. In the last 20 years, EU programmes in the HE sector have been redesigned and diversified, based on

<sup>101</sup> HUST: Huazhong University of Science and Technology

experience obtained in earlier programmes and programme phases, and through dialogue with partner countries. Implementation was also based on this accumulated knowledge. The programmes contributed not only to mutual understanding between the HEIs of the EU and the partner countries, but also helped to put reform issues on the agenda of the HEIs and systems in many partner countries.

Development assistance can be provided in various ways that can be complementary (e.g. project aid, sector programme support, sector and general budget support, humanitarian aid and assistance in crisis prevention, support to and via the civil society, approximation of norms, standards and legislation), according to what works best in each country – not least in terms of efficiency.

EQ 8 aims first at evaluating the extent to which the various instruments, aid modalities and policy dialogue employed by the EU have been appropriate, and thereby efficient for strengthening HE in partner countries. Following on from that, the question is whether the design of the different EU co-operation instruments and the modalities of implementation, together with policy dialogue with partner countries, were the appropriate measures not only for mutual understanding at the level of HEI's, but also for strengthening the HE system in those countries. The question also assesses whether EU support was delivered in a timely and efficient fashion. It addresses both the level of individual HEIs and the country or regional level of HE systems.

### Summary answer to the evaluation question

#### Key points:

- The level of responsiveness of the major HE programmes – *ALFA III*, *Tempus IV*, *EduLink*, *Erasmus Mundus*, and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* – to the national and regional contexts has been adequate. In these programmes, EU support was directly channelled to the HEI networks. Allocating the funds to the consortia and entrusting the co-ordinating institution with the responsibility for the projects' management contributed to strengthening the beneficiaries' ownership of the project. This way of providing support gave the network co-ordinator – within the contracted financial framework – a significant level of decision autonomy and flexibility, which allowed for appropriately addressing the needs of often heterogeneous sets of partner countries in a regional context.
- Through regular evaluation and redesigning exercises with partner countries' participation, the major HE programmes (such as *ALFA III* and *Tempus IV*) fostered and reinforced networking and dialogue in HE with partner countries throughout the world. In most cases, however, the EU and partner country stakeholders (governments) did not engage in comprehensive exchanges on the advantages and disadvantages of regional versus country-level support.
- In general, EU support (both bilateral and via major HE programmes) for HE in partner countries was mostly delivered in a timely fashion – with the exception of some delays at operational level, which were, however, not perceived as being highly critical.
- *EduLink* represented a strong case of ownership that was based on decentralised management (now indirect management). The ACP Secretariat was the Contracting Authority, while the EU played only an endorsing role. This approach was different in comparison with the other HE programmes and reflected ACP ownership of the programme.
- HEI stakeholders in partner countries have faced a heavy EU-prescribed administrative burden of managing projects – particularly reporting and accounting for expenditure – regardless of the respective programme.<sup>102</sup> This finding needs to be considered seriously, although project reports suggest that these challenges could be overcome.

<sup>102</sup> The question of whether European HEIs that acted as consortia co-ordinators had the same kind of administrative and accounting problems as co-ordinators from partner countries is outside the scope of this evaluation.

### 6.8.1 Responsiveness of the instruments and aid modalities to the national and regional context in partner countries(JC 81)

*Both support provided through programmes and bilateral co-operation responded well to the needs of partner countries.*

The review of documents and the findings of the field visits confirmed that support provided through regional or global programmes and through bilateral co-operation responded well to the needs of partner countries. However, no strong evidence has emerged that the approach to delivering the specific support to HE was the result of an extensive analysis of partner country needs. In other words, the focus of programme-specific or bilateral support was well aligned with the needs of partner countries and regions (see EQ2), but the aid delivery methods and instruments were pre-determined and not subject to thorough consultations with partner countries. At the same time, documents and all field visits provided evidence (based on a wide range of stakeholder interviews) that instruments and aid modalities were responsive to national contexts and that, at the level of individual EU-funded projects, the various instruments and aid modalities were appropriate and efficient. (I-811)

*There was a strong sense of identification with projects across all programmes. The programme approach was an appropriate way to address the needs of often heterogeneous sets of partner countries (within one consortium) in a regional context.*

EU support in the regional programmes mainly went to institutional beneficiaries – that is, to the consortia of HEIs, of which one lead HEI received the funds and administered them for the whole network, in accordance with the prior network agreements. This implementation arrangement allowed a horizontal and consensus-based management of the project funds – a method that was considered very appropriate by beneficiary HEIs, according to project reports and confirmed by stakeholder interviews – and strengthened the sense of responsibility and accountability of the participating institutions. Interviews with HEI stakeholders in all field mission countries demonstrated that there was a strong sense of identification with projects across all programmes. The programme approach was an appropriate way to address the needs of often heterogeneous sets of partner countries (within one consortium) in a regional context. *EduLink* can be considered as having achieved a high level of ownership because the programme was based on decentralised management (now referred to as indirect management). The ACP Secretariat was the Contracting Authority, and the EU only endorsed. This approach contributed to the alignment of the support with the regional development needs and created a sense of regional ownership. At the same time, it should be noted that the ACP Group of States, as a representative body, can only mirror the specific HE needs of all its member countries to some extent. (I-811 and I-814)

*Program documents discuss the pros and cons of on the advantages and disadvantages of regional versus country-level support but in most cases, the EU and partner country stakeholders did not engage in comprehensive exchanges on this issue.*

The documents of the global or regional EU HE programmes show a thorough analysis of the pros and cons of a bilateral or a regional (or global) programme. They argue that the focus of a regional programme provides the beneficiary partner country HEIs with the opportunity of inter-regional and intra-regional networking and dialogue. This has to be considered an important part of the added value of an EU intervention.

Each of the regional EU programmes in HE has its own history of several years (and even decades) of performance, evaluation, lessons learned, and redefinition of the programme's framework. An essential part of this periodical exercise consisted of dialogue with partner countries with regard to new programme designs.

In most cases, however, the EU and partner country stakeholders did not engage in comprehensive exchanges on the advantages and disadvantages

of regional versus country-level support. (I-812)

*Neither documents nor field interviews suggest that the EU adapted the way support was provided in response to changing socio-economic or political framework conditions.*

EU development co-operation in HE usually covers commitments of several years. In such a long period of time, political, socio-economic or geopolitical evolutions occur and may affect the conditions under which the EU support has originally been granted. However, neither documents nor field interviews suggest that the EU adapted aid delivery methods in response to changing socio-economic or political framework conditions. The evaluation encountered one of the clearest cases of such an attempt in Egypt. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring protest and demonstration that brought down the Egyptian government in 2010, the EU introduced bilateral support to respond to a request by the new government. The EU allocated funds to one country-specific project – “Integrating Human Rights in Higher Education”. The project was supposed to be implemented by UNDP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education. The project design directly responded to the events of the Arab Spring and the Egyptian Revolution, and addressed the Egyptian government’s pledge – at that time – to create human rights curricula for the different stages of education, including university education. The project activities were planned for 2013-2015, but the project never took off – due to the eventual lack of interest on the part of the government, according to interviews. (I-813)

#### **6.8.2 EU support has been delivered in a timely fashion, minimising costs for all parties involved (JC 82)**

*In 2015, 62.4% of all amounts contracted between 2007 and 2014 had been paid out.*

Due to the nature of the disbursement data available for the EU’s support to HE, no conclusive statement can be made about the timeliness of delivery of the EU support. However, data shows that, in 2015, about two-thirds (62.4%) of all amounts contracted between 2007 and 2014 had already been paid out. (I-821)

*A reasonable amount of delays in implementation of HE interventions occurred.*

Some delays in the implementation of HE interventions occurred. This could be expected and was not perceived as highly critical. Among the reasons identified were delays in disbursements due to partner country bureaucracy (e.g. in relation to the procurement of equipment). The overall findings for the field visit countries are that funds were generally delivered in a timely fashion in Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, South Africa, Egypt and Moldova. Evidence of some delays emerged in Cameroon, and interviews in Kenya revealed common delays in disbursements, which had caused problems for some partnerships and consortia. (I-822)

*Despite considerable complaints about the administrative burden of managing EU funded projects, HEIs in partner countries were usually able to overcome this challenges.*

Project co-ordinators in six out of eight field visit countries complained about the administrative burden of managing projects (in the remaining two field visit countries, Guatemala and Moldova, there was no HEI acting as co-ordinating organisation). This particularly concerns reporting and accounting for expenditure, regardless of the respective programme (*ALFA III*, *Tempus IV*, *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, and *EduLink*). This challenge did not exist for *Erasmus Mundus* where only EU-based HEIs, but no universities, in partner countries were allowed to take the lead within the consortia.<sup>103</sup> However, from 2013 until 2014 under *Erasmus Mundus* made it mandatory that one partner country HEI played the role of a co-co-ordinator of a

<sup>103</sup> As the EU HEIs kept out of the scope of this evaluation, it can only be assumed that as project leaders, they might have also had some accounting challenges in the project management.

consortium.

Stakeholders frequently noted that EU procedure requirements for presenting proposals and reporting (in particular, financial accountability) were excessive. Challenges related to the necessity of complying with the EU requirements – while at the same time satisfying national laws, rules and regulations – were also often mentioned. In Egypt, interviewees pointed to the difficulties in dealing with ex-post audits, which, in some cases, were conducted only two or three years after the completion of the respective projects. According to the *ALFA III* evaluation, 14 out of 37 selected *ALFA III* projects reported minor or major complaints –some of them criticising administrative problems within the consortium, others critical of the EC, particularly with regard to delays in the disbursements.<sup>104</sup> Project reports showed that HEIs in partner countries were able to overcome the challenges of strict administrative procedures posed by EU support. The main factors seem to be the long-standing co-operation in HE that has contributed to strengthening university administrations in fund management (in Europe, as well as in third countries), and in the fact that HEIs of both regions seem to have carefully selected their partner institutions for networking and common projects. (I-823)

## 6.9 EQ 9: Coherence and Synergies

*To what extent has EU support to HE been coherent in its approach and implementation, and to what extent has it added value to the EU Member States' interventions?*



### *Rationale and coverage of the question*

This question assesses policy coherence<sup>105</sup> of the EU interventions, and the coherence between the EU's and the EU Member States' interventions.<sup>106</sup> The EQ also asks whether, and to what extent, this has led to complementary emphasis and approaches. It goes without saying that an assessment of the level of co-operation and coherence also addresses intra-EU and EU Member States co-ordination as the pre-condition for achieving the former two.

The first aspect of policy coherence covers an assessment of the degree to which the design and implementation of the different programmes funded by DG DEVCO in support of HE – i.e. *Erasmus Mundus* (Action 1A & 2), *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, *Tempus IV*, *ALFA III*, *EduLink* and *AU Support Programme 2 (Pan-African University)* – have followed a coherent approach. The second perspective concerns the coherence of HE support funded by DG DEVCO with other EU policies, programmes and activities in this area, particularly those financed by DG Education & Culture (DG EAC) and DG Research & Innovation (DG RTD).

