

REMOVING OBSTACLES FOR  
CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION  
(ROCCO)

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**GUIDELINES FOR THE  
DEVELOPMENT, ACCREDITATION  
AND IMPLEMENTATION  
OF JOINT PROGRAMMES**



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# GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT, ACCREDITATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF JOINT PROGRAMMES

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# GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT, ACCREDITATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF JOINT PROGRAMMES



These Guidelines are among the outcomes of the project *Removing obstacles for cross-border cooperation (ROCCO)*, which was developed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports to enhance cross-border cooperation in higher education with a special focus on creating conditions for the development and accreditation of joint programmes and, more generally, the creation of a legal framework for cross-border cooperation in higher education. The project was funded under the programme ERASMUS + KA3 – *Support to Policy Reform, Support to the implementation of EHEA reforms 2014-2015*.

The project activities were focused on two fundamental outcomes: a proposal to enhance the legal framework for the accreditation and implementation of joint programmes and, generally, the promotion and facilitation of cross-border cooperation in higher education, and the preparation of guidelines to provide higher education institutions with basic information and advice for the development, accreditation and delivery of joint programmes. To ensure participation by all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of project activities, the minister of science, education and sports appointed a Working Group to draft regulations on joint programmes and cross-border cooperation in higher education.

The Guidelines were prepared with the participation of the Working Group and Project Team members, including:

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The Guidelines first provide an overview of the current status of cross-border cooperation in higher education with a focus on joint programmes, explain the reasons for establishing joint programmes and, by using a SWOT analysis, present challenges and opportunities emerging therefrom. The Guidelines then describe the steps preceding the accreditation of a joint programme (creating a consortium, elaborating the programme, choosing a study mode and a funding mode for the programme, drafting a Consortium Agreement), the initial accreditation procedure and the subsequent programme implementation (drafting a Consortium Contract, programme delivery and qualification award, programme sustainability, periodic external evaluation). Furthermore, the Guidelines also provide an overview of potential external funding sources for joint programmes, with a list of potentially useful documents developed at the European and global levels, which are relied upon by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) in its work, being attached at the end of this document.

## CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Cross-border cooperation in higher education implies the cross-border movement of people (the mobility of students and/or teachers), the delivery of educational programmes (distance learning, franchises, joint programmes) or the activities of entire higher education institutions (e.g. establishing branches in other countries). As stated by the OECD, these forms often appear combined in practice (e.g. a joint programme often implies the mobility of students), and they can take place as part of non-commercial academic partnerships or on a commercial basis. The mobility of students can be divided into long-term mobility, which is aimed at obtaining qualifications (*degree mobility*) and is present for many years but is still occasional, and short-term mobility, which is aimed at gaining ECTS (or some other) credits (*credit mobility*), which has become increasingly massive and well-established in the past years (especially with the Erasmus+ programme). It is also important to emphasise scientific cooperation, which has the longest tradition and is recently additionally fostered through EU-funded projects.

In order to ensure suitable application of these Guidelines, as well as the national and European legislation on cross-border cooperation in higher education, it is crucial to distinguish between different types of cross-border cooperation. These Guidelines pertain to **joint programmes**, which are defined as study programmes **jointly developed** and **delivered** by at least two higher education institutions from **different countries**. As shown below, well-developed legislation and a support system for such programmes are in place at the level of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Within the EHEA, there is also an equally well-developed legal framework and support for the mobility of students and teachers, primarily under the Erasmus+ programme, and for different forms of scientific cooperation, primarily under the Horizon 2020 programme.

Before signing any contract with their foreign counterparts, local higher education institutions are advised to contact the ENIC/NARIC Office of the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) ([enic@azvo.hr](mailto:enic@azvo.hr) and [medjunarodna@azvo.hr](mailto:medjunarodna@azvo.hr)) in order to ascertain whether these are indeed accredited higher education institutions.

