

MASTERS

DOCTORATES

RESEARCH

POSTGRAD

DOCTORATES

ERASMUS MUNDUS



GRADUATE IMPACT SURVEY 2009-2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY







Summary of Survey Results

On behalf of the European Commission, ICUnet.AG has been monitoring the success of Erasmus Mundus and its impact on students and graduates since 2007. Research has included both qualitative in depth-interviews (in 2007-2008 and 2008-2009) and quantitative online surveys. The online surveys were carried out in three phases and addressed students and graduates. A total of 2192 respondents participated in the quantitative evaluation, while 50 in-depth interviews were conducted.

This report is based on the findings of the third survey, carried out in 2009-2010 among 668 participants. The following summary gives an overview of the main results.

The EU as a Study and Living Destination

The vast majority of participants (89%) judged the EU to be a very good or good study destination. The fact that graduates are more positive about the EU as a study destination than first-year students gives reason to believe that the Erasmus Mundus experience has a positive impact on the EU's image as a place for study. When asked to explain their judgement in an open question, respondents (72%) most commonly refer to the quality of higher education as both a reason to be happy or unhappy with the EU as a study destination. This suggests that some disagreement with respect to the quality of European study programmes exists.

It is also noteworthy that among those not satisfied with the EU as a study destination, many respondents (27%) mention organisational or logistical problems in their Erasmus Mundus course. The EU's attractiveness as a place to live is further reflected by the high numbers of respondents (41.4%) remaining in the EU after graduation. The overwhelming majority of EU citizens (82%) and nearly half of all non-European graduates (42%) choose to live in an EU Member State. Non-EU respondents having returned to their home country report mainly private reasons (63.7%), while those having remained in Europe predominantly mention career-related reasons.

It should be noted that respondents tend to rate the recognition and awareness of Erasmus Mundus in their home country as being low. Almost 50% of all students and graduates in 2009-2010 believe that EM is "not known" in their home country – a percentage which seems to be rather stable over time. Similar results stem from open questions where respondents were asked to describe the image of Erasmus Mundus in their home institution and among potential employers: many respondents mentioned that this programme is simply not known enough.

Students' and Graduates' Social Integration

While the satisfaction with integration activities offered by Erasmus Mundus courses is relatively high (60%), we observed an increase in respondents having answered "unsatisfactory" in the last survey (12.6%). This development needs to be further monitored in subsequent survey rounds. Considerable variance across study fields exists with respect to satisfaction with networking opportunities. While almost 90% of respondents in medical and health studies deemed their networking opportunities to be very good or good, only half of all respondents in law, business and economics thought so. This is an important finding in so far as Erasmus Mundus contacts are the most cited network source among non-EU respondents (40.3%) and the second most mentioned source among EU respondents (40%).



Interestingly, integration into the host society seems to be most successful in the first country in which respondents study. The majority (40% of all EU respondents and 41% of all non-EU respondents) were most satisfied with their contact with host-country natives in their first Erasmus Mundus course country. 24% of EU respondents and 36% of non-EU respondents found contacts in their second country to be most satisfying, while only 13% of EU respondents and 8% of non-EU respondents were most satisfied with contacts in their third country of sojourn.

Erasmus Mundus and Graduates' Careers

While generally positive, the employment situation of Erasmus Mundus graduates still has room for improvement. In 2009-2010, 18% of those having graduated a year ago and 6% of those having graduated two years ago were unemployed. Among respondents having graduated 3-5 years ago, 4% were jobless. It should be noted that another 4% of all graduates were currently doing an internship or traineeship. The percentage of unemployed graduates is greatest in social sciences and humanities (14%) and lowest in science and engineering (7%). When asked about potential reasons for their joblessness, some non-European jobseekers refer to visa problems and bureaucratic obstacles. Some unemployed respondents wish for more active support from their Erasmus Mundus course.

Interestingly, the lion's share (nearly 40%) of graduates who found a job remain in or return to academia. This might be due to the fact that academic institutions are traditionally more international and thus more readily hire foreign candidates.

When asked about the most important factor for having been hired by their current employer, both EU respondents and non-EU respondents agree that the experience they gained during their Erasmus Mundus course played a crucial role. Nonetheless, while non-EU respondents tend to ascribe much importance to their study records, EU respondents deem their foreign language skills to have been the second-most decisive factor.

Policy Implications

Considering the findings of this survey, the following policy advice is proposed:

- Increase awareness and recognition of Erasmus Mundus beyond the academic world and outside the EU.
- Within academic institutions, do not only target international and exchange offices as potential channels and contact points, but also career services.
- Improve graduates' career opportunities by offering fully-fledged career services, especially to non-European graduates who often encounter bureaucratic obstacles.
- Given that the majority of non-EU nationals learned about Erasmus Mundus via the Internet, the websites promoting Erasmus Mundus should remain as attractive and up-to-date as possible.
- Considering that respondents' integration into the host society (measured by their satisfaction in respect of contact with host-country natives) seems to decrease in each new study country, it might be sensible to limit the amount of study destinations per student. This might give students a better opportunity to get to know their country of destination, notwithstanding their academic challenges.