

ERASMUS MUNDUS EXTERNAL COOPERATION WINDOW

Frequently Asked Questions

Call for Proposals – EACEA 35/08
for the implementation of mobility schemes
in the academic year 2009/2010

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ERASMUS MUNDUS "EXTERNAL COOPERATION WINDOWS" QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window is an EU initiative designed to foster institutional co-operation in the field of higher education between the European Union and Third-countries through a mobility scheme addressing student and academic staff exchanges for the purpose of studying, teaching, training and research.

ECW PROGRAMME: FRAMEWORK, OBJECTIVES AND DEFINITIONS

1. Is External Cooperation Windows part of the recently launched Erasmus Mundus II (2009-2013)?

External Cooperation Windows is integrated as Action II "Partnerships" under the new Erasmus Mundus II programme always aiming at promoting institutional cooperation and mobility activities.

2. Who is in charge for the management of the ECW programme?

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency ("the Agency") is the body that, acting under powers delegated by the Commission of the European Communities, is in charge of the management of the programme.

3. Are third countries involved in the design of the ECW programme?

The involvement of the relevant authorities in third countries is in particular of importance for the partnership composition, the type of mobility to be promoted and to define regional and thematic fields of study. In principle, the Delegations of the European Commission follow up contacts and discussions.

4. Who can apply? (Sec. 6.3 of the Guidelines)

Proposals can be submitted by Universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) settled in any of the following countries:

- 27 European countries, or
- Candidate countries
- EEA countries

In order to be eligible Applicants must have obtained an Erasmus Charter before the date of publication of the Call for proposals.

5. What is an Erasmus Charter?

The Erasmus University Charter (EUC) provides the general framework for the European co-operation activities for sending and receiving students and teaching staff on mobility assignments, as well as for carrying out intensive programmes and coordinating multilateral projects and networks.

More detailed information can be found at the following address:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/lfp/erasmus/erasmus_en.htm

6. What is a Partnership? (Sec. 6.4 and 7 of the Guidelines)

A Partnership is a group of higher education institutions (from European and Third-countries) that intends to implement the mobility scheme within one or more of the geographical lots concerned by the call for proposals. In order to be considered as eligible for funding, a Partnership needs to be constituted of:

- European Union: a minimum of five European universities from at least three European Union countries
- Third-Country: specific provisions can be found in the individual geographical window in sec.7 of the Guidelines

The maximum size of the partnership is limited to 20 partners.

Please note that, in some specific geographical lots, partnerships should include third-country universities, either private or public, settled in less developed targeted regions (i.e. Latin America Regional lots). This is not an eligible requirement due the possible lack of universities in the specific targeted regions. However, their presence, where possible, is strongly encouraged.

7. What are the roles of the institutions participating in the Partnership?

The ECW partnerships are constituted of: an applicant/coordinator, partners and associates. The applicant and its partners must draw up an agreement defining the technical and financial rights and obligations of each member of the Partnership. The institution that submits the application on behalf of the Partnership will act as the coordinator (and unique interlocutor of the Agency for the contractual implementation of the project). All institutions participating in the Partnership must have an active and clearly-defined role within the Partnership and, for higher education institutions, be in the position to send and host students and academic staff.

The grant application form has to be accompanied by the partnership statements by all participating partner institutions (Annex B of the grant application form). Each partnership statement has to be signed by the relevant authority of the partner institutions involved, confirming its agreement with the application submitted.

8. Which Third-Country Higher Education Institutions are eligible to participate?

In order to be eligible for support under ECW, Higher Education Institutions must be registered in one of the third-countries targeted by the Call for proposals. In addition, Third-Country HEIs must be fully accredited by the Ministry of Education of the respective country and the degrees issued must be fully recognised by the national authority and in line with the national system of education.

Institutions preparing students for foreign degrees, such as those operating as a branch or under a franchising agreement are not allowed to participate. They are not, therefore, eligible for support.

9. What is an associate?

An "associate" is any other type of organisation or institution from the eligible countries that plays an active role in the action but is not a direct beneficiary of the project and the community grant. Associates do not have to sign the "partnership agreement". NGO, regional institutions of higher education, enterprises and chambers of industry and commerce can be an example of associates. Their role will be to facilitate and contribute to the implementation of the individual mobility for instance by identifying and/or, preparing Third-countries mobility candidates, by assisting incoming students or staff members in their host country(ies), by identifying and providing placement facilities to incoming students, etc.