Joint programmes are the least-developed form of cross-border cooperation, which has recently been systematically fostered at the European

level. They have even been labelled a hallmark of the European Higher Education Area, recognisable for its linguistic and cultural diversity. Thus, for instance, the European Union's ERASMUS+ programme has provided the funding earmarked to set up and deliver joint programmes. The support for joint programmes is also reflected in communiqués issued at conferences of higher education ministers from the EHEA countries. In the Bucharest Communiqué (April 2012), the ministers responsible for higher education undertook to work on dismantling administrative obstacles to setting up and implementing joint programmes. The Ministerial Conference in Yerevan (2015) adopted the *European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes* – a document proposing amendments to national legislation so as to ensure that the process of setting up a joint programme involves a single accreditation issued by an EQAR-registered agency and recognised by all parties involved. In keeping with these international documents and initiatives, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports has launched the activities to draft a new Higher Education Quality Assurance Act and its accompanying enabling regulations in order to ensure that they incorporate additional provisions governing cross-border cooperation and the accreditation of joint programmes.

Croatia is among the countries with the fewest joint programmes within the EHEA. According to the European Commission's data for the academic year 2013/2014, Croatia entered the group of countries with 0-2.5% joint programmes. As the key national document in the field of higher education, the Education, Science and Technology Strategy (2014) provides for the promotion of establishing joint programmes with renowned European and global higher education institutions, whereas the Action Plan for the Internationalisation of Education (2015) contains two measures aimed at increasing the number of joint programmes. As part of the efforts to increase the number of joint programmes through amendments to the national legal framework and in order to facilitate cross-border cooperation and setting up joint programmes for Croatian higher education institutions, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports decided to prepare these Guidelines for the Development, Accreditation and Implementation of Joint Programmes, in collaboration with representatives from higher education institutions offering joint programmes in Croatia and representatives from the Agency for Science and Higher Education.

## WHY TO SET UP JOINT PROGRAMMES?

While the aforementioned documents and initiatives are vital to the development of the European Higher Education Area *per se*, their importance is outweighed by the reasons why higher education institutions should strive to set up joint programmes. These reasons can be divided into three categories:

- ✦ **enhancing the quality of education (learning and teaching);**
- ✦ **access to additional resources for educational as well as scholarly activities;**
- ✦ **raising the reputation and attractiveness of study programmes and higher education institutions at the national and international levels.**

Generally, internationalisation significantly contributes to enhancing the quality of study and research. These benefits are complementary to those derived from formal evaluations (internal and external) in the field of quality assurance, which provide assurance that standards are being met. A further difference, that is, upgrade to the average quality achieved by meeting all formal requirements is best made by encouraging various forms of mobility and inter-institutional and international cooperation. As shown by numerous studies, this is achieved primarily by exchange, networking, and student and staff training. The mobility of teachers and students exposes teachers to international competition and puts them in a situation in which both they and their peers and students (local and foreign) can compare their work with that of other teachers from different higher education institutions and different countries. This also gives them an opportunity to learn from examples of good practices offered by their peers from a broader academic community. Such circumstances give rise to healthy competition which is highly motivating and brings added value to the quality achieved by other quality assurance measures, which leads to an embrace of the culture of quality. A further benefit that may stem from partnering with foreign higher

education institutions is the joint use of equipment and scientific expertise available to partner institutions not only for teaching, but also for research purposes, which may lead to increased scientific production and more efficient utilisation of resources. Finally, by partnering with renowned foreign counterparts, Croatian higher education institutions obviously raise their reputation and attractiveness. This is especially reflected in the fact that, in this way, students can gain qualifications from all higher education institutions participating in programme delivery, regardless of whether these are joint or multiple qualifications, which may give them a competitive edge in the labour market.

On the other hand, it is clear that setting up and delivering joint programmes is by no means easy. Initial accreditation can be complex and lengthy if it needs to be carried out in each of the countries whose higher education institutions are involved in the programme, because this requires the application of appropriate national procedures and criteria. Similar complex procedures are also replicated to all subsequent reaccreditation processes. The cost of delivering such a programme can be higher than that of a programme delivered only by one higher education institution, and funding can be much more complex in an international environment. Furthermore, without special support, students from vulnerable groups face significant impediments in accessing joint programmes. Finally, the selection of eligible candidates, the admission procedure and the issuance of documents can also be more complex, and the same applies to the preparation and implementation of study programmes.

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## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN SETTING UP AND DELIVERING JOINT PROGRAMMES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CROATIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Presented below is a summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) for setting up and delivering jo-

int programmes in Croatia from the perspective of higher education institutions. Each higher education institution is advised to make a similar SWAT analysis specific to the institution itself and the joint programme it plans to set up, taking into account whether the strengths and opportunities can offset the impact of weaknesses and threats. If not, efforts should be made to identify the investment in human and material resources that will make this possible or, if such investment is unlikely, the decision to set up joint programmes should be put off.