The third dimension of coherence addresses the way in which EU and EU Member States' efforts in support of HE in partner countries and regions have been conceptualised and implemented in a coherent and co-ordinated way. Donor co-ordination has become increasingly important, underpinned by

<sup>104</sup> Final Evaluation of the ALFA III Programme" (December 2016), FWC BENEf Lot no 9 (Culture, Education, Employment, Social), EuropeAid/132633/C/SER/multi

<sup>105</sup> Policy coherence as defined in Art.208 and Art. 210 of the Treaty of the European Union

<sup>106</sup> Coherence is defined as the extent to which the intervention logic is not contradictory/the intervention does not contradict other intervention with similar objectives.



the Paris Declaration and the international agreements on aid effectiveness that followed (including the Accra Agenda for Action).

### Summary answer to the evaluation question

#### Key points:

- While EU support to HE has been coherent in its approach and implementation, few synergies were created between the various approaches. At the same time, there has been hardly any co-ordination between the EU support to HE and the assistance provided by EU Member States.
- There was no glaring incoherence or conflict between: a) the respective programmes funded by DG DEVCO in support of HE; b) the programmes financed by DG DEVCO and those supported by other DGs – including, most prominently, DG RTD and DG EAC; c) between EU-support to HE and Member States' interventions in partner countries and regions. DG DEVCO support to HE and DG RTD's funding of the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7), the EU's main instrument for funding research, were coherent and complementary. *Erasmus Mundus* and the FP7 mutually reinforced each other. Furthermore, DG RTD and DG EAC reviewed the complementarity of their programmes when establishing Erasmus+. The clearest evidence of coherence is available for the individual programmes funded by DG DEVCO, *Erasmus Mundus*, *Tempus IV*, *ALFA III*, *Edulink* and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*. All programming documents refer to the other programmes and, in most cases, explain linkages between and among them. Evidence of coherence and synergies between interventions funded by DG DEVCO and the support of other DGs is less pronounced.
- The process leading up to a restructuring of EU support to HE, and eventually the integration of the former autonomous programmes into *Erasmus+* as the global EU approach to HE, comprised extensive EU Member States consultations. These consultations were partly motivated by perceptions among HE stakeholders about insufficient operational linkages between the programmes of the EU and MS respectively – and, consequently, missing synergies.
- While information-sharing between the EU and Member States (as well as other donors) has taken place within the Higher Education Donor Harmonisation Group (since 2010), the evaluation could not find any evidence of formalised sharing of information and analysis, let alone systematic co-ordination, between the EU and EU Member States in partner countries. In seven out of the eight field visit countries, formalised or institutionalised efforts at co-ordination in the field of HE did not exist (with South Africa being the exception). In most cases, however, informal and ad hoc exchanges between the respective EUD and MS agencies (including, but not limited to, the German DAAD, the British Council and Agence Française de Développement) have taken place.
- Except for one recent case – EU SHARE, a joint project of the EU and MS agencies from the UK, France, the Netherlands and Germany, which started in January 2015 – the evaluation has not come across any examples of joint EU Member States projects.

#### 6.9.1 Coherence of DG DEVCO-financed HE support with relevant EU policies and strategies (JC 91)

*There has been no incoherence or conflict between DG DEVCO-funded HE support with programmes financed by other DGs.*

No evidence has emerged of any incoherence or conflict between HE support funded by DG DEVCO and programmes financed by other DGs. At the same time, explicit proof of the existence of well-established approaches directed at creating and strengthening coherence is hard to come by for the pre-*Erasmus+* era. DG DEVCO strategy, policy and programming documents pre-*Erasmus+* did not include references to the support of other DGs in the field of HE. (I-911, I-912)

*Erasmus+ was the*

However, over the evaluation period, the respective DGs have evidently

*clear result of an inter-DG attempt to increase the coherence of the EU's support to HE.*

moved closer together in an effort to design, promote and implement a coherent EU strategy towards HE. The merging of all individual programmes in support of HE within Europe and with partner countries and regions into just one global programme, *Erasmus+*, provides strong proof of this approach to strengthening coherence. In 2010 and 2011, DG DEVCO participated in an inter-service steering group (led by DG EAC and composed of DGs DEVCO, BUDG, EMPL, ELARG, ENTR, INFSO, RTD and of the SG, SJ, EEAS and EACEA)<sup>107</sup>, which provided input to an impact assessment on international co-operation in HE. This impact assessment fed into the process that resulted in the establishment of *Erasmus+*. (I-911)

*DG DEVCO's support to HE and DG RTD's funding of FP7 were coherent and complementary.*

The most substantive evidence of inter-DG coherence is provided by the evaluation of EU support to research and innovation (R&I),<sup>108</sup> which finds that DG DEVCO's support to HE and DG RTD's funding of the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7), the EU's main instrument for funding research, were coherent and complementary. In addition, DG RTD and DG EAC reviewed the complementarity of their programmes when establishing *Erasmus+*, with a concerted decision to move the doctoral training previously offered under *Erasmus Mundus* to the Marie Curie actions under Horizon 2020. The main finding is that both DGs *"have made a valuable contribution to involving partner country scientists in international research. They have done so principally by promoting international networks at all levels, global and regional, and promoting bilateral and multilateral scientific collaboration. Closely related to networks are programmes such as Erasmus Mundus that, by helping young researchers develop European links, have served as an incubator for later FP7 participation."* In some cases (although the exact number is not known), co-ordinators of Tempus projects applied to FP7. Furthermore, EU-ACP systematic institutional linkages with research programmes were established among ACP HEIs. As evidence of such efforts within ACP, in addition to Edulink II networking projects, the following programmes can be listed: ACP Research for Development Programmes, and ACP Science and Technology II (S&T), both programmes providing capacity-building and synergies creation along the research/innovation value chain. Nevertheless, it is not possible to quantify the impact of such synergies. (I-912)

### 6.9.2 DG DEVCO-financed programmes are mutually reinforcing (JC 92)

*While the EU perceived the different DG DEVCO-funded programmes as being inter-related parts of a bigger whole, operational linkages between these programmes were limited.*

The EU did not treat the different programmes funded by DG DEVCO (*Erasmus Mundus*, *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, *Tempus IV*, *ALFA III*, *Edulink*, and AU Support Programme 2) as stand-alone interventions, but rather perceived them as inter-related parts of a bigger whole. The vast majority of strategy and programme documents, as well as MTRs and other evaluations, include references to the support provided by other programmes and often explain how the different programmes complement each other. However, according to several programme evaluations, operational linkages among programmes (and projects under different programmes) were limited, resulting in missed opportunities to create synergies. This general perception was one of the main motivating factors for the merging of all

<sup>107</sup> BUDG and INFSO did not participate in the meetings.

<sup>108</sup> European Commission 2016: Strategic evaluation of EU support to Research and Innovation for development in partner countries (2007-2013); [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation-eu-support-research-and-innovation-development-partner-countries-2007-2013\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation-eu-support-research-and-innovation-development-partner-countries-2007-2013_en)

individual programmes into Erasmus+. The 2011 impact assessment on international co-operation in HE referred to a widespread view among HE stakeholders that “*there should be closer integration between the various existing EU HE programmes, be they intra-European (Erasmus), near-global (Erasmus Mundus), regional (Tempus IV, Alfa III, Edulink) or bilateral*”.

*Programmes mutually reinforced each other at the level of HEIs.*

However, field visit findings put into perspective the rather negative conclusions of previous evaluations on the lack of cross-fertilisation of the individual programmes. HEI stakeholders noted that, at project level, *Tempus IV* and *Erasmus Mundus, ALFA III* and *Erasmus Mundus, Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* and *Erasmus Mundus, Edulink* and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, reinforced each other at universities that co-ordinated, or participated in, projects under more than one programme. (I-922)

*The link between programme-based and bilateral support to HE is weak.*

Judged on the basis of programme documents, probably the weakest link within the portfolio of DG DEVCO support to HE was the one between the regional/global programmes and bilateral interventions. The most likely explanation is that, in most partner countries, HE was covered only through near-global or regional support, whereas bilateral interventions covered primary, secondary and vocational education. There is thus only limited evidence of synergies and co-ordination between the regional and bilateral interventions in HE. (I-923)

### **6.9.3 Systematic efforts to foster co-operation and to create synergies between support provided by the EU and the EU Member States (JC 93)**

*Systematic efforts to foster co-operation and create synergies were made at high political levels, but were largely absent in partner countries. Shaped the process which led to the establishment of Erasmus+.*

According to its own accounts, the EC has regularly and extensively consulted with MS on the strategic direction of the EU’s support to HE. This has particularly been the case for the consultations within the framework of the Higher Education Donor Harmonisation Group (since 2010), comprising the EU Member States donor organisations (e.g. British Council, Nuffic, DAAD, SIU, CIMO, NORAD, GIZ, OeAD), the EU Commission, and other international donors, such as the World Bank, DfiD, USAID, UNESCO. Meetings have taken place on a yearly basis to update the members on policies, strategies and programmes for their support to HE in partner regions. In 2015, harmonisation efforts in Asia (the EU SHARE project) and in Africa (Tuning, and the new Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation initiative – HAQAA) were on the agenda. According to stakeholder interviews, there has been a deliberate effort through this group to ensure harmonisation and complementarity across the programmes supporting HE.

Equally important, extensive dialogue and discussions involving the EC and EU Member States eventually paved the way for the integration of all individual EU-funded HE programmes into Erasmus+.

This process started in May 2006, when the EC convened a MS education expert group to discuss the different existing programmes in the field of HE, and the plans to develop a global external co-operation mobility programme, which would enlarge the scope of the available opportunities. The process included major public consultation in 2011 to receive input from HE stakeholders, both in EU Member States and partner countries. In addition to the public consultation, dedicated meetings with representatives from partner country representations, missions and EUDs were also organised. Finally, in June 2011, a future single programme in the area of education, training,

youth and sport was proposed in a Communication of the EC on a Budget for Europe 2020. However, this consultative process was mainly restricted to high political levels and, according to field visit findings, consultations did not take place in any systematic manner in partner countries. (I-931)

*Most EU programme documents do not include references to the support provided by EU Member States.*

Although the EU has seemingly put great emphasis on involving the MS in discussions on the overall strategy and approach to HE support, the available programme documents include surprisingly few references to the support provided by the MS. Likewise, the EU's country and regional strategies of the 2007-2013 period did not customarily make specific references to other donors' interventions in HE, let alone discuss areas of overlap or potentials for collaboration. At the country level, of all CSPs reviewed for this evaluation only the ones for Algeria, Armenia, Egypt and Thailand mentioned HE programmes and projects funded by EU Member States in these countries. However, no active approach to creating synergies between EU and MS interventions could be identified. (I-932)

*Attempts by the EU and MS to jointly support programmes and projects are rare.*

Since HE is seldom a focal point for the bilateral co-operation with partner countries, it is not subject to joint programming. For example, HE is not included in the "eight strategic priorities" of the Joint European Union-Member States Strategy for Guatemala 2014 -2020. The same applies to the EU Joint Co-operation Strategy in Support of Kenya's Medium-Term Plan 2014-2017. The field visit also did not come across examples of joint programming. Overall, the EU and MS have only recently started to make attempts to jointly support programmes and projects. However, this approach is still limited to a very small number of examples as far as EU support to HE outside Europe is concerned. The best example – which, however, falls outside of the temporal scope of this evaluation – is EU SHARE. The project started in January 2015 for four years and is the first major Technical Support to HE institutions supporting the implementation of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community building and connectivity (see also below under JC 94). (I-933)

#### **6.9.4 EU plays an active role in co-ordination mechanisms with EU Member States in the field of HE (JC 94)**

*Formalised sharing of information and analysis, let alone systematic co-ordination, between the EU and EU Member States in partner countries exists only to a limited extent.*

Neither the documents reviewed nor the field visits provided evidence of formalised sharing of information and analysis – let alone systematic co-ordination – between the EU and EU Member States in partner countries. In seven of the eight field visit countries, formalised or institutionalised efforts at co-ordination in the field of HE did not exist. Similarly, the final evaluation of ALFA III (2016) did not find "*much convergence with the actions of the EU MS, some of which co-operate intensively with Latin American HEIs bilaterally*"<sup>109</sup>. In most cases, informal and ad hoc exchanges between the respective EUD and MS agencies (including, but not limited to, the German DAAD, the British Council and Agence Française de Développement) have taken place.