10. What is a geographical window and a geographical lot?

A geographical window refers to the geographical regions targeted by the programme and by specific cooperation instruments. Each window is divided into geographical lots, which represent either a group of third-countries or, in some cases, one single country.

11. What is an individual mobility flow?

Each mobility scheme is composed by individual mobility flows whose minimum number, types and conditions are indicated in specific sections of the Call for Proposals.

12. How many types of individual mobility flows are targeted?

There are 5 types of individual mobility:

- Undergraduates

- Masters
- Doctorates
- Post-doctorate fellowships
- Academic staff

These types of mobility are targeted depending on the specific geographical window concerned.

13. Who can benefit from an individual mobility grant?

- European students and academic staff registered in one of the European universities member of the Partnership.
- Nationals of the third-countries concerned by the geographical lot.

14. How long does a mobility flow last?

The duration of the mobility depends on the type of mobility and the target group. You can find a detailed table in sec. 6.5.2 of the Guidelines of the Call for Proposals.

One academic year is in principle equal to 10 months, taking into account 2 months break. One semester equals usually 6 months.

15. What is a target group and how many target groups exist?

A target group is a group of students/academic staff having the same characteristics regarding the institution/country of origin and/or personal situation.

There are 3 target groups:

- Target group 1: individuals registered in one of the universities member of the Partnership
- Target group 2: nationals of the third-countries concerned by the geographical lot and currently not registered in one of these countries partner universities.
- Target group 3: nationals of the third-countries concerned by the geographical lot who are in particularly vulnerable situations (refugees, asylum seekers, indigenous population etc).

16. How much is the overall available budget?

The overall budget amounts to € 163.5 million for projects selected in 2009.

17. What will it be financed? (Sec. 11.2 of the Guidelines)

The financial contribution will contribute to cover the different activities necessary to attain the objectives of the action. The Grants will be calculated on the basis of:

- A lump sum for each participating institution to cover costs deriving from the organisation of the individual mobility flows
- Unit costs amounts for travel, fees, subsistence and insurance costs of students and academic staff participating in the individual mobility flows

In accordance with the principles applicable to lump sums and unit costs, these have been calculated as maximum amounts allocated to the project in order to cover only part of the real costs of the activities they correspond to. As a result, any expenditure incurred by the partnership beyond these unit costs/lump sums may not be covered by Community grant.

18. How can universities identify a partnership?

The Agency has created a partner search facility in order to facilitate the universities in search for European and Third-Countries partners. This tool can be found on the Agency's website at the following address: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/extcoop/call/2008/index_en.htm

19. Is there a risk that Erasmus Mundus "External Cooperation Window" will aggravate brain drain from developing countries? (Sec. 6.5.1 of the Guidelines)

All participating institutions commit themselves not to carry out any activity susceptible of encouraging the brain drain (for example, offering jobs or further possibilities to study in the hosting university). As foreseen in the Call for proposals, partnerships have to show in which ways the mobility scheme will increase knowledge rather than favour the **brain-drain** from Third-countries.

20. Which disciplines or subject areas are covered by Erasmus Mundus "External Cooperation Window"? (Sec.2.2 and 7 of the Guidelines)

The present call for proposals is open to all levels of higher education (from undergraduate to post-doctoral, including academic staff) and operates in all fields of study.

Partnerships are encouraged to implement activities covering a wide range of thematic fields of studies and disciplines in line with the regional needs reported in the individual windows.

21. Is there any kind of academic recognition at the end of an individual student mobility flow?

At the end of a mobility period covering only part of a curriculum – lasting from one quarter to one academic year or more -, the student must be provided by his/her host institution with a transcript of records specifying the marks obtained for each of the courses attended. This transcript must be used by the home institution for recognising the study period abroad as part of the general curriculum required for obtaining the final degree. In addition, a Diploma supplement could be issued at the end of his/her studies identifying the courses followed and the marks obtained during the student's

study period abroad. Exchanges which will lead to the award of double diplomas or joint diplomas are warmly encouraged.