	Helps in setting up and delivering joint programmes	Hinders setting up and delivering joint programmes
Internal sources/reasons of the higher education institution	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
	Wide range of study programmes that can be joined together	Complex initial accreditation
	High-quality teaching staff	Complex quality assurance
	Students interested in new forms of studying and methods of teaching	Additional administrative burden
	Support from the line ministry and accompanying quality assurance agencies	IT system of higher education institutions (ISVU) does not support joint programmes
	Sound language competence of students and teachers	Insufficient support systems for foreign students
	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
	Internationalisation and raising the international reputation of the higher education institution	Differences between legislative and institutional frameworks in various countries
External sources/reasons beyond the direct control of the higher education institution	International dimension in curriculum design and development	Increased costs of delivering joint study programmes
	Excellence-based clustering in specific disciplines	Increased burden on human and other resources
	Innovative programmes and teaching methods	Questionable sustainability of joint programmes
	Creating a motivating competition among teachers	Unrecognisability on the local labour market
	Access to additional resources of foreign higher education institutions	
	Attracting motivated foreign and local students	
	Development of teachers' competences for work in an international environment	
	Access to additional EU funds (ESF etc.)	
Increased employability in the European Common Market		

## THE INITIAL IDEA FOR A PROGRAMME

The first thing we must consider when setting up a joint programme is that, by being joint, it has to add value, but not only by enhancing the reputation and adding to the internationalisation of the higher education institution. In other words, joining up as a consortium in order to deliver a study programme that will in no way differ from a programme autonomously offered by a consortium member is not a good initial idea.

A higher education institution that already offers a study programme on its own may decide to set up another programme with identical content, but in collaboration with foreign partners, just to achieve additional internationalisation and raise its reputation or to gain access to additional resources, which *per se* constitute an added value. However, designing, setting up and delivering a joint programme requires effort, time and additional cost. Therefore, higher education institutions should embark on it primarily because of the benefits it will bring to its students.

The initial idea for a joint programme should always stem from the wish to offer students something they could never get without such a study format. This can be an entirely new programme (in terms of content or methodology) that cannot be delivered by each of the partners alone, but it can also be a programme similar to one which already exists, only of a substantially higher quality thanks to the ability to avail of joint resources (material and human). On the other hand, partners who jointly enter a project can also bring in other complementary values. For instance, one partner may have sound cooperation with the business community, which the other partner lacks, whereas the latter may have a large number of interested students, which the former lacks. All these are just examples and it is clear that there are also many other possibilities which cannot be foreseen and listed herein.

The experiences of foreign higher education institutions show that the preparation of joint programmes requires special support from non-teaching staff at higher education institutions, primarily international cooperation experts and law professionals, who need to be consulted from the earliest stages of programme development in order to anticipate in good time all potential administrative and legal obstacles.

## CREATING A CONSORTIUM AND CHOOSING A MODE OF STUDY

The fundamental difference between a joint programme curriculum and a curriculum delivered by a single institution is that a consortium should be formed to prepare and deliver a joint programme. A consortium means two or more higher education or other institutions partnering up to prepare and offer together a joint programme. The existence of a consortium can provide major comparative advantages for joint programmes, but can also pose potential risks in their implementation. All partners entering a consortium should be aware of such advantages and risks, as well as the fact that all partner higher education institutions must be accredited in their home countries and that the agencies which carried out their accreditation or reaccreditation should be EQAR-registered or have passed a comparable external evaluation process.

The benefits of creating a consortium are reflected in an expanded expertise and pool of professionals, which can be achieved through a balanced and relevant selection of partners. The relevance of a consortium is associated with the very topic of its joint programme and the envisaged mode of study. In this context, the topic (programme area) can be built around (but is not limited to) the following scenarios:

- An innovative, complex and interdisciplinary programme area which requires the partnering of several higher education institutions from different countries, so that such a programme topic can be studied and translated into a deliverable curriculum. In doing this, it is important to make clear the contribution of each consortium partner to the development and delivery of the curriculum as such;
- A programme area which is important in the European context, but the delivery of the programme is not viable for each country alone because a relatively small number of students is expected/needed in each country or the equipment required to deliver the programme is costly and not accessible to all those

who are interested in delivering such a curriculum;

- ✿ An innovative pedagogical mode of delivery which relies on an offer targeting non-traditional student groups (lifelong learning, disabled students, student-parents, other underrepresented groups) or requires international student groups working on complex issues;
- ✿ The pilot implementation of a new study programme (e.g., funded under a European Union initiative) in order to test the feasibility and/or sustainability of the new programme and develop human, material and organisational resources required for the future delivery of the improved programme.