One of the very few examples of co-ordination was South Africa, where a Donor Forum chaired by the DHET was revived in 2013 through the EUD's efforts, and institutionalised as part of elements of the sector dialogue under the new Teaching and Learning Development programme. It meets annually and has triggered bi-lateral dialogues. Participants include EU Member

<sup>109</sup> See also the „Final Evaluation of the ALFA III Programme” (December 2016), FWC BENE Lot no 9 (Culture, Education, Employment, Social), EuropeAid/132633/C/SER/multi

States, Norwegian and Swiss representatives, the National Treasury of South Africa, the Development Bank of South Africa and the African Development Bank.

The EU – together with GIZ, AfDB, SIDA, USAID, Ford Foundation and the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) – supported the harmonisation of HE programmes and the implementation of the African Quality Assurance Framework to facilitate Recognition of Academic Qualifications across the Continent. This has been undertaken under the overall umbrella of the Arusha (now Addis Ababa) Convention on the recognition of qualifications, which is the result of a joint collaboration between the AUC and UNESCO. While it is not the EU's responsibility to ensure complementarity between the different actors contributing to the overall Arusha Convention, the EU is well aware of the different contributions, and a significant effort was made by the EU to bring all actors together (donors and African stakeholders) and get a commitment from them to consistency in this field.

Furthermore, according to interviews, the EUD to the African Union has been instrumental in ensuring consistency in the EU and MS contributions to the Pan-African University, as well as the complementarity of the EU with other international donors contributions to the different hubs. (I-941, I-942, I-944)

*Joint financing or task division among EU and EU Member States in partner countries in the implementation of projects has been rare.*

Approaches to joint financing or agreed task division among EU and EU Member States in partner countries at the implementation stage do not exist, except in a very small number of cases. Probably the most prominent recent example of joint financing is the Jakarta EUD's grant contract with the British Council on EU SHARE. The project is being implemented by a consortium of EU Member States stakeholders led by British Council, and including Campus France, Nuffic Neso Netherlands, DAAD Germany, European University Association (EUA) and European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) as partners. The key idea of the programme is to share EU experience with ASEAN for the improvement of standards and quality of HEIs in the ASEAN region, drawing on the experience of the Bologna process and the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The EU is the only partner working with ASEAN in this area.

Furthermore, PAU – which aims to stimulate highest quality research in areas critical to Africa's technical, economic and social development – received the support of both the EU and the German agencies DAAD, GIZ and KFW. DAAD has provided funding for partnerships between PAU and German universities. GIZ and KFW established, and have since supported, the PAU Institute of Water and Energy Sciences (including Climate Change) –PAUWES. However, this is a case of complementary support, rather than joint financing or planned task division. (I-943)

## 7 Conclusions by evaluation criteria

Conclusions by evaluation criteria follow the framework of the OECD DAC evaluation criteria and are based on the responses to the EQs.

Table 6 Coverage of the evaluation criteria by the evaluation questions

Question	Evaluation criteria						
	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability	3Cs	Added value
EQ1 on strategic orientation	✓✓					✓✓	✓✓
EQ2 on alignment	✓	✓				✓✓	
EQ3 on management, teaching, learning and research		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓		✓✓
EQ4 on HE policy reform	✓✓	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓		
EQ5 on inclusiveness	✓✓	✓✓		✓			
EQ6 on labour market needs and brain circulation	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓		
EQ7 on intra-regional harmonisation	✓✓	✓		✓	✓✓	✓✓	
EQ8 on modalities and instruments			✓✓			✓	
EQ9 on coherence and synergies	✓		✓			✓✓	✓✓

✓✓ The criterion is largely covered by the EQ

✓ The criterion is partially covered in the EQ

### *Relevance – EU support to HE has been highly relevant at several levels.*

First, EU support to HE was relevant as a contribution to achieving both the EU's and partner countries' socio-economic development objectives. The strengthening of quality HE is essential for producing the engineers, health specialists, teachers, policymakers, technologists, and natural and social scientists whose knowledge and leadership are needed to improve people's lives and, ultimately, reduce poverty (EQ 1). The EU support had a strong focus on enhancing the responsiveness of degree programmes to the needs and requirements of national labour markets (EQ 6). Second, the EU approach has been relevant in terms of achieving the goals of the Paris Declaration – namely, the alignment of the support provided with the policy priorities and systems of partner countries and regions (EQ 2). Third, EU support has been relevant with regard to the design and implementation of national reform processes in HE. Thanks to, inter alia, the successful model of the Bologna Process, the EU and EU Member States are widely perceived as important sources of benchmarking for internationalisation (EQ 4). Fourth, EU support to HE was relevant for promoting inclusiveness, in the form of equitable access to HE for different groups of society in partner countries and regions (EQ 5). Fifth, the EU's explicit focus on furthering regional approaches for the harmonisation and standardisation of HE made the EU support relevant as a substantial contribution to advancing regional integration (EQ 7).

*Effectiveness – The EU support to HE has achieved a high level of effectiveness in most areas*

At the level of HEIs, EU support has strongly contributed to: increasing the quality of teaching and learning through curriculum development; improving management practices of HEIs as a result of strengthened administrative, institutional and financial practices. The EU support had an indirect influence at HEI level, by drawing their attention to development priorities and thus creating a fertile ground to greater inclusiveness of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

Universities from the EU and partner regions have been brought closer together. This has broadened and deepened mutually beneficial linkages in learning and teaching and in research, and has contributed to the harmonisation of HE systems. Good progress has also been made towards the standardisation of HE systems within partner regions, albeit in a less systematic manner and with uneven results across programmes and regions. Nevertheless, the EU has contributed decisively to fostering “South-South” co-operation in HE. Today, a larger number of universities worldwide are more solidly integrated into transnational partnerships, and thus, through mutual learning, enjoy better framework conditions for reforms than they had at the beginning of the evaluation period. The rapid and marked expansion of the application of the Bologna system by partner countries’ universities and regional HEIs has played an important part in achieving the overall effectiveness of the support (EQs 3, 7). Beyond and in spite of reforms inspired by the Bologna Process, it is harder to find examples of effective EU influence on expected policy and legislation reforms to better HE achieve development objectives in the partner countries. According to information gathered on field visits, this is due mainly to the fact that EU-funded programmes focused on the HEI sector, and not directly on state policy-making institutions. However, placing HEIs at the centre of EU support was effective in many ways. Most importantly, this approach constituted a bottom-up reform process that started at the university level and then often spilled over to the level of national governance. However, success is not guaranteed, and sometimes this can be a long and winding road. At the same time, EU-facilitated national policy dialogue about other national HE reforms – relating to areas such as learning and research mobility, scholarships and other financial support for students, HE infrastructure, and university management and governance – have yielded positive results only in a small number of countries (EQ 4). Improving management and governance often implies high additional costs for universities, and this funding is not always available – resulting in a reluctance by HEIs to embark on reforms.

Furthermore, since EU-funded programmes under evaluation did not usually provide direct support for research infrastructures in partner countries (taken care of, in several cases, through bilateral co-operations)<sup>110</sup>, HE programmes tried more to enhance the “soft” conditions for research in partner country universities. This was done by providing exchanges of academic staff, PhD students and accurate research literature with EU HEIs (cf. EQ3). In LA, ENPI and, to a lesser extent, in ACP, HEIs developed – through their EU-funded programmes – a better complementarity of HE academic programmes and research programmes (cf. EQ4). Linkages between EU support to academic and administrative conditions of HE, and also research and innovation, have been promoted, and there is evidence that the two areas have cross-fertilised each other. For example, in several cases, HEIs and individual academics benefited from both DG DEVCO and DG RTD funds. In some cases, *Erasmus Mundus* and *Tempus IV* were stepping stones for Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) applications/participation (cf. EQ 3). Some of the most visible cases of effectiveness are apparent with regard to students and academic staff. Ample evidence points to substantially increased study and research skills, qualifications and capacities, inter-cultural understanding, and professional career prospects for both groups, as a result of their participation in EU-supported programmes (particularly mobility programmes). In spite of the absence of substantial direct assistance for research, EU support to HE has enhanced the research capacities of individual academics, in the sense that they developed independent research skills and learned new techniques in their respective fields (cf. EQs 3, 4, 6). The level of effectiveness is more difficult to determine in the case of inclusiveness. *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* and the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* – the two principal mobility programmes – have, to a large extent, achieved an equitable gender balance at

<sup>110</sup> E.g. Japanese and Korean co-operations in DRC

master's degree level, but less so for PhD students. As for vulnerable and other disadvantaged groups, it is less easy to calibrate the results because of a lack of clarity about their boundaries. The general impression is that the mobility programmes were less successful in achieving the participation of these groups than in achieving gender balance – with the notable exception of *Erasmus Mundus* External Co-operation Windows, which paid particular attention to students in vulnerable situations. The main reasons for this situation seems to be that HEIs and policy-makers have often lacked clear definitions to identify such groups at country-level, and that there was a lack of suitable applications from members of potentially relevant social groups (cf. EQ5). Furthermore, the inclusion of students from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in mobility programmes has not led to any systematic spill-over to EU support for improving access for these groups to HE in general. In other words, EU support to HE has not resulted in notable changes to admissions policies that would allow more young people with disadvantaged backgrounds to study at university level. Admission policies are indeed the responsibility of the HEI, but generally under the overall framework of national legislation and policies that go beyond the scope and possibilities of EU-funded HE programmes (see EQ 5).

*Efficiency – To the extent that a judgement on efficiency can be made, the overall finding is that the programme-based support achieved most of its objectives in an expected and timely manner.*

As far as cost efficiency is concerned, in the absence of a counterfactual, the overall efficiency of the EU support to HE cannot be fully assessed. A possible approach towards judging efficiency would be a comparison of the per capita expenditures of the EU's support to HE with that of other major donors, such as EU Member States (for example, Germany, the UK and France), the US, Australia and Canada. However, no data was readily available, so a comparative study was beyond the scope of this evaluation.