For individual mobility flows covering the totality of the curriculum required for obtaining a degree, this latter will be issued by the student's host institution.

22. Does Erasmus Mundus "External Cooperation Window" use the ECTS credit system?

The individual student mobility flows between European and Third-Country universities should be implemented in the spirit of ERASMUS Higher Education mobility programme. In this respect, they have to ensure the academic recognition of the studies carried out in the host country of the mobile students. In order to fulfil this condition, the use of the ECTS or other similar credit transfer system is highly recommended.

23. What language requirements are there for an individual mobility flow?

There is no particular requirement for the language of the courses attended by incoming students. Although a linguistic support is foreseen for incoming students or lecturers, the Partnership must ensure that a clear information on the language of tuition is provided in advance to the candidate students or teaching staff member, and that selected individuals have the required knowledge to follow (or give) courses in the languages concerned.

INDIVIDUAL MOBILITY: STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC STAFF

24. When is the individual mobility flow to start?

It is mandatory for all individual mobility flows covered by the specific agreement to start during the academic year 2009/2010, **by the 1st September 2010 at the latest**. No mobility flow can start in the subsequent academic year. New mobility can be promoted in the context of the renewal application(s) to be submitted in the following Call(s) for proposals.

25. Who selects students and academic staff for mobility flows? How can potential candidates find out about specific admission conditions and apply for an individual mobility flow? And how will they find out if they have been accepted in a mobility flow?

The selected Partnerships are responsible for the organisation, selection and the implementation of the individuals' mobility. Each Partnership establishes the mechanisms foreseen for the selection of students and academic staff.

Each Partnership is responsible to widely publish the different mobility opportunities available within the scheme and attracts potential candidates. The availability of mobility opportunities has to be widely visible and the information easily accessible for all the targeted groups of potential candidates,

not only in the partner institutions (target group I) but also in non-partner institutions (target group II and III).

These mechanisms need to prove that they comply with the rules of transparency and equal treatment. Potential candidates for a scholarship (students and academic staff) have to submit their application directly to the partnership selected. This latter is also responsible to communicate and publish the list of candidates who will eventually participate to the mobility scheme.

At the end of May, indicatively, the list of selected Partnerships is published on the Agency website at the following address: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/extcoop/call/index.htm>

26. How is "academic staff" defined? (Sec. 6.5.2 of the Guidelines)

Academic staff comprises teaching staff or researchers from the universities participating in the Partnership, but also university administrators (rectors, personnel in charge of cooperation offices, etc). All these categories are eligible candidates for outgoing mobility. They will have to be invited by the host institution member of the Partnership in order to perform training, teaching and/or research activities.

27. Are inter-European or inter-Third-countries mobility flows allowed?

No. Individual mobility flows of Europeans between European institutions or Third-Country nationals between Third-Country institutions involved in the partnership are not covered by this scheme.

28. Can students or academic staff benefit from more than 1 mobility flow?

No European or Third-country student or academic staff can benefit from more than one mobility activity within the same project.

29. Can third-country nationals living in Europe apply for a mobility flow?

For target group 1 it should not be possible because students and academic staff must be registered in a third-country university.

For target group 2, the mobility is reserved to students registered in a university in their home country or to persons having obtained a first diploma in their home country. This makes it possible for the third country nationals living in Europe if they have obtained their first higher education diploma in a university from their home country.

For target group 3, they can apply if they meet the following conditions:

1. They have the nationality of one of the countries in the respective lot.
2. They are in any of the conditions of vulnerability enumerated in the call (refugee status, asylum

seeker, indigenous population etc)

30. Can students spend a given period at an Associate Institution?

Yes, as long as the conditions of the External Cooperation Window are respected and as long as the academic curriculum of the students in question requires such secondment and it is clearly stated in the learning agreement. However, associates may not receive funding from the grant.

31. Can European and Third-country students/academic staff receive scholarships from other Community programmes for the purpose of following an individual mobility flow?

Only one Community grant can be awarded for the purpose of implementing an action or activity. In this context, a European or Third-country student/academic staff benefiting from a mobility scholarship under the present cooperation scheme is not entitled to be awarded additional grants from other Community initiatives for the same purpose.