The mode of study can be considered from several perspectives, including, for instance:

- ✿ Place of delivery – traditional face-to-face (f2f) teaching, blended learning, distance learning by using communities of practice, social networks, etc.;
- ✿ Mode of participation by partners – students always at the same higher education institution, with teachers travelling, or students attending each term at a different higher education institution;
- ✿ Flexibility of curriculum – a firmly built programme with a small share of elective courses and fixed deadlines for the completion of each module or a flexible structure with a high level of electivity, the recognition of informal and non-formal learning and openness for attendance with part-time student workload;
- ✿ Focus on professional or research competencies – a programme delivered in collaboration with the business community (student training, field education) or greater emphasis placed on laboratory work/research context.

When forming a consortium, consideration should also be accorded to the following challenges:

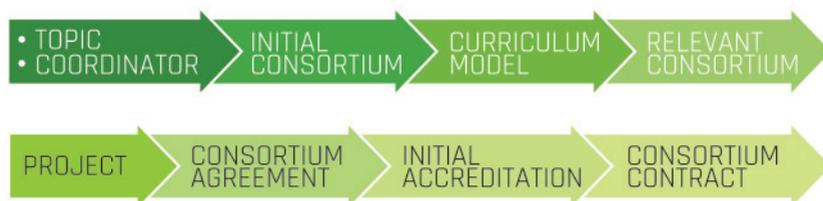
- ✿ Modes of programme funding, which also involve the input of national funding, the identification of interests among partners in programme co-financing, the participation of students in programme costs;

- Curriculum development funding, where the consortium can use the available funds for such projects at the national and EU levels or have self-financing partners;
- Role of the programme coordinator in the consortium and the responsibility of all partners as members of the consortium;
- Level of development of national legislation on the implementation of joint programmes and regulations at the level of higher education institutions as partners in curriculum development, as well as the compatibility of legal arrangements;
- Experience of the partners in setting up joint programmes, i.e. the analysis of good practice examples if the consortium has no past experience.

In this respect, the following steps can be identified in creating a consortium:

- Identification of the topic of the joint curriculum and the coordinator in charge of creating the consortium and developing the curriculum;
- Creation of an initial consortium;
- Joint discussion of the suitability of the topic, its further development and possible curriculum models within the initial consortium;
- Identification of additional partners required and the creation of a relevant consortium capable of preparing, delivering and maintaining the joint programme curriculum;
- Preparation of the joint programme project and the joint curriculum;
- Drafting and signing of a consortium agreement, with the responsibilities for programme development.

*Figure 1. Steps in creating a consortium*



The recommended content of a consortium agreement is contained in paragraph 2.3. Once the initial accreditation has been carried through, the partners sign a consortium contract with the elements of the consortium agreement appended thereto, either in unchanged or modified form, all in keeping with the recommendations from the initial accreditation.

When selecting members of the initial consortium, in addition to the existence of appropriate academic expertise and the fact that higher education institutions have been accredited, attention should also be accorded to mutual trust among the partners, their commitment to the delivery of their joint programme and institutional support from each institution involved. Also, it is important to define at the outset the sustainable number of partners involved, i.e. the size of the consortium relative to programme delivery requirements. To wit, coordinating a large number of partners may pose a challenge to the successful delivery of the programme. Most of the joint programme consortia have been created on the basis of prior collaboration, including scientific projects or student and teacher exchanges. In some cases, however, the geographical location of a partner can also be crucial for its selection.

## JOINT CURRICULUM AND CONSORTIUM CONTRACT

The curriculum of a joint programme should contain the basic elements of a “standard curriculum”, along with some additional elements specific to joint programme curricula.