The general finding is that the delivery of support, mainly via projects under regional and global programmes, provided a suitable framework for achieving the expected outcomes in line with the reconstructed intervention logic. This included, but was not limited to, policy and institutional reforms at both national and universities level (including improved QA), harmonisation and standardisation of HE, internationalisation of HEIs, and strengthened capacities of individual students and scholars.

The evaluation did not find any differences in terms of: a) the efficiency of the major regional and global HE programmes b) the efficiency of EU support provided bilaterally. Across the entire portfolio, support to HE in partner countries was delivered in a timely fashion in most cases, with the exception of some delays at operational level that were not, however, perceived as being highly critical.

A hurdle to efficiency existed at the level of individual projects. HEI stakeholders complained about the administrative burden of managing projects, and about discrepancies between EU rules and national laws and regulations. This particularly concerns reporting and accounting for expenditure, regardless of the respective programmes (particularly *Tempus IV* and *Edulink*). This challenge did not exist for universities in partner countries that participated in *Erasmus Mundus* Action 2, where only EU-based HEIs (or those in non-EU programme countries)<sup>111</sup> were allowed to be grant-holders, and thus consortia co-ordinators (i.e. not universities in partner countries). Whether or not European HEIs faced similar challenges is a question not covered by this evaluation (EQs 2, 3 and 8). At the same time, these projects have built up the capacities of partner countries to ensure the sound financial management that is essential for an international HE arena where funding is often available on a competitive basis.

Missed opportunities in creating efficiency are related to the underdeveloped state of co-operation and co-ordination between EU support to HE and the support provided by EU Member States on a bilateral basis (see below and EQ 9).

<sup>111</sup> Programme countries are all EU Member States, as well as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Turkey.



*Impact – EU support to HE contributed to achieving most of the envisioned impacts according to the intervention logic*

Regarding the intermediate impact level of the reconstructed intervention logic, EU support to HE has evidently contributed to narrowing the gap between the qualifications of HE graduates and the requirements and needs of national, regional and global economies and labour markets. This was mainly achieved through the development of new degree programmes oriented to the labour market, and increasing interaction between HEIs and the private sector. One of the most visible impacts is improved employability and the acquisition of relevant skills for the socio-economic development of partner countries, as a direct result of broad-scale brain circulation within the framework of the EU-funded mobility programmes. At the same time, brain drain could be avoided to a large extent. Even when it happened, partner countries did not perceive its extent as being a problem (EQ 6).

The extensive and rapid EU-supported expansion of the Bologna principles demonstrates the impact achieved in terms of HE reforms in partner countries and the standardisation of HE in relations between the EU and third countries and regions. Impact is also evident in the case of harmonisation of degree programmes and curricula, as well as in mutual recognition of studies and qualifications among participating countries and HEIs within and between non-European regions. Hence, at the global impact level, support to HE made a decisive contribution to enhancing political and economic co-operation within and between regions (EQ 7).

As for other global impacts, there can be no doubt that the EU support achieved the envisioned strengthening of inter-cultural understanding and inter-societal co-operation between regions as a core objective of the EU's external relations and development co-operation. Support to HE played a central part in efforts towards achieving this goal. However, a robust and direct link between support to HE and sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development cannot be established in measurable terms.

*Sustainability – Harmonisation, standardisation and internationalisation of HE is the most sustainable result of the EU's support.*

EU support has yielded sustainable benefits at the level of partner countries and regions, as well as individual HEIs. Simply put, the partly substantial reforms – which were introduced as part of, and result of, projects under the respective programmes, and/or supported through bilateral co-operation – are highly unlikely to be reversed. It can reasonably be assumed that the changes are sustainable wherever Bologna principles have been fully or partly adopted, or where other EU-supported policy and institutional reforms have been implemented with a view to improving the quality of teaching and learning, the employability of students, and the capacities of academic staff. In these instances, solid and durable structures have been created. However, reforms have not progressed in a sustainable way in the case of efforts towards regional harmonisation outside the Bologna framework – for example, in Africa and Latin America. At the same time, strong commitment on the part of regional organisations – most importantly the ACP Group of States, the African Union, and ASEAN – has created very favourable conditions for the sustainability of programmes that are jointly funded and implemented with the EU. Tuning Africa is a case in point.

As far as HEIs are concerned, the evaluation has provided ample evidence of the sustainability of university partnerships and networks, which have often continued to exist beyond the duration of the EU-funded projects. This has yielded additional and new benefits for these networks, including new joint project applications and the continuation of research and academic staff exchanges, which started during the period of EU support. All programmes (ALFA, Tempus, Edulink, EM, and now Erasmus+ under the Capacity Building in Higher Education action) are based on the principle of international networks combined with inter-regional and, to a lesser extent, intra--regional mobility. This approach has substantially strengthened the internationalisation of universities as an important element of sustainability.

*Coherence, EU added Value and the 3Cs– Support to HE has been coherent within the EU and complementary with the interventions of EU Member States, but co-operation between the EU and MS has only taken place to a limited extent. EU added value has nevertheless been high.*

Overall EU support to HE has been largely coherent in its approach and implementation. The clearest evidence of coherence is available for the individual programmes funded by DG DEVCO – *Erasmus Mundus*, Tempus IV, ALFA III, Edulink, and the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme. All programming documents refer to the other programmes and, in most cases, explain linkages between and among them. Evidence for coherence and synergies was also found between interventions funded by DG DEVCO and the support provided by DG RTD and DG EAC. DG DEVCO's support to HE and DG RTD's funding of FP7 – the EU's main instrument for funding research – were coherent and complementary. *Erasmus Mundus* and FP7 mutually reinforced each other. Furthermore, DG RTD and DG EAC reviewed the complementarity of their programmes when establishing Erasmus+.

Although an analysis of EU Member States' support to HE did not fall within the scope of this evaluation, there can be little doubt that all major stakeholders in European HE share the same norms and values guiding their specific programmes and interventions. The evaluation did not find any instances of notable inconsistencies between the support provided by the EU and by MS. However, given the broadly similar objectives and targeted beneficiary groups of the EU programmes and those of large MS (e.g. Germany, France and the UK), it is surprising that only limited effort has been made at formal co-ordination with the aim of creating synergies through the pooling of resources and funding. The complementarity of the respective interventions was more coincidental than as a result of strategic planning. When co-ordination at the level of partner countries took place, it happened informally and not within institutionalised frameworks. Outside the Higher Education Donor Harmonisation Group, which has facilitated exchanges between the EU and MS (and other donors), the lack of formalised co-operation and co-ordination at the level of partner countries and regions constituted a missed opportunity in terms of achieving coherence or synergies. Jointly-funded projects existed only in a very small number of cases – most prominently, with regard to the support to ASEAN and PAU.

An important part of the added value of the EU interventions was the focus of the regional programme approach which provided the beneficiary partner country HEIs with the opportunity of inter-regional and intra-regional networking and dialogue. At the same time the added value of the EU support – understood as being the value resulting from an EU intervention that is additional to the value that would have been otherwise created by MS action alone<sup>112</sup> – has been high.

Probably no single EU Member State or even group of Member States on their own would be in a well-placed position to take the lead in organising and managing a highly complex programme in support of global HE.

<sup>112</sup> The European Commission has not formulated an official and authoritative definition of “added value”. Here, we refer to the definition provided in the Commission Staff Working Paper, “The added value of the EU budget Accompanying the document Commission Communication – A budget for Europe 2020”, SEC(2011) 867 final: “On a general level, European added value is the value resulting from an EU intervention which is additional to the value that would have been otherwise created by Member State action alone” (p. 2), [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/biblio/documents/fin\\_fw1420/working\\_paper\\_added\\_value\\_EU\\_budget\\_SEC-867\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/biblio/documents/fin_fw1420/working_paper_added_value_EU_budget_SEC-867_en.pdf)

## 8 Overall conclusions

As the evaluation covers the 2007-2014 period, the Erasmus+ programme and its individual projects are not in the scope of the evaluation. However, the design of Erasmus+ Guidelines<sup>113</sup> are taken into account for the conclusions and recommendations in order to fulfil the evaluation's mandate to be forward-looking. The conclusions are grouped under three headings:

- Policy and strategic focus
- Achieving results
- Co-ordination and synergies

### 8.1 Policy and strategic focus

#### 8.1.1 Conclusion 1: EU support to HE lacked a clear overall strategic approach outlining the pathways to expected development effects

*The EU's approach to HE lacked an overarching strategy, with clear and strong rationale and assumptions on how to achieve the expected impacts and overarching development goals towards sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development and, ultimately, to poverty reduction.*

*This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 1 and 2.*

The EU's support to HE lacked a conceptual framework – that is, an intervention logic – to embed the interventions within the EU's overarching development objectives. Several policy documents – including, but not limited to, the *Communication on education and training in the context of poverty reduction in developing countries* and *Education and Poverty - Resolution of the Council and Representatives of the Governments of the Member States* – stipulate the necessity of efforts to ensure that sufficient numbers of appropriately-trained professionals are generated to support development and contribute to poverty reduction. *The Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* explicitly outlines the promotion of “sustainable development and poverty alleviation by increasing the availability of trained and qualified high-level professional manpower in the ACP countries” as the programme's overall objective. However, the evaluation found that the design of programmes and of bilateral assistance was based only on an implicit assumption that support to HE will always make some decisive contribution to socio-economic development and, ultimately, to poverty reduction. This assumption is certainly correct, but a more comprehensive strategy explicitly linking HE to broader development goals could have had the potential to increase the relevance and eventually the impact of the EU support to HE even further. Hence, from individual interventions to overall goals, the causal chains between the two were unclear. The Erasmus+ Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for DCI is more specific on development objectives than previous programming documents, but still falls short of a comprehensive strategy.

An explicit approach towards reducing poverty through HE support would require a thorough analysis of university curricula and labour market needs, including the identification of those employment sectors that are most critical to achieving socio-economic development. This might be agro-engineering in one country, and medicine in another. While this knowledge was generated in some projects, it has not spread to the level of strategic decision-making. Furthermore, such a strategy would need to outline clear pathways that lead from the provision of HE to the reduction of poverty – including the role of factors such as the willingness and preparedness of national governments, as well as the private sector, to absorb newly-qualified professionals who are most needed within the given national development context. The exact conditions under which the specific and intermediate impacts of the support to HE actually led to the expected “sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development” as a global impact (see the IL) have not yet been elaborated on.

<sup>113</sup> European Commission. Erasmus+ Programme Guide. Version 2 (2016), 07/01/2016, [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus/files/files/resources/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf)

### 8.1.2 Conclusion 2: The strategy of supporting HE mainly through projects under regional and global programmes was effective

*Although the EU's approach to HE is best described as the sum of its parts, its common feature was the practice of channelling funds mainly through regional and global programmes for the benefit of universities, academics and students. This placed Higher Education Institutions at the centre of the support. In that way, reform processes within universities were initiated and effectively implemented. In many cases, these processes spilled over to the national level, resulting in reform initiatives for the entire sector.*

*This conclusion is based mainly on EQ 1, 2, 3 and 4.*

The EU's approach to supporting HE was flexible as the EU did not apply "one size fits all" strategies, but embedded its support within the specific development contexts of HE in the respective countries and regions. Support to HE delivered via bilateral co-operation with partner countries was usually aligned with the strategies, policies and development needs of the respective countries. Support provided through the major regional and global programmes responded equally well to existing development challenges.

