

DIMENSION 3 INTERIM REPORT ERASMUS MUNDUS ACTION 3 - JISER MED

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Introduction

Erasmus Mundus is a co-operation and mobility programme in the field of higher education intended to promote the European Union as a centre of excellence in learning around the world. It aims to support the development of top-quality European Masters Courses and to enhance the visibility and attractiveness of European higher education in third countries. The programme has, as its strategic aims, to improve the quality of higher education in Europe and to promote intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries.¹

Erasmus Mundus main aim is to promote the quality and excellence of the European higher education. To achieve this goal, the EM different programmes focus on Master Courses; scholarships for third-country students; partnership programmes with higher education institutions in third countries and projects for the enhancement of the EU higher education attractiveness.

EPUF's contribution to JISER-Med Erasmus Mundus is mainly based on its expertise and its nature of International non-profit association (AISBL under the Belgian Law). EPUF has been in charge of the initial partnership election and management and coordination of the partners. EPUF's bi-regional nature and scope of action permits this EuroMed Higher education and research network to be the most indicated for the coordination of the Dimension 3.

Dimension 3 is addressed to the identification of the best practices on Higher Education and Research from a Euro-Mediterranean point of view. To do this, EPUF also counts on the collaboration of the Euro-Med Young Researchers Network (MEDYRE), coordinated by the UNESCO Chair of Intercultural Dialogue in the Mediterranean, located at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili, in Tarragona.

Because of its regional relevance, EPUF is also expected to play a central role in the preparation of the green and white papers and in the establishment of the multiplier dimensions, one of the JISER-Med vertical dimensions.

¹ Interim Evaluation of Erasmus Mundus. Directorate General for Education and Culture. Final report, June 2007. By Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services LLP

Aim and scope of Dimension 3

As regards to the Dimension 3 intervention logic and objectives, it offers the opportunity to strengthening relations between European and Mediterranean higher education and research good practices. It also and contributes to the expansion of a grounded interdisciplinary policy debate.

EPUF has played significant part to an increased participation and mutual understanding among different stakeholders of both regions. EPUF has done this mainly by ensuring sustainable means of multiplying and disseminating successful experiences of Euromed joint actions, in the areas of Higher Education and Research, as identified by the Erasmus Mundus Programme as priorities for this specific call.

The present interim evaluation is undertaken at the middle of the JISER MED Project, that is, December 2011, and it aims at evaluating the Dimension development.

The aims of the interim evaluation are, on one hand, to address issues related to the Dimension itself, such as its relevance and utility, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and value, in order to facilitate an analysis of its results and impacts so far.

On the other hand, this Interim report also focuses on how the Dimension has been thought (intervention logic), what are its objectives, how has it been designed and the implementation arrangements used. Following this analysis, the expected results and the Dimension impact can be further improved.

Key Dimension Evaluation issues

One of the major aspects to pay attention to is the *relevance* of the work to be done and that already undertaken. It is also necessary to analyse Dimension 3 level of *potential impact* and the *costs involved* for the execution of its goals.

In this sense, Dimension 3 is aimed to define what is a “best practice” in the field of Higher Education and Research, and to present some valuable examples of what is already happening in the Mediterranean.

By identifying and promoting best practices, Dimension 3 will deepen the successful cooperation schemes in the region and help mutual understanding between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

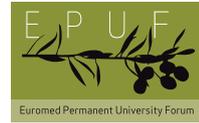
From a political point of view, there should be no doubt that cooperation is correlated with peace and stability. If we take into account the currently changing contexts in the southern shore of the Mediterranean, the European Commission should be very interested in maintaining alternative links as a thread for future cooperation and dialogue paths to develop.

The obtained results of the Dimension, such as the Paper that will be presented and debated within JISER Med frame mean a lot for the overall region, and, once published and disseminated through chosen political institutions, as well as academic and research universities and centres, will help increasing the general knowledge of each other.

EPUF will coordinate this Dimension, with the support of the Université Virtuelle de Tunis (Tunisia), the Abdelmaleek Essâdi University (Morocco), the Universitat de les Illes Balears (Spain), the Princess Sumaya University of Technology (Jordan) and the Universitat de Barcelona (Spain), JISER Med partner Universities and Project leader respectively.

As regards to the utility of the Dimension 3, the expected outcomes will clearly contribute to the European Higher Education system and the Mediterranean partners of the Union for the Mediterranean which are not members of the EU. These countries and its Higher Education systems need to be paid attention to.

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Therefore, the overall added value of this Dimension go above the JISER MED project and make it possible to continue working in this research line, as the Green Paper will only put the seeds for a broader document, that EPUF is willing to coordinate, and that might become a White Book of the EuroMed universities system and institutions.

Dimension 3 is also sustainable considering the type of work and efforts involved, and also attending the limited resources available. EPUF will use the already existent members of the network partnership to gain the information to analyse. The use of new technologies in both communication and results presentation is also a synonym of effectiveness in information transmission and mobility costs.

Methodological approach

Dimension 3 has been articulated in line with the overall methodology of the JISER MED Erasmus Mundus.

A research question from which to analyse the relevant literature was the first step taken. This has helped drawing the line to understand the state of the art in higher education and research best practices, especially focusing in the institutions active in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

The specific institutional contexts will be presented at the final Report, as a result of a qualitative survey sent to the JISER MED consortium partners. This questionnaire is a case study among the involved partners, which is expected to bring some very valuable data. It is yet to be confirmed if further interviews might be necessary, with alternative stakeholders, considered active or relevant in the area and being them public or private.

The research phase has been complemented with a survey circulated among JISER MED partners and EPUF members. In order to attain the maximum variance and geographical scope of the answers, the survey has been sent to around 130 institutions from 28 different countries, a target group easily contactable through EPUF available mailing list.

The content of the survey has been carried out by EPUF, which has count with the support of the Universitat de les Illes Balears (UIB) for the technical development.

Along the process, two meetings via videoconference will be organised and lead by EPUF with the other Jiser-Med Dimension partners or interested.

After the research and definition of the good practices, some examples of existing projects will be presented. In this line, Dimension 3 is aimed to present a proposal after evaluating and examining what does work and what does not.

A Paper will be then published and disseminated, where a definition of “good practices” will be offered. In this definition, “universal” and “particular” views and characteristics will be exposed.

Dimension design

Following the guiding purpose of this Dimension, which is to disclose a ground description and analysis of Higher Education and Research good practices in the Euro-Mediterranean area, EPUF designed a dimension work aiming at approaching the question from a “universal” to a “specific” perspective.

The starting point was to question issues like why do some practices are understood as “good”; under what conditions do this practices are capable to develop; why some of them remain in time and some do not; what influence do elements like budget and politics have for a cooperation practice execution.

In order to bring some light to the subject, an ambitious survey was developed, enquiring about the following major fields of analysis:

- Institutional relationship, cooperation and mobility
- Joint programmes and double degrees
- Languages and information availability
- Research mission of the University
- University and its socio-economical impact
- University and governance
- Euromed region: what is a best practice?

Along with the survey, a more qualitative approach has also been started, demanding the JISER Consortium members to explain some of their latter activities that they would consider to be good practices.

A posterior analysis of this data and crossing the results might allow us identifying some common trends of what can be understood as a “definition” of a good practice.

Dimension management and implementation

Phase 1: Preliminary Tasks

Set up meeting

- Preparatory sessions: December 2010
- Kick-off Meeting: 17 January 2011
- Working Sessions:
 - The first working session among all partner institutions was held on 18 January 2011. Further bilateral contacts with the Project coordinator were held within the months of January and February.
 - On 23 February, EPUF welcomed a bilateral meeting with the Consortium leaders in order to discuss the Dimension works and calendar.
 - EPUF organised a third meeting, hold on 22 March 2011, putting together the Campus Mare Nostrum Project (Universidad de Murcia) and the Project leaders of JISER-MED in order to explore cooperation possibilities and to enhance the synergy dimension of the Project.

From January to March 2011, but especially after the bilateral meeting, EPUF designed the methodology structure of the Dimension 3 and presented as well a draft of the foreseen work-plan and timetable.

Inception Report: March 2011

- An internal document was sent to the coordinator institution of the Project, Universitat de Barcelona (UB).

Phase 2: Fieldwork and survey work

Desk research

- On a preliminary studying stage, EPUF Executive Secretariat began with the Literature review of the subject of analysis.
- The design of the Survey content included some questions and answers with the Project partners, especially with the UB as the leader of the project.

Survey work of institutions participating

- The survey was conceptualized between the months of May and July to be afterwards sent for confirmation to the leading partner.

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- The UIB was included to the work in August, and developed the technical part within September 2011.

The survey was sent to the JISER MED consortium partners on 17 October 2011 as a preliminary control group.

The survey was afterwards submitted to the entire EPUF member institutions list, on 14 November 2011.

- Good practice case studies of EM projects (through qualitative analysis of the JISER MED consortium partner institutions).
- Presentation of the Dimension 3 works in the frame of the first JISER Seminar (Amman): 21 and 22 November 2011

Preparation of interim report

- Interim Report: December 2011

Phase 3: Analyses and Reporting

(Foreseen calendar for the coming months)

Analysis and reporting

- Quantitative and qualitative work on the results obtained: November 2011 to March 2012
- Second JISER Seminar Tanger, Morocco, on April 2012: provide information of data obtained
- Videoconference lead by EPUF with Dimension 3 partners: July 2012

Preparation of draft final report

- Writing and revision of the Paper: May to August 2012

Steering Group workshop outlining findings and policy recommendations

Final Report: October 2012

- Policy Event Presentation of the Paper: Final Evaluation Meeting

Dimension funding

The general Budget for Dimension 3 coordinator is 24.500€ in two years. URV has an assigned budget of 14.000€ as direct funds, and contributes with a co-financing of 10.500€.

For the first year, EPUF/URV have an overall Budget of 12.500€, of which 8.000€ are funded by the European Commission and the resting 4.500€ are co-financing by the URV.

Dimension outcomes

This Dimension will present an extended research study on the best collaboration practices for the strengthening of the relations between higher education and research at a Euro-Med (Union for the Mediterranean) level.

The outputs of this research will thus provide the European Union Higher Education and Research institutions with valuable data and useful tools for improving the relations between these two sectors (Higher Education and Research) in this relevant geographical area.

The resulting data from the research study and the survey will be also gathered and presented in a Paper, as well as included in the Project website for extensive dissemination.

The JISER-MED project consortium institutions and the Higher Education community at large will be able to access this research, since the study will be further published in the consortium websites and promoted on the occasion of the different Project Workshops.

ACCRONYMS

AISBL “Association Internationale sans but lucratif” (non-profit international association)

EU European Union

EC European Commission

EM Erasmus Mundus

EPUF Euromed Permanent University Forum

MEDYRE Mediterranean and European Young Researchers Network

URV Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona (Spain)

UIB Universitat de les Illes Balears (Spain)

UB Universitat de Barcelona (Spain)