Curriculum elements	Additional joint programme elements	Other issues
Objectives, learning outcomes, EQF-compliance	Specific requirements of each country, but also the European context	Identification of the joint programme’s added value
Content and teaching methods	Responsibility for specific parts of programme delivery at the consortium level	Flexibility derived from the complex structure of the joint programme
Teaching resources	Shared virtual platform for teacher-student collaboration (e.g. LMS)	Open or closed platform and technical features
Programme funding and sustainability	Consideration and adjustment of the specifics of national higher education funding	Modalities for using equipment and teachers belonging to different partners
Admission requirements	Agreeing on the requirements and lists of admitted students among the partners	Appropriate IT system
Programme completion requirements	Method for issuing completion certificates and recognition in national systems	Informing stakeholders (employers, agencies, etc.) about qualifications
Programme quality assurance	Comprehensiveness of the quality assurance system	Avoiding red tape and redundancy

To conclude, before the initial accreditation of a joint programme, higher education institutions participating in a consortium should enter into a Consortium Agreement which must contain the following minimum elements:

- method of coordinating the work of the consortium and the development and delivery of the curriculum;
- plan for the external evaluation of the programme – the initial accreditation as well as future external and internal reviews or evaluations of the study programme in line with the European Standards and Guidelines-ESG);

- ✿ agreement on funding, responsibility for costs and distribution of revenue;
- ✿ duties in the management and leadership of the study programme;
- ✿ engagement and mobility of teachers;
- ✿ procedures for standardising teaching competencies based on the selected pedagogical concept;
- ✿ student selection procedure and admission procedure;
- ✿ places and modes of programme delivery;
- ✿ proposal for the study programme;
- ✿ ensuring recognition of the period spent studying abroad;
- ✿ student financing, student status and entitlements;
- ✿ ensuring sustainability and the contingency plan for students in case delivery of the joint programme is discontinued;
- ✿ use of e-tools and IT systems for management of the education process;
- ✿ award of qualifications and the elements of public documents;
- ✿ academic and professional titles and academic degrees awarded in the languages of all partners.

When preparing and developing its joint programme, the consortium should answer the following questions:

- ✿ Rationale – What are the reasons for setting up the joint programme and what gives its added value compared to already existing programmes delivered by the partner higher education institutions?
- ✿ Quality assessment – Do the Croatian and foreign higher education institutions have positive (re)accreditation scores relevant to the programme they plan to launch and has the foreign university been externally evaluated by an agency which is registered in the EQAR or has passed a comparable form of international external evaluation? Of course, a necessary prerequisite is that both the Croatian and foreign higher education institution are accredited higher education institutions in their countries (which can be verified at the ASHE's ENIC/NARIC Office).
- ✿ Funding plan – Is the plan sufficiently detailed and sustainable,

including a clear indication of the expected share of Croatian students in the student group, and are the students supposed to cover any programme costs and, if yes, what share would that be?

- ✿ Risk and sustainability assessment – Is there a detailed contingency plan for students in case the partnership is terminated and the delivery of the joint programme is discontinued? Possible plans: The Croatian higher education institution is required to offer all/some students an opportunity to complete a similar study programme at their own higher education institution, at the higher institution with which it has concluded the agreement or at another Croatian higher education institution which provided mentorship in setting up this joint programme.
- ✿ External evaluation plan – Is there an agreement on a single agency that will carry out evaluation? Is such a procedure acceptable in all countries from which the partners come?
- ✿ Analysis of the capacity of the higher education institution and the study programme and student interest in setting up the specific joint programme – Does each partner have the capacity to perform its duties and how does it prove this?
- ✿ Ensuring the recognition of the period spent studying abroad – What are the applicable rules and procedures and who is responsible for them?

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### INITIAL ACCREDITATION

When it comes to joint programmes, quality should stem from the “culture of jointness”, that is, the idea that the whole is greater than the mere sum of its parts. Accordingly, initial accreditation should address the quality of the whole rather than the quality of individual components. In other words, this is a situation where the culture of quality is not limited to one higher education institution or to one country, but arises from their unity, which is pre-

cisely what brings about the challenge of programme evaluation, especially inasmuch as it concerns external evaluation.