The bulk of the EU support for HE (90%) was based on, and delivered through, major regional and global programmes (i.e. *ALFA III*, *Tempus IV*, *EduLink*, *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* and *Erasmus Mundus*), which mainly provided funding for projects implemented by HEI consortia and mobility programmes for students and staff. The EU channelled only 10% of the total funds directly to partner countries via bilateral co-operation programmes. While, at first glance, this might appear to have reduced the scope for aligning EU support with the specific needs of partner countries and regions, the evaluation shows that the predominantly regional and global approach provided a suitable framework for the support of HE. There was a strong sense of identification with the projects of all programmes among the participating HEIs. In that way, universities – the main providers of HE – took centre stage as they benefited directly. As a result, they were able to internationalise, improve the quality of learning, teaching and management, introduce degree programmes that increasingly met the needs and demands of national labour markets, and improved capacities of students and academic staff. Equally important, reforms introduced at HEIs within the context of EU-funded projects – for example, on Quality Assurance – often created an upward pressure on governments to introduce and implement HE reforms at national level.

Furthermore, project applications (under *EM*, *Tempus*, *Intra-ACP*, *EduLink* and, partially, *ALFA III*) had to focus on national and regional development objectives as a key selection criterion for funding. Several country-specific external co-operation windows under *Erasmus Mundus* worked as a bridge between the programme's nearly-global reach and the needs and priorities of individual participating countries. However, the scope of alignment did not extend to joint field missions and shared analytical work between the EU and partner countries in the process of designing and preparing support – at least, not in a systematic way.

At the same time, the EU engaged in comprehensive and systematic reflection on the relative advantages and disadvantages of programme-based bilateral support for achieving the EU's development objectives. There is no indication that the specific 90%/10% split between programme-based and bilateral support was the result of a strategic approach, which would also have considered other options with the objective of identifying the most suitable strategy. However, it should be added that the small share of bilateral support was also related to the priorities of the partner countries concerned. Bilateral co-operation is generally dedicated to the focal sectors chosen by the EU's partner countries.

## 8.2 Achieving results

### 8.2.1 Conclusion 3: EU support to HE improved the framework conditions for enhanced teaching and learning

*Across all regions, HEIs benefited from EU support in terms of often substantially improved enabling conditions for more effective and better quality teaching and learning. Improvements were most visible in countries where EU-funded projects promoted the Bologna Process, but results were also evident in partner countries or other countries that have chosen to follow other guidelines.*

*This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 3 and 4.*

Between them, the EU programmes in support of HE strongly contributed to:

- Development of new degree programmes and courses
- Curricular reforms
- Introduction of QA mechanisms and institutions
- Teachers' training and academic capacity development
- New and improved management structures and procedures
- Establishment or strengthening of international offices
- Creation of monitoring and performance management procedures for academic staff
- National reforms in HE, and particularly the establishment of QA mechanisms or agencies

Overall, the strongest impact was evident in countries that fully joined the Bologna Process or adopted its key principles. The Bologna Process is not an EU programme, but EU support to HE has actively promoted the expansion of this system. While the use of Bologna criteria differs across countries and regions, Bologna Process features have increasingly been applied in a growing number of HEIs, although sometimes only in a partial manner. It should be noted that the implementation of Bologna guidelines does not necessarily result immediately in improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. While it was beyond the evaluation's scope to assess directly the quality of teaching and learning at individual universities, it found that the cross-border compatibility of academic degrees and study components, co-operation and coherence across HE sectors, and QA of degree programmes and monitoring systems provide a tested and effective framework for quality gains.

Most departments and faculties of project co-ordinating universities in partner countries had a performance monitoring and assessment system of academic staff in place, of which many were established with the support of EU-funded projects. Under *Erasmus Mundus*, the introduction of Quality Assurance mechanisms was obligatory for all projects, resulting in new and improved managerial structures and procedures or the establishment or strengthening of international offices. *Tempus IV* projects strongly continued to improve the conditions for enhancing teaching and learning methodologies and mechanisms.

*Not everywhere did the programmes intend to achieve a direct application of Bologna Process guidelines to HEIs' teaching and learning organisation, modalities and practices. However, in Latin America – through ALFA III projects – the example of the Bologna Process nevertheless inspired reform processes in HEIs, and was widely perceived as an example of good practices. In the Caribbean, initiatives for standardisation, as well as developing and sharing pedagogical innovations to improve the teaching-learning process, have been triggered by Edulink-funded projects. A success story, which would not have been possible without EU support, is the creation or expansion of e-learning programmes at a wide range of HEIs that participated in ALFA III, Tempus IV and Edulink projects. Similar evidence was also found in the case of some Erasmus Mundus projects.*

### 8.2.2 Conclusion 4: EU support to HE generated employability effects

*EU-funded projects that were directed at creating and improving degree programmes and curricula, and related measures to better align university education with the needs and demands of labour markets, contributed to improved employment opportunities and prospects for graduates. Furthermore, the participation in mobility programmes prepared students for the labour market.*

*This conclusion is based mainly on EQ 6.*

It is not possible to assess the overall impact of EU support to HE in exact quantitative terms. For example, the overall number of former participants in mobility programmes who found jobs – or better jobs – is unknown. However, based on the HEI survey, programme evaluations, project reports and interviews conducted in partner countries, it is evident that EU-supported projects created and improved employment-focused teaching and learning environments, and thus contributed to better employability of graduates.

In the HEI survey, 83% of participating departments/faculties had established mechanisms to respond to labour market trends in degree programmes and related curricula. Universities had: conducted tracer studies and labour market surveys; considered research on new trends in evaluation and review of curricula; integrated internships or apprenticeships (or other opportunities for students to gain practical experience) into degree programmes; established student career development centres; liaised with the ministries of labour, and labour unions and alumni; and organised job fairs and regular meetings with employers. Employers were involved in curricular design and its continuous modification, including delivery of individual courses. The EU contributed in so far as it enabled the creation of such study programmes and financed studies in this direction. In total, 79% of departments/faculties said they found that employability of their students increased “to a great extent” or “to a considerable extent” as a result of participation in EU programmes. Students enhanced their employability because they studied quality curricula, or their access to and awareness of job opportunities increased.

The tracer study provides further proof. Approximately 80% of EM A2 alumni and 90% of students who participated in the *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* considered that their first job matched their degree fields. Although there is no counterfactual, these percentages suggest that these graduates’ skills matched the demand in labour markets.

### 8.2.3 Conclusion 5: EU support to HE did only make a limited contribution to increasing inclusiveness

*All EU-funded programmes promoted inclusiveness in HE from a gender perspective, and some promoted other under-represented, disadvantaged groups. The major mobility programmes only partly succeeded in achieving equitable participation, and only limited progress has been made in promoting better access to higher education for these groups in general.*

*This conclusion is based mainly on EQ 5.*

All programmes in support of HE put particular emphasis on inclusiveness – that is, improved participation of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, defined in terms of gender (all programmes), disabled people, refugees or particular indigenous groups (*Erasmus Mundus* Action 2 and *ALFA III*). EU-funded projects at HEI level – for example, under *Erasmus Mundus*, *Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme*, and *EduLink* – drew attention to greater inclusiveness as a development priority or, particularly in the case of *ALFA III*, led to the establishment of mechanisms such as HEI equity units and staff training courses to promote equity. However, the actual effect on admissions policies and special support provided to students from disadvantaged groups has remained small. EM2 allowed members of disadvantaged groups to gain access to the higher levels of university education, such as Master’s degree or PhD programmes. Many universities indicated in the HEI survey that they had taken measures to include vulnerable and/or under-represented students, but no hard evidence has emerged that access to HE for disadvantaged groups has increased due to EU support.

The EU’s approach was partially more successful with regard to equitable participation in the pro-

grammes themselves. At the Master's – but not the PhD – level, this was successful from a gender perspective, and the EU ensured that opportunities offered by *Erasmus Mundus Action 2 and the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme* – the two principal mobility programmes – were enjoyed by women and men in almost equal proportions. However, the participation of disadvantaged, vulnerable or under-represented groups in these programmes was often below expectations. For *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* scholarship holders between 2007 and 2014, the figure was 5.2%. This is difficult to calibrate because no targets were set. At the same time access to information on opportunities in HE for disadvantaged groups has clearly increased.

#### 8.2.4 Conclusion 6: EU support has strengthened intra-regional co-operation

*Network-building among HEIs within the same region, intra-regional mobilities within the frameworks of the Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme and indirectly with ALFA III, and Edulink, as well as EU-supported harmonisation based on governmental agreements, have not only fostered co-operation in HE between and among partner countries, and also intra-regional co-operation in general. Although the Erasmus+ Capacity Building action has promoted co-operation between different regions, it has not equally enhanced intra-regional co-operation for partner countries.*

*This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 1, 2 and 7.*

In addition to substantially fostering co-operation between HEIs in partner countries/regions and Europe, all programmes had a strong intra-regional dimension as they encouraged, and indeed strongly supported, the creation and expansion of university networks within regions. *The Intra ACP Mobility Scheme* also included intra-regional mobility components. Even in the case of ALFA III, and *Edulink* which were not mobility programmes, projects strongly contributed to establishing intra-regional dialogues and cooperation (partly as the result of synergies with *Erasmus Mundus*). In that way, the EU made a strong contribution to “South-South” co-operation in HE. This resulted, inter alia, in the exchange of good practises, internationalisation, joint development of study programmes, harmonisation and standardisation and, particularly in the case of intra-regional mobility, increased inter-cultural competence in relations with partner countries. EU-supported intra-regional harmonisation based on governmental HE agreements, formalised or institutionalised partnerships between and among HEIs and mutual recognition of degrees has advanced – particularly in regions that already have a strong tradition of cross-border collaboration in HE (e.g. Latin America, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe) or that started from a low level (e.g. Central Asia). The EU also strongly supported the efforts of regional organisations to foster co-operation in the HE sector. The most prominent examples include the ACP Group of States, the African Union, and ASEAN.

The merger of *Tempus*, *Alfa III* and *Edulink* into the Erasmus+ Capacity Building action allows for a strengthening of co-operation between different regions, however the focus on intra-regional co-operation for partner countries remains limited. For example, under *Edulink*, a project consortium could exclusively comprise ACP HEIs (without the participation of EU HEIs), while under Erasmus+ this is no longer possible. *ALFA III* included minimum requirements for the participation of Latin American HEIs in projects: at least four LA countries (Lot 1) or 16 LA countries (Lot 2). The number of LA partners always had to be double the number of EU participants. This inevitably promoted the creation of networks and synergies contributing to HE regional integration. Currently under Erasmus+ The number of HEIs in programme and partners countries has to be equal. As far as the DCI-funded part of the programme is concerned, the participation in the capacity-building action of partner countries and their HEIs has decreased while the participation of Erasmus+ Programme Countries HEIs is higher.