32. Can incoming students be charged tuition fees?

The maximum tuition fee rates will be paid directly to the Partnership as part of the mobility grant, in accordance with the rules defined in the Guidelines and the justification provided by the Partnership in its application. With the exception of small fees to cover library costs, laboratory consumables, etc. which could be charged on an equal basis as to local students, no tuition fees can be charged by the Partnership to the incoming students in addition to the fee amount already covered by the corresponding part of the grant.

33. How can students and academic staff obtain a visa in order to study in Europe/third countries under an individual mobility flow?

Once students and scholars have received an official confirmation from the Partnership that they have been accepted to participate in an individual mobility flow, they have to obtain a visa in their home countries via the embassies of their host country (ies).

In order to accelerate and facilitate the procedure, the selected partnerships are strongly advised to contact and liaise with the EC Delegations in the EU partners' countries as well as the Consulates and the Embassies of the EU member states in the countries concerned as soon as they receive the official confirmation of being selected: http://ec.europa.eu/world/index_en.htm.

It has to be borne in mind that obtaining the necessary visas can be a lengthy process. The international offices of the Universities will advise students and academic staff on how to proceed.

34. Are students and academic staff covered by an insurance scheme?

Yes, they are to be covered by a complementary sickness and accident insurance offered by the Partnership and funded with the community grant allocated to the project.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS ACTIVE IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

35. What should a third-country higher education institution do if it is interested in entering into a Partnership that already run a mobility scheme?

Entering into an already operating Partnership may have an impact on the content and, maybe, the quality of the action, since it would change the structure of the action and affect its content. A change in Partnership will also have an impact on mobility arrangements. It can also have consequences in financial terms, in particular as regards the distribution of the grant among partners as well as payment modalities. As a result, this cannot be granted in the course of an academic year, during the implementation of the mobility scheme. Existing partnerships wishing to include new Third-Country universities will only be able to do this in the context of the following call(s) for proposals.

36. Can a higher education institution submit or be involved in more than one proposal?

There is no limit to the number of proposals in which a European or Third-Country higher education institution can be involved as long as the expected outcomes and activities can be performed to the agreed quality standards.

However, the same Partnership can submit different applications to a maximum of four different geographical lots.

37. Is it a formal requirement that applications address all three target groups?

As a general rule, there is no specific requirement to cover all three Target Groups. In accordance with the specific Third-Country needs, however, there could be explicit requirements concerning the inclusion of all three groups or exclusion of one target group. Unless differently specified in the geographical windows' sections of the Guidelines, Target group 1 refers to European and Third-Country individuals and it must represent at least 50% of the individual mobility covered by the project. Target Group II and III target only Third-country mobility. Third-country students' mobility must represent at least 70% of the total individual mobility of the project.

In their project, applicants shall describe the target groups that will benefit from their mobility scheme.

38. How are the submitted proposals selected? (Sec. 5 of the Guidelines)

Proposals are selected through a competitive system based on their academic quality, and all candidates are subject to the same award criteria. The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency is responsible for the selection process of the proposals assisted by independent academic experts.

The independent academic experts will assess all eligible applications on the basis of the award criteria defined in the Guidelines to the Call. On the basis of the academic experts assessment and their final score awarded to each application, a Selection Committee composed of officials from the Commission and the Agency will draw up a list of partnerships to be selected. Once the official decision on the selection of partnerships is taken, the results will be communicated to all applicants.

39. Do the partners have to sign any kind of document between them?

There are four kinds of documents the partners must elaborate during the different stages of preparation, submission and implementation of their projects.

- Before the submission of the application: a Partnership Statement must be signed by the appropriate authorities of each institution participating in the project, confirming their agreement with and endorsement of the project, to be annexed to the application form.
- Before the signature of the grant agreement: a Mandate must be signed by each co-beneficiary granting power to the main beneficiary. It must be annexed to the grant agreement to be signed between the Agency and the main beneficiary.
- During the organisation of the mobility scheme:
 - A Memorandum of Understanding must be drawn up among the partners with the objective to reach a sound management of the partnership and address all the aspects linked to the organisation of the mobility scheme such as, for example, the communication strategy, the definition of procedure and criteria for the selection of candidates and specific academic arrangements.
 - An agreement must be signed between the partners defining the technical and financial rights and obligations of each member of the Partnership for internal management. This agreement does not have to be provided to the Agency.

40. What kind of agreement will the selected partnerships be offered and for which duration? (Sec. 13.1 of the Guidelines)

Following the decision to award a grant, the new selected partnerships will be offered a grant agreement covering the expenses for the project submitted under the call for proposals for mobility starting in the academic year 2009-2010. The duration of the grant agreement will depend on the duration of the project and in turn on the duration of the longest mobility foreseen.

41. Are Partnerships obliged to include mobility proposals for each of the five types of mobility (i.e. undergraduate, masters, doctorate, post-doctorate and academic staff)?

No, since some of the geographical windows or lots cover, only and exclusively, some of the types of mobility. In section 7 of the Guidelines it is provided the specific types of mobility per window with the respective indicative distribution. Applicants should reflect the indicative distribution of the respective window/lot to their best endeavours. If this cannot be respected, applicants can propose a different distribution provided that the proposal covers at least the minimum number of mobility flows with each of the countries concerned by the proposal and the types of individual mobility are those targeted by the window.

The indicative distribution of the mobilities is calculated on the basis of the total number of mobilities and not on the budget foreseen to implement the mobilities.

42. By which criteria do Partnerships select students and academic staff?

Each Partnership has to identify its own common set of criteria in compliance with the principle of transparency and equal treatment to select students and academic staff. Classic tools for selecting applicants comprise CVs, study and exam results, specific requirements for language skills, letters of motivation and letters of recommendation. The Agency reserves the right to verify if the selection of the students and academic staff has been carried out in respect of the principle of **transparency and fair and equal treatment**. Only candidates fulfilling the established selection criteria should be included on the main and/or reserve lists. All other candidates should consequently be ineligible and appear on the non-selected lists.

The Partnerships will have to provide the Agency with a description of the methodology applied during the selection of the candidates.

43. How will the mobility scheme budget be calculated? (Sec. 11.2 of the Guidelines)

The budget form annexed to the application form intends to establish the provisional budget and grant requested for the preparation and implementation of the proposed mobility flows. In the budget form, 5 parts can be distinguished:

1. Organisation of the mobility: a flat rate of 10.000 EUR per eligible partner participating in the Partnership.
2. Subsistence allowances: total subsistence allowances covering the period abroad of all individual mobility flows and calculated on the basis of the rates defined in the Guidelines to the Call.
3. Travel costs: total amount of travel costs calculated on the basis of the rates defined in the Guidelines to the Call for each individual mobility flow.
4. Tuition fees: total amount of tuition fee for incoming students as calculated by the Partnership and, if applicable, revised by the Agency in accordance with the maximum defined in the Guidelines to the Call.
5. Insurance: total amount of insurance costs calculated on the basis of the rates defined in the Guidelines to the Call for each individual mobility flow.

44. Who is responsible for the management of the grant within the partnerships?

The coordinating institution is responsible for the distribution of the total amount received from the Agency amongst partners and, depending on the internal arrangements of the Partnership, students and academic staff participating in individual mobility flows.

Depending on the number of students hosted, the length of their stay, the project coordination workload, it is left to the Partnership to decide and agree on the way the grant awarded for the mobility organisation costs will be distributed between the coordinating institution and the other partners.

45. Who pays the allocated amounts to students and academic staff and how?

The Partnerships are responsible for paying the grants to the students and academic staff. Partnerships are free to establish their own payment modalities provided they respect the full amount to be paid out and that the payments are performed on a regular basis, preferable on a monthly basis and for periods not longer than three months.

46. Can Partnerships allocate to mobile individuals different subsistence allowances than those defined in the Guidelines to the Call?

No. The subsistence allowance calculated on the basis of the monthly allowance table included in the Guidelines to the Call must be paid in full to the grantees. However, in order to avoid fraudulent abuses, the payment of subsistence allowances must be paid fractioned and disbursed on a regular basis, preferably every month and for periods not longer than three months.

47. How are travel expenses calculated? (Sec. 11.2.2 of the Guidelines)

For each individual mobility flow an amount is allocated for travel costs. This amount is based on a fixed sum depending on the distance ("as the crow flies") between on one side the location of origin (for Target Group 2), location of residence (for Target Group 3) or home university (for Target Group 1) of the student/academic staff and on the other side the hosting university premises.

A travel grant is calculated for each specific mobility flow, irrespective of the travel costs that will be finally incurred. It is up to the Partnership to define the procedure to be used for the payment of these costs (direct reimbursement to the grantee, direct booking by the Partnership, etc).

The differences, if any, between the amount allocated for each individual mobility flow and the amount actually incurred cannot be compensated with the amount received in concept of subsistence allowances.

Although the total mobility period can be divided in successive periods in the host institution, only one travel amount is calculated per individual student or academic staff.

If an individual mobility flow includes a stay in different hosting institutions, the Partnership should use the longest distance to calculate the travel amount for the corresponding flow.

48. Can Partnerships charge tuition and registration fees directly to students? (Sec. 11.2.2 of the Guidelines)

Partnerships may request Community support to cover tuition fees for incoming students. The corresponding amount depends on the duration of the mobility and it must be clearly indicated and justified in the application form. In case of approval of the proposal, the Partnership will receive this amount as part of the overall grant and fees should therefore not be charged to the incoming students. It is responsibility of the Partnerships to distribute to each hosting institution the tuition fees corresponding to the students hosted.

As far as possible, the tuition fees received by the Partnership should include all obligatory costs incurred by students. It is however possible to ask incoming students for the payment of a small additional fee to cover e.g. laboratory or library costs, under the condition that this additional fee is charged on the same basis as to local students.

49. How much can a Partnership requests for tuition fees? (Sec. 11.2.2 of the Guidelines)

In general this amount is limited to EUR 3.000 per academic year and per student.

Tuition fees cannot be charged for the mobility of students enrolled in one of the partner universities and undergoing a mobility period of less than 10 months in another partner university.

Post-doctorate mobility flows should not include tuition fee unless they concern specialized post-doctorate studies (as opposed to post-doctorate mobility for research purposes). In this case the fee covered by the grant can amount to 5.000 € maximum.

Please, note that these amounts are not a flat-rate guaranteed per individual mobility flow. There are maximum amounts that can be reduced in the light of the practice of the hosting institution.

50. How are insurance costs calculated? (Sec. 11.2.2 of the Guidelines)

Partnership must provide a full insurance coverage to students and academic staff participating in an individual mobility flow. For each person, a fixed amount of EUR 75 per month is calculated, irrespective of the real insurance costs finally incurred.

The differences, if any, between the amount allocated for each person and the amount actually incurred cannot be compensated with the amount received in concept of subsistence allowances.

In order to obtain economy of scale benefits, Partnerships are advised to subscribe a global policy for all the individuals involved in the mobility scheme.

51. How will the final grant based on real cost be calculated?

At the time of submission partnerships present a budget based on an estimated mobility flow. The grant for selected partnership is calculated on this estimated budget which is annexed to the specific grant agreement.

At the end of the contractual period defined in the grant agreement, the coordinating institution will have to submit a final report based on the real mobility, thus, cost. The financial part of this report will consist in an overview of the costs related to the organisation of the mobility and a detailed declaration of the individual mobility flows actually implemented. The final amount of the grant will be established after the evaluation of this final report by the Agency.

52. Can part of the Community grant be used to finance language courses before the main courses start?

Yes. Part of the 10.000 EUR granted to each partner for the organisation of the individual mobility can be used by the Partnership to finance intensive language courses at the start of project implementation in order to upgrade the language skills of the students/academic staff that are going to participate in the mobility scheme. This is possible only within the eligibility period.

53. What kind of services are Partnerships expected to offer to incoming students and academic staff?

Partnerships are expected to offer practical information and assistance to welcome the incoming students/academic staff, and to facilitate their introduction in the hosting university. These services may include linguistic support (language courses), housing facilities, coaching and counselling, welfare services, activities aiming at social integration, services for students with a family or special needs as well as other support measures. Details can be obtained directly from the Partnership concerned.