Specifically, internal evaluation is defined by the internal by-laws of higher education institutions, so that their relevant bodies can adopt special by-laws which will ensure that joint programmes are monitored and evaluated, and which will, to the maximum extent possible, reflect precisely the culture of jointness. Moreover, a higher education institution participating in the delivery of several joint programmes with different partners from different countries may, in agreement with its partners, define special procedures for each of these programmes in order to benefit as much as possible from their jointness. As stated above, these procedures need to be defined in a consortium contract concluded by partners when setting up a joint programme.

On the other hand, external evaluation is, in principle, a part of the national quality assurance system of each country, and is based on its national regulations, procedures and criteria. It is first important to note that there are two possible cases which differ depending on whether higher education institutions are subject to institutional or programme-level external evaluation:

- All higher education institutions in a consortium have the authority to adopt study programmes (in Croatia, these are public universities);
- One or more higher education institutions in a consortium are subject to initial programme accreditation carried out by an accreditation agency (in Croatia, these are polytechnics, colleges and private universities).

In both cases, it can and should be achieved that the initial accreditation process is based on a single review of the proposed study programme, which is carried out in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG) and without using any specific national criteria. Thus, the senates of public universities, which carry out the initial accreditation of study programmes in Croatia, are also required to adjust

their procedures in order not to introduce unnecessary obstacles to joint programmes (e.g. the requirement that the process is conducted in the Croatian language or through evaluation by a local commission appointed by the university's senate/quality board). In the former case, when carrying out the initial accreditation of a joint study programme, higher education institutions may, if they so wish, employ the criteria and processes suggested by the *European Approach*. In the latter case, that is, if any of the higher education institutions in a consortium is subject to the external initial accreditation of its study programme, the *European Approach* suggests that the higher education institutions select, by agreement, an EQAR-registered agency to conduct that procedure. The *European Approach* document itself describes in more detail how it is to be carried out. While the implementation of the *European Approach* may take a while in certain EHEA countries, the ASHE provides Croatia's higher education institutions with support in seeking out and implementing a single accreditation service by way of expertise and collaboration with foreign agencies, and calls upon higher education institutions to cooperate with it even when they plan to seek external evaluation from another agency or are authorised to self-accredit their programme.



## EVALUATION OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

As stated above, each consortium contract must also contain a plan for further quality assurance of the joint programme. This process should consist of periodic programme evaluations in keeping with the ESG, European Approach and good practices in joint programme quality assurance, which are specified in more detail in the list of useful references at the end of this document. Pursuant to the effective legislation governing quality assurance in higher education in the Republic of Croatia, reaccreditation is the most important form of external quality assurance. It is carried out at the level of higher education institutions rather than at the programme level, but it also covers all programmes offered by each

higher education institution. Moreover, following the reaccreditation process, a higher education institution delivering several study programmes may receive a license for some of them, while for others it may receive a letter of expectation or even a denial of license. However, during the reaccreditation of a Croatian higher education institution which is a partner in a joint programme, it is not possible to reaccredit that programme as well, because the accrediting body (ASHE) normally has no authority over foreign partners and cannot evaluate the programme as a whole, unless stipulated otherwise in the consortium contract. However, while checking minimum requirements to be met by a higher education institution, the ASHE will consider the overall engagement of its resources in all programmes it delivers, including any joint programme. This exercise can have no adverse effects on the joint programme, but may potentially have negative repercussions for other programmes delivered by that higher education institution. External evaluations of quality assurance systems – i.e. external audits when it comes to Croatia's system – serve only to assess the functioning of internal quality assurance systems. Accordingly, there are no problems with the application of national criteria in this process. The process relies on the already described procedure of internal evaluation and consists only of a review of the quality of that procedure.



## MODES OF FUNDING

As joint programmes are generally delivered in English, Croatian higher education institutions can charge tuition fees for such programmes to the full amount of programme costs, which means they can also be delivered without public funding. However, if these programmes are to attract the best possible students and offer learning opportunities to students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups as well, it would be advisable that they are at least partially publicly funded.

The funding of joint studies and, in particular, their public funding

is relatively complex precisely because of their joint nature, i.e., they involve participation by institutions and students from different countries. For instance, the possibility of charging tuition for programmes delivered in English applies to Croatian institutions, but not necessarily to those from other countries. In some countries, however, charging tuition is also possible (or even mandatory) for programmes that are not delivered in foreign languages. Clearly, these countries have a reduced share of public funding for higher education institutions, which needs to be considered when entering into consortium contracts. In other words, the consortium contract must clearly define whether tuition will be paid by some students or by all of them, what will be the amount of such tuition, and how the consortium members will distribute their tuition proceeds among themselves.