### 8.3 Co-ordination and synergies

#### 8.3.1 Conclusion 7: EU support to HE produced some linkages with the EU's assistance to research and innovation, but synergies could have been higher

*The EU's approach to supporting HE on the one hand and research & innovation on the other was complementary and has created some synergies – for example, in terms of links between Erasmus Mundus and Tempus IV with FP 7, as well as Edulink's connection with the ACP Science & Technology Programme (ACP S&T). However, formal and institutionalised attempts to connect the major programmes targeted at universities are very limited (they existed only in the case of ACP HEIs) and there would have been room for creating more synergies.*

*This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 3 and 9.*

While EU support to HE was not designed to produce large-scale institutional effects, such as increased budgets for research and improved physical research infrastructures, the strengthening of “*capacity to generate scientific and technological innovation*” was an expected intermediate impact (see the IL). Many EU-funded projects provided suitable frameworks for the initiation or expansion of collaborative research projects. However, in the absence of direct EU support for research infrastructure in partner countries, the research strengthening could only have a limited impact. Some achievements are nevertheless evident. For example, 85% of departments and faculties of universities in partner countries, among those that participated in the HEI survey, had a strategy for research in place. In about a half of these cases, a link could be established between the development of such strategies and EU support. However, only 10% of respondents indicated that research strategies were a direct result of an EU-funded project. In most instances (34%), EU support rather gained importance as a catalyst, in the sense that projects exposed universities in partner countries to the international academic world and helped raise awareness about the significance of research. Furthermore, as a result of mobility programmes and network-building among HEIs, EU support to HE has enhanced the research capacity of HEIs and individual academics, as well as post-graduate students. The main effect was that these groups acquired and developed independent research skills, and learned new techniques in their respective fields.

According to the evaluation of EU support to research and innovation (R&I, 2016)<sup>114</sup>, DG DEVCO's support to HE and DG RTD's funding of the Framework Programme 7 (FP7) – the EU's main instrument for funding research – were coherent and complementary. Both DGs “*have made a valuable contribution to involving partner country scientists in international research. They have done so principally by promoting international networks at all levels, global and regional, and promoting bilateral and multilateral scientific collaboration. Closely related to networks are programmes such as Erasmus Mundus that, by helping young researchers develop European links, have served as an incubator for later FP7 participation.*” Many HEIs and individual academics benefitted both from DG DEVCO and DG RTD funds, and in some cases *Erasmus Mundus* and *Tempus IV* were indeed stepping stones for FP7. Furthermore, EU-ACP systematic institutional linkages with research programmes were established among ACP HEIs. However, it is not possible to quantify the impact of such synergies. More recently, DG RTD and DG EAC reviewed the complementarity of their programmes when establishing Erasmus+, with a concerted decision to move the doctoral training previously offered under *Erasmus Mundus* to the Marie Curie actions under Horizon 2020.

Overall, EU support to HE was effective, within its limited scope, in enhancing research environments, but there is still room for a more systematic approach. Neither this evaluation nor the R&I evaluation have come across formal and institutionalised attempts at connecting the major programmes targeted at universities. Likewise, HEI stakeholders interviewed in partner countries complained about a lack of explicit and straightforward links between the EU's support to HE and research.

<sup>114</sup> European Commission 2016: Strategic evaluation of EU support to Research and Innovation for development in partner countries (2007-2013), [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation-eu-support-research-and-innovation-development-partner-countries-2007-2013\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation-eu-support-research-and-innovation-development-partner-countries-2007-2013_en)



### 8.3.2 Conclusion 8: Formal co-ordination of the EU's and Member States' support to HE exists at the high political level, but is largely absent at partner country and regional levels

*Although the EU support to HE and major programmes of MS have, by and large, complemented each other, formal co-ordination mechanism at the level of partner countries and regions have not been established.*

*This conclusion is based mainly on EQ 9.*

Since 2010, the Higher Education Donor Harmonisation Group – composed of EU Member States donor organisations (e.g. British Council, Nuffic, DAAD, SIU, CIMO, NORAD, GIZ, OeAD), the EU Commission, and other international donors (e.g. the World Bank, DfiD, USAID, UNESCO) – has annually exchanged information on the members' respective policies, strategies and programmes for support to HE. However, in more practical terms, the EU and MS have embarked only on a small number of jointly-funded programmes (most importantly, PAU) and joint projects (mainly EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region/EU SHARE). To some extent, this result could be expected in view of the fact that HE is seldom a focal point for the bilateral co-operation with partner countries and is, hence, not subject to joint programming.

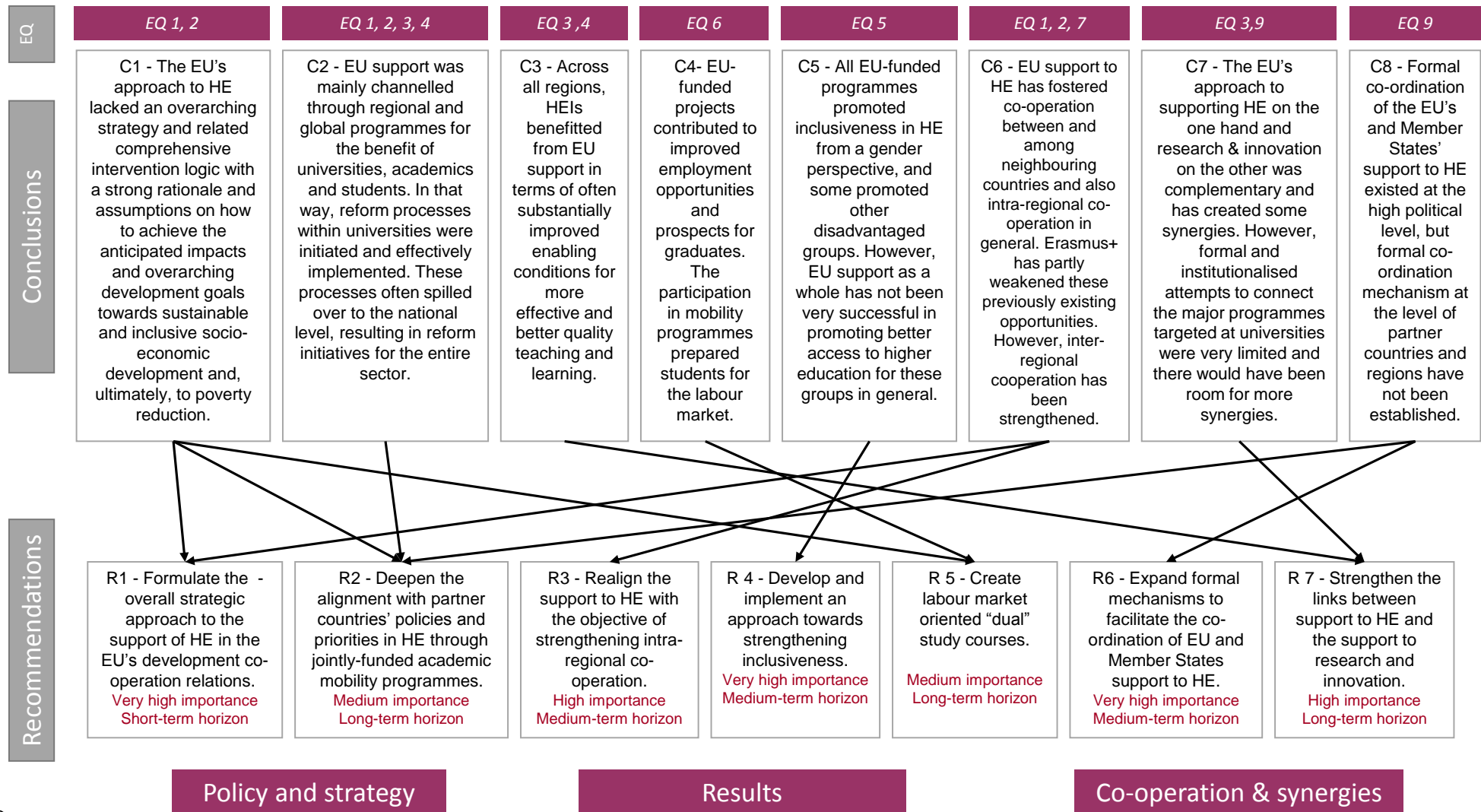
However, given the sizeable and often complementary HE programmes of some MS (including, but not limited to, Germany, the UK and France), the absence of formal co-ordination approaches is striking. EUDs in partner countries were well aware of the HE-related activities and interventions of MS, and the often informal or ad hoc exchanges. Yet neither the EU nor MS have made attempts at co-ordinating their respective support with the objective of creating synergies, and thereby increasing the overall effectiveness of the European approach towards HE in the world. The only notable example of collaboration observed within the evaluation period was the process of EU Member States consultations on the restructuring of the EU support to HE, and eventually the integration of the former autonomous programmes into Erasmus+ as the global EU approach to HE.

## 9 Recommendations

Following on from the Conclusions, a number of recommendations can be proposed under the same headings: Policy and strategic focus – recommendations 1, 2 & 3; Achieving Results – recommendations 4, 5 & 6; and Co-ordination and synergies – recommendations 7 & 8.

The linkages between EQs, conclusions and recommendations are illustrated in the following figure.

Table 7 Major links between EQs, conclusions and recommendations



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Table 8 Prioritisation of recommendations

No.	Issue	Importance*	Urgency*
1	Formulate the overall strategic approach to the support of HE in the EU's development co-operation relations	Very high	Short-term horizon
2	Deepen the alignment with partner countries' policies and priorities in HE through jointly-funded academic mobility programmes	Medium	Long-term horizon
3	Realign the support to HE with the objective of strengthening intra-regional co-operation	High	Medium-term horizon
4	Develop and implement an approach towards strengthening inclusiveness	Very high	Medium-term horizon
5	Create labour market oriented "dual" study courses	Medium	Long-term horizon
6	Expand formal mechanisms to facilitate the co-ordination of EU and Member States support to HE	Very high	Medium-term horizon
7	Strengthen the links between the support to HE and the support to research and innovation	High	Long-term horizon

## 9.1 Policy and strategy focus

### 9.1.1 Recommendation 1: Formulate the overall strategic approach to the support of HE in the EU's development co-operation relations

*During the evaluation period, the EU's support lacked an overall strategic approach based on an explicit intervention logic. The EU support was programme-related – that is, driven by the individual programmes. In 2013, the Communication on the European Higher Education in the World was adopted in view of the intended integration of the programmes into one single Erasmus+ programme, of which the co-operation with partner countries outside the EU takes the smaller part. In consequence, the EU approach has been changed, and the present recommendation takes account of the developments since the end of the evaluation period. The basis for Erasmus+ is the guide that has been developed since 2014 (the current version is from January 2017). It cannot be considered an overarching strategy. It is a guide for beneficiaries and programme managers, and it covers both the co-operation within the EU and with the partner countries, and thus is not specific to EU development co-operation.*

*By taking the steps outlined below, the EU will arrive at a strategy that is clear with regard to "what" and "how". The strategic approach should address the main shortcoming of the documents from the previous programming period and the present Communication. The main shortcomings were:*

- The lack of clearly described logical chains from individual interventions upwards to overall goals – that is, how exactly the expected results are supposed to materialise.*
- Insufficient differentiation between the levels of intervention that ended up referring to each other in a circle.*
- Extensive usage of implicit assumptions about how an effect will be achieved.*

*This recommendation is mainly linked to Conclusion 1 and 7.*

*Main implementation responsibility: DG DEVCO and DG NEAR as leading DGs, with DG EAC as contributor*

The strategy needs to be based on the existing Communication, and thus to:

- Be more adapted to development co-operation. This could be achieved by introducing a section that deals exclusively with development co-operation.
- Be updated so that it reflects both the Sustainable Development Goals and the overall EU development objectives, particularly socio-economic development and poverty reduction (the starting point being the overall intervention logic reconstructed in the present report).
- Clearly describe logical chains between the overall EU development goals downwards through

intermediate and specific impacts to the level of expected outcomes and outputs.

- Outline an integrated approach, taking account of programme-based support, bilateral co-operation, and political and policy dialogue.
- Adopt a holistic perspective by elaborating on both teaching and learning and on research and the inter-relationship between the two areas of support (consider whether, and to what extent, the recommendation made by the evaluation on research and innovation to “formulate a strategic approach with a focus on establishing institutional frameworks for R&I” should be considered).
- Elaborate benchmarks, as was done in case of HE support within the EU (see “Strategic framework – Education & Training 2020”).<sup>115</sup>

### 9.1.2 Recommendation 2: Deepen the alignment with partner countries’ policies and priorities in HE through jointly-funded programmes

*Alignment of the EU development co-operation to the partner country’s own development policy and priorities is one of the main operational objectives of EU development co-operation policy in general. EU support to HE was channelled mainly (90%) through global and regional programmes, which responded well to national development agendas, but, by definition, were not directly aligned with the specific needs of a given country. While the EU’s commitment to alignment is undisputed and clearly visible, it should be strengthened further through joint EU and partner country initiatives. DG DEVCO and other EU stakeholders should explore the possibility of programmes jointly funded by a partner country and the EU or, more specifically, joint programmes that would fund double degree study courses between the partner country’s HEIs and EU-HEIs. Joint programme funding would also make a contribution towards meeting the requirements of systems alignment under the Paris Declaration.*

*This Recommendation is mainly linked to Conclusions 1, 2 and 8.*

*Main implementation responsibility: DG EAC, in co-operation with DG DEVCO and DG NEAR, and in co-operation with DG EAC, EEAS, EUDs and EU Member States*

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- According to the Paris Declaration, partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies and co-ordinate development actions; and donors base their overall support on the partner countries’ national development strategies, institutions and procedures. While the EU support to HE has largely followed these principles – with the exception that country systems and procedures have been used only in a small minority of cases – ownership and alignment could be further strengthened through jointly-funded mobility programmes.
- DG DEVCO should elaborate an action plan in co-operation with other relevant EU stakeholders. Deliberations on this action plan should also involve representatives of HE Agencies of the MS (CampusFrance, DAAD, British Council, Nuffic, among others) to obtain and discuss general information about MS’ experience with joint bilateral programmes with partner countries; a list of possible target countries could be elaborated. The establishment of the HE Donor harmonisation group was an important step towards enhanced co-operation and co-ordination between EU support to HE and the bilateral programmes of MS. This group and other existing co-ordination mechanisms should be actively involved.
- This exercise would draw on existing joint programmes between Partner Countries and EU Member States. For example, Mexico has agreements with, among others, France, Germany, the Netherlands and UK. Other Latin American countries, such as Brazil, Argentina, Colombia and Chile, signed similar agreements with MS. Although these and potential other partner countries (for example, the ASEAN states) that could be considered for this initiative are no longer eligible for development co-operation but we assume that co-operation in the field of

<sup>115</sup> European Commission (2009): Strategic framework – Education & Training 2020. See <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview>

HE continues. In fact, EU support to HE still includes HEIs of “graduate” partner countries. If we look at the number of direct beneficiaries (grant-holders from partner countries) in Latin America, most of the scholarships (also those financed by DG DEVCO – i.e. in the past EMA2) went to students from “graduate” countries. In the case of Asia, China and other emerging economies also benefited with a high proportion of EU-funded scholarships.

- As a second step, DG EAC directly (or through EUDs) should contact the respective national government agencies in charge of international academic exchange programmes to explore their potential interest in signing an agreement on HE co-operation with the EU. The next step would be to negotiate the general conditions (objectives, requirements, funding scheme, and operational steps) of the intended joint programme.
- A jointly-designed, implemented and funded academic mobility programme between a partner country and the EU would guarantee that the EU support to HE is fully aligned with partner countries’ priorities; additionally:
  - It would enhance the efficiency of the EU co-operation due to the use of the full range of national instruments to disseminate the programme throughout the country.
  - It would enhance transparency through joint academic selection committees.
  - Joint funding means a win-win situation: with half of the money spent by the EU (and roughly the same amount spent by the Partner Country), the same number of scholarships may be granted. It could even transpire that money can be saved through EU negotiation with HEIs of MS about specially favourable admission conditions (i.e. some kind of tuition fee waiver).
  - The visibility and prestige of a governments’ academic mobility programme would be enhanced through the international dimension conferred by the EU, and the EU would benefit, in particular, from the ample national coverage of the programme.

## 9.2 Achieving results

### 9.2.1 Recommendation 3: Realign the support to HE with the objective of strengthening intra-regional co-operation

*In addition to fostering relations between the EU and partner countries and regions, EU support was strongly oriented towards the harmonisation of HE in and between partner regions. Projects involving several universities from one region, as well as intra-regional student and staff mobility, made a substantial contribution to this end. Overall, strengthened regional co-operation constituted a key expected impact and a clear asset of the EU’s approach. Although the Erasmus+ Capacity Building action has promoted co-operation between different regions, it has not equally enhanced intra-regional co-operation for partner countries. The latter should therefore be strengthened in the future to maximise the benefits of this action for both Programme and Partner countries.*

*This recommendation is linked to Conclusion 6.*

*Main implementation responsibility: DG EAC, DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, EEAS*

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following aspects:

- The harmonisation of HE, the strengthening of inter-cultural understanding and generally inter-societal co-operation are central objectives of the EU’s support to HE. However, the current approach under Erasmus+ emphasises these three aspects mostly in relations between the EU and partner countries. Approaches to fostering harmonisation, inter-culturality and co-operation in general within and between partner regions should be more pronounced.
- For example, ALFA III included minimum requirements for the participation of Latin American HEIs in projects: at least four LA countries (Lot 1) or 16 LA countries (Lot 2). The number of LA partners always had to be double the number of EU participants. This inevitability promoted the creation of regional networks and promoted synergies contributing to HE regional integration. Such a requirement does no longer exist under Erasmus+.

- One approach towards strengthening the regional dimensions would be for DG EAC (with the collaboration of DG DEVCO) to amend the Erasmus+ programme to the extent that all HEIs can both send and receive students under the mobility components. This was already possible in *Erasmus Mundus Action 2* for 2013 and 2014 projects.
- The Intra-ACP Academic Mobility Scheme, which was not merged into Erasmus+, became the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme. Under this programme, only African applicants can apply, which naturally strengthens intra-regional co-operation. DG EAC (in collaboration with DG DEVCO) should explore the possibility of replicating the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme in other regions or introducing similar regional mobility programmes outside the scope of Erasmus+.

### 9.2.2 Recommendation 4: Develop and implement an approach towards strengthening inclusiveness

*The EU mobility programmes achieved equitable gender balance in the main mobility streams (i.e. at Master's degree level), but the EU support did not fully meet expectations in other areas. Some of these shortcomings were due to problems over definitions of, for example, disadvantage and vulnerability. Others were related to a lack of evidence-based targets. The EU should develop a clear concept of inclusiveness that will form a basis for a performance mechanism. DG EAC and EACEA should monitor the performance of Erasmus+ and other EU support to partner countries against clear performance targets for inclusiveness in HE, and should take steps if the targets are not met. Putting special emphasis on inclusiveness seems mandatory in view of both the requirements of the Erasmus+ programme and overall development objectives.*

*The recommendation directly addresses SDG 4.a ("Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all"), as well as SDG 4.3 ("By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university") and SDG 4.5 ("By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations").<sup>116</sup>*

*Furthermore, a special Chapter (VII, Article 23) of the Regulation that establishes the Erasmus+ programme deals with the transversal issue of social inclusion. With regard to the selection of participants and awarding of grants, special efforts should be made "to promote social inclusion and participation of people with special needs or with fewer opportunities" (Regulation, L 347/64).<sup>117</sup> As a transversal issue valid for all the Key Actions, inclusiveness is addressed in the reconstructed overall IL in two of the expected results: improved relevance of HE provision in partner countries (including for vulnerable groups and disadvantaged institutes) and access to HE (including for vulnerable groups).*

*Finally, strengthening inclusiveness is directly related to the pledge to "leave no-one behind" which is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda and thus creates a clear mandate for DG DEVCO.<sup>118</sup>*

*This recommendation is linked to Conclusion 5.*

*Main implementation responsibility: DG EAC, DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, EACEA*

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- Although the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development addresses social inclusion, the concept is not dealt with in terms of definition. Therefore, the elaboration of a concept of inclusiveness is important – that is, a general definition valid for global EU actions in

<sup>116</sup> <http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sdg-goal-4>

<sup>117</sup> European Union (2013). REGULATION (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport

<sup>118</sup> "Leave no-one behind" means that SDGs and their related targets should be met for everyone, with a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and furthest behind. The approach has a strong emphasis on education at all levels.

development co-operation and, if needed, for HE in particular. This definition needs to allow enough room for an adapted operational definition. It should comprise aspects that are both relevant for Erasmus+ and measurable within its scope.

- Ideally, the definition would be agreed at regional level or, where appropriate, at country level, together with regional organisations and partner countries. However, inclusiveness can be a political issue in many partner countries that have different understandings of, or approaches to, what constitutes inclusiveness or do not recognise certain parts of society as being excluded. Political dialogue will need to be employed where appropriate, and may be embedded within the context of UNESCO's Education Framework for Action 2030 – SDG 4.
- The definition of inclusiveness is a very important first step and will be the departing point for the next stage – that is, implementation and performance measurement. The characteristics of individuals as such, as well as the environment in which they are embedded, should be considered – that is, gender, handicaps and disabilities, social, economic, geographical, religious and other backgrounds (e.g. conflict and fragile states).
- One of the important aspects of inclusion is access to HE. A statement that the previous programmes enhanced access by defining eligible target groups and making the involvement of a certain target group an obligation when applying for a mobility scholarship is valid only to a limited extent. Access to HE is truly improved only when HEIs become equally open for all groups of students following these EU programme interventions.
- A positively-affirming definition might be easier to implement and measure than a definition with negative connotations (e.g. including words such as “disadvantaged”, “discriminated”, or “excluded”, or a combination of them); the more technical terms, the more need to define and differentiate.
- It should be noted that EACEA already monitors the performance of HEI consortia and DG EAC monitors the credit mobility action. However, withholding funds for non-adherence can only be done if there is sufficient legal basis to do so. Considering the lack of definition of these target groups and, more importantly, acceptance of these definitions by partner countries themselves, the EU only has the means to recommend and not to retain funds. This underlines the need for agreed definitions, as recommended here.
- Once a definition has been agreed, the creation of a performance mechanism needs to follow – that is, the formulation of indicators and their targets (if possible, quantitative, but not exclusively), including baselines. Indicators should be defined bearing in mind the possibilities of data collection during the implementation (i.e. who would bear the burden of data collection and reporting). Based on these considerations, a combination of open sources and own sources of information could be proposed. If it is decided that the collection will be done at HQ level, internal capacities have to be ensured. If it is decided that the data collection will be done by the implementing partners, then the ToR of Calls for Proposals and later the contracts have to include information about this obligation, and progress reports have to be adopted in their structure as well. This performance mechanism has to become an integral part of the implementation/monitoring process, and not seen as a time-consuming optional add-on.

### 9.2.3 Recommendation 5: Create “dual” study courses oriented to the labour market

*EU support to HE aims at linking degree programmes and study courses with the labour market. DG EAC and DG DEVCO should encourage the creation of “dual” degree courses, either as a special action under Erasmus+ or through a new programme to further strengthen the positive effects that have already been achieved with regard to employability. Dual programmes have a stronger vocational approach than traditional academic study courses, and combine a university course with practical training. Unlike in the case of part-time courses, the employment and/or training element in a dual programme is an integral part of the course.*

*Dual study courses would make a contribution towards achieving SDG 4.4: “By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.” There is also a direct relation with the new European Consensus on Development (2016) which stipulates that “ensuring access to quality education for all is a prerequisite for long-lasting development” and stresses the inter-connecteness of, inter alia, tertiary education and vocational training. This recommendation is coherent with the actions mentioned in the Joint Communication on an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations.<sup>119</sup>*

*This recommendation is linked to Conclusion 4, and to some extent also to Conclusion 1.*

*Main implementation responsibility: DG EAC, DG DEVCO and DG NEAR*

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

Erasmus+ has already strengthened the nexus between support to HE and labour market needs. The inception report of the mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ notes: *“The programme now allows cross-sectoral co-operation between different sectors and sub-sectors, which was not possible in the past [...] In some sectors, greater emphasis is placed on cross-sectoral co-operation with the world of work (in particular VET and higher education).”<sup>120</sup>*

Under Erasmus+, a traineeship (work placement) abroad in an enterprise or any other relevant workplace is possible as a student mobility. A study period abroad may include a traineeship period as well. Such a combination already creates synergies between the academic and professional experience abroad, and may be organised in different ways depending on the context: either one activity after the other, or both at the same time. The combination follows the funding rules and minimum duration of study mobility. However, this recommendation goes beyond the existing possibilities of Erasmus+:

- Dual study courses, as entire degree programmes, could either be further developed under a new action of Erasmus+ or through a special funding scheme established by DG DEVCO in co-ordination with DG EAC. The development of dual study courses at HEIs in partner countries would be based on close collaboration between universities and enterprises. Such models are practice-oriented because they are based on alternating phases, with students learning theory at the university and receiving practical training from a private sector company. The curriculum and course content is tailored to the changing demands of industries and businesses.<sup>121</sup>
- The introduction of dual programmes would be an innovation in many partner countries in terms of improved linkages between university degrees and labour market needs. These programmes would also strengthen the connection between HE and Vocational Education and Training (VET). In most EU countries, the boundaries between the two areas have long been removed.

<sup>119</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/strategic-framework/strategy-international-cultural-relations\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/strategic-framework/strategy-international-cultural-relations_en)

<sup>120</sup> Mid-term evaluation of Erasmus + and ex-post evaluation of predecessor programmes Inception report (revised version), 24 October 2016, p. 120.

<sup>121</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see Tobias Nolting & Rainer Beedgen. Rethinking the relation between higher education and employment – The dual study system of the Baden-Wuerttemberg Co-operative State University as a new way of integrating theory and practice; <https://www.pef.uni-lj.si/fileadmin/Datoteke/Mednarodna/conference/wher/after/nolting-proceedings.pdf>



- Starting with a pilot project, the dual programmes should be designed and developed by consortia comprising EU HEIs, EU-based companies, partner country HEIs, and partner country companies. In some partner countries, amendments to HE laws or other legislation and standards might be necessary to establish the framework for the implementation of dual programmes. Thus the legal situation needs to be taken into account for the application of projects and their implementation. There are three main types of dual programmes that could be considered:
  - Programmes that combine a university course with practical training (but without obtaining a formal vocational qualification in addition to the academic degree). Students sign a contract with a specific employer, complete a curriculum that is tailored to the needs of the specific field of employment, and the course is completed in two different places. As a general rule, to enrol on a dual programme with a training component, the student must have a general university entrance qualification and a contract of employment.
  - Programmes with a training component where students do not only conduct practical training, but also obtain a formal vocational qualification in addition to the HE degree.
  - Programmes with a work experience component that combine a course of study with extended practical phases in an enterprise. Students obtain a university degree, but not a recognised vocational qualification.

### 9.3 Co-ordination and synergies

#### 9.3.1 Recommendation 6: Expand formal mechanisms to facilitate the co-ordination of EU and Member States support to HE

*Regular formal exchanges between DG DEVCO and the respective ministries and/or HE agencies of the MS should be conducted at the strategic level. In partner countries and regions, HE should be included in the formal co-operation and co-ordination agenda of the EU Delegations and MS.*

*This recommendation is linked to Conclusion 8.*

*Main implementation responsibility: DG EAC, DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, EUDs in partner countries, EU Member States, and their HE agencies*

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- Added value in co-operation and co-ordination between the EU and MS result from different factors – for example, co-ordination gains, legal certainty, greater effectiveness or complementarities. It reflects broader European relevance and significance of the action. While there is no doubt about the complementarity of support to HE provided by the EU on the one hand and MS on the other, added value could and should be further strengthened through efforts towards co-ordination.
- Using the practice and experience of the EU Member States consultations during the design phase of Erasmus+ as a model, DG DEVCO should take the initiative to establish a regular dialogue mechanism with MS, with the objective of harmonising support to HE, increasing synergies, and facilitating joint programming.
- EU Member States consultations should focus on joint analytical work on the pros and cons of establishing HE as a priority sector, on producing a joint response that shows how a division of labour could be conceptualised and implemented, and on identifying stakeholders that are to focus on the HE sector (including commitments to indicative allocations). This goes beyond the current exchanges in the HE Donor Harmonisation Group.
- At the level of partner countries and regions, EU Delegations should – analogous to other sectors – establish co-ordination meetings with MS that provide support to HE in the given country. This should be based on the dual objective of mutually reinforcing the different programmes and interventions and enhancing the European voice on HE.
- This implementation approach is in line with the joint communication "Towards an EU strategy

for international cultural relations".<sup>122</sup>

### 9.3.2 Recommendation 7: Strengthen the links between support to HE and support to research and innovation

*Through standardisation and harmonisation EU support has strengthened the enabling environment for better quality teaching and learning. While this approach should therefore continue it could be further enhanced through the creation of stronger links between support to HE on the one hand and support to research and innovation on the other. Both this evaluation and the evaluation on research and innovation have, overall, arrived at positive conclusions with regard to the support provided by DG EAC / DG DEVCO and DG RTD. However, neither evaluation was able to identify formal Institutionalised links between the two areas of support that would allow for a stronger co-ordinated approach and creation of synergies. Since these DGs support higher education, it is essential that the EU develops a more integrated approach that treats learning and teaching on the one hand and research on the other hand in a holistic way, and allows for cross-fertilisation between the two mutually-dependent areas of HE.*

*Enhancing the links between higher education and research will also make a strong contribution towards achieving SDG 9.5, which stipulates: "Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending"<sup>123</sup> It also follows the actions recommended in the Joint Communication on an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations.<sup>124</sup>*

*This recommendation is linked to Conclusion 3 and 7.*

*Main implementation responsibility: DG EAC, DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, DG RTD*

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- Teaching and research are the two most important traditional functions of universities. It is widely recognised that teaching contributes to the enrichment of research, and that research contributes to enhanced levels of teaching. Both are closely related, inter-dependent and mutually supportive. The current approach of the EU, which implements its support to teaching and learning and to research mainly through separate programmes, does not give full justice to this widely-accepted notion of the inter-connectedness of the two areas. The links between the two areas should therefore be enhanced.
- A study should be conducted by HE experts on how the current loosely-connected approaches to HE (i.e. teaching and learning) and research can be better brought together. Despite existing linkages and synergies in some instances, the current approach of following different and institutionally-unrelated approaches is no longer reflective of modern higher education, which is based on a mutually-reinforcing relationship between teaching and learning and research. The concept of research-led teaching – which has long taken centre-stage not only at universities in the EU, but also increasingly at HEIs in partner countries and regions – is just one example of the interdependent nature of the two fields.

Possible approaches that the involved DGs could take inspiration from include:

- A "bigger" solution: the creation of an additional action or activity under Erasmus+ that enables HEI networks/consortia to apply for grants for *Erasmus Mundus* Joint Master's Degrees and for research funding (for example, under Horizon 2020) in one package co-funded by DG DEVCO and DG RTD. The proposed joint Master's degree and the research project(s) should be in the same thematic field and related to each other. This would offer an opportunity for re-

<sup>122</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/strategic-framework/strategy-international-cultural-relations\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/strategic-framework/strategy-international-cultural-relations_en)

<sup>123</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg9>

<sup>124</sup> Section 4b) Inter-cultural exchanges of students, researchers and alumni <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=JOIN:2016:29:FIN>

search-led teaching, exposing both post-graduate students and academic staff from partner countries to research environments at HEIs in the EU, and – through the mutually-reinforcing effects of implementing both a joint master’s degree and joint research – increasing the prospects for the sustainability of the network.

- A “smaller” solution: the expansion of the Jean Monnet activities<sup>125</sup> (under the same or a different name) under Erasmus+, with the aim of covering more subject areas and having a more pronounced and stronger research focus than the current activities which are restricted to field of European Union studies.<sup>126</sup>

These two approaches should be further analysed under the current mid-term reviews of the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes, and later considered in the light of specific findings of the MTRs.

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<sup>125</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/home/erasmus-plus/funding/jean-monnet-activities-2017\\_en](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/home/erasmus-plus/funding/jean-monnet-activities-2017_en)

<sup>126</sup> “European Union studies comprise the study of Europe in its entirety with particular emphasis on the European integration process in both its internal and external aspects. They promote active European citizenship and deal with the role of the EU in a globalised world, enhancing awareness of the Union and facilitating future engagement and people-to-people dialogue worldwide”. Erasmus+ Programme Guide, version 2 (2017): 20/01/2017, p. 196.