When negotiating a programme contract with the competent ministry, a Croatian higher education institution participating in a joint programme for which public funding has been approved will include in the negotiation process that programme as well. When calculating the funding required for material costs/subsidies based on the number of students, the competent ministry may also include the students who will attend that programme. In doing this, it may take into account only the Croatian students, but also all students from EU Member States.

On the other hand, all joint programme students are admitted to all institutions forming the consortium, but each student has a home institution which is, as such, defined for him/her (as a rule, the institution in the country of his/her citizenship). Public funding from the competent ministry can be defined by taking into account only those students enrolled in the Croatian member of the consortium as their home institution. Since a particular student will attend only a part of his/her courses at the Croatian institution, the competent ministry can determine the amount to be paid thereto for that student in such a way that it is proportional to the time spent by him/her at the Croatian institution, but it can also pay the entire amount as an incentive for setting up joint programmes. All this is subject to negotiations about programme contracts, where the competent ministry should act so as to foster the delivery of high-quality and efficient joint programmes.

## LONG-TERM FUNDING OF JOINT PROGRAMMES

The implementation of joint programmes can pose an additional financial burden on the higher education institutions involved, but may also facilitate more efficient use of resources in higher education. In delivering joint programmes, most of the higher education institution consortia use their existing resources such as their faculty, administrative services and spatial capacity. However, the question is how to finance the mobility of students and teachers. The answer is most often in the use of mobility programmes such as Erasmus+, CEEPUS and different national, bilateral and multilateral programmes. From the very outset of the planning process, the involved higher education institutions should thoroughly consider all potential funding sources, which also implies openness to alternative sources. In certain countries, the principal source of funding are student tuition fees, but in other countries, this is not a legal option. More information on student tuition fees and grants is available in the thematic Eurydice report (Eurydice 2015). Partner institutions participating in the implementation of a joint programme should agree a common policy of tuition fees and/or other student payments before they start to deliver their programme. They should also agree on how they will manage their joint finances, including the distribution of tuition proceeds under the consortium contract (Erasmus Mundus- recommendations and examples of good practice). This is particularly important in cases where a consortium partner institution cannot charge tuition fees.

It is equally important to project the total real cost of delivering a joint programme according to the full costing principle and define the financial input of each consortium partner at the very outset of the planning process (JOI.CON 2012). The experiences of many European higher education institutions highlight the need to diversify funding sources for joint programmes, for instance, through cooperation with corporate partners or local communities and European Union programmes.

# EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALISATION:

## HORIZON 2020

As part of the Horizon 2020 programme (the Excellent Science priority – the Marie Skłodowska Curie action – Innovative Training Networks), access to funding for **European Joint Doctorates** is possible through annual calls for proposals published on the Research & Innovation Participant Portal. The project consortium should be composed of at least three (3) higher education institutions from three (3) different EU or associated countries, which are entitled to deliver doctoral degrees. Partners outside the academic community are also welcome. Doctoral candidates must be under joint mentorship, with focus on the acquisition of transferable skills by junior researchers. The maximum available funding is for 540 research months per network.

## ERASMUS+

**Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD)** are highly integrated joint master programmes awarded with Erasmus Mundus label of excellence by the European Commission. They are delivered by a consortium of higher education institutions from at least three (3) different programme countries<sup>1</sup> and include a period of study in at least two (2) different countries involved in the consortium. Through annual Erasmus+ calls for proposals, operating grants are awarded to fund such study programmes. Each grant ranges between two and three million euros and covers the consortium's operating costs, fees for guest lecturers, and scholarships for students over a period of three or five years. Erasmus Mundus is expected to fund 350 new joint master degrees by 2020.

<sup>1</sup> EU 28, Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway, Macedonia and Turkey.

## THE MOBILITY PROJECTS BETWEEN PROGRAMME AND PARTNER (THIRD) COUNTRIES

(International Credit Mobility) is an activity that constitutes the international opening of Erasmus and enables student mobility (3-12 months per study level) and staff mobility (5 days to 2 months) between Eu-

ropean higher education institutions and those from third countries, with emphasis on incoming mobilities in Europe. Project applications are submitted to national Erasmus+ agencies.

## THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The **Strategic Partnerships** activity provides funding for flexible intra-European projects of cooperation in the field of education, aligned with European policies (EC 2011 and EC 2013). Project activities can, for example, include the preparation of an innovative joint programme curriculum. Project proposals are submitted to national Erasmus+ agencies and the available funding ranges between €300,000 and €450,000.

## KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCES

**Knowledge Alliances** are transnational structured projects between higher education institutions and businesses aimed at the active implementation of the knowledge triangle, the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and the reinforcement of European innovation capacity. This activity provides funding for student training, programmes to acquire entrepreneurial competencies, ICT use in entrepreneurial education (e.g. MOOCs, e-learning modules) and, to a lesser extent, student, faculty and corporate staff mobility.

## CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**Capacity Building in the Field of Higher Education** builds on the former Tempus, Alfa and Edulink programmes. This activity aims to strengthen the capacity of higher education systems and institutions in third countries through cooperation with European higher education institutions. Among other things, this activity provides funding for the development of joint programme curricula, partial programme piloting, and student and staff mobility for partner countries during the project period. Applications are submitted to the Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels.

## CEEPUS

**CEEPUS** is the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies enabling mobilities for students, doctoral candidates and teaching staff. It is a multilateral agreement between sixteen countries of Central and South-East Europe, which promotes the development of joint programmes within the CEEPUS network. This programme facilitates finding partners and testing cooperation for setting up joint programmes, and provides funding for individual mobilities.

Within the European Social Fund, that is, its “Efficient Human Resources 2014-2020” Operational Programme, funding will be provided based on calls for project proposals to develop study programmes delivered in foreign languages in priority areas, as well as joint programmes. Also, by implementing programme agreements, Croatian higher education institutions will be able to finance certain aspects of higher education internationalisation.

Information of funding opportunities can be found on the website of the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes.

## NATIONAL FUNDING SCHEMES

Certain countries or regions have developed their own funding schemes for joint programmes or promote the development of such programmes in other ways, such as the **Nordic Master Programme, Universita Italo-Francese, Finnish-Russian Cross-Border University** (JDAZ 2015). Another interesting initiative is the Austrian programme **AUSTRIA MUNDUS+**, whereby Austrian higher education institutions are encouraged to apply for Erasmus+ activities (and EMJMD) as part of their efforts to finance project preparation.



## SUSTAINABILITY OF PROGRAMMES

The sustainability of a joint programme encompasses its financial sustainability and the sustainability of the programme itself, primarily in terms of its quality. At the outset of the joint programme planning process, it is advisable to make a SWOT analysis to identify, among other things, potential threats to programme sustainability (financial sustainability, legal obstacles, institutional support) and design appropriate measures to eliminate them. Another key element of programme sustainability is institutional support from each consortium partner, that is, fostering good relations among the involved consortium partners as well as extending the partnership to other stakeholders such as employers, professional associations, public administration bodies, alumni clubs, etc. Similarly, good practice examples highlight the involvement of these

stakeholders in joint programme advisory or management boards, if any. When planning and developing a new joint programme, measures should be designed to ensure its sustainability, which should then be incorporated in the consortium contract.

To ensure programme sustainability, it would be useful that the sustainability strategy – along with financial sustainability and programme quality measures – also includes a marketing plan to attract students and associates (employers, research institutes, etc.). Joint programme success stories show that a student will be motivated to enter an attractive joint programme which is aligned with the needs of the labour market and offers him/her opportunities for practical training. To ensure curricular relevance to labour market needs, it would be advisable to involve a labour market representative from the very outset of the planning process for each new programme. Just like other modern study programmes, joint programmes tend to involve labour market representatives in the teaching process pursuant to the “teaching factory”, “work based learning” or “learning by doing” models. Furthermore, programme sustainability requires support services to administer the programme, as well as student support services, including student standard, academic and career counselling. More information on the issue of programme sustainability is available on the website of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS:

ECTS - European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System  
 ASHE - Agency for Science and Higher Education  
 EHEA - European Higher Education Area  
 EQAR - European Quality Assurance Register  
 EQF - European Qualifications Framework  
 ESG - European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education  
 MOOC - Massive Open Online Course  
 CEEPUS - Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies



