

Chapter III

***„MY MUNDUS EXPERIENCE“
STUDENTS' ESSAYS***

1. NON-EUROPEAN STUDENTS STUDYING IN THE EU COUNTRIES – ANALYSIS OF MUNDUS STUDENTS’ STORIES

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I would like to say thank you for the Erasmus Mundus programme, for giving us the opportunity to study in Europe. I hope in the next period, there will be some better things to make. In general, I like very much to be one of the Mundus students, although in the process there are so many new bad and good experiences to mature my mind and myself (Martha, Indonesia, International Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory).

This text presents a glimpse of non-EU Mundus students' experiences of studying and living in Europe based on their stories. The students' essays, subsequently presented, can serve as a follow-up source, clarifying and deepening the issues raised through the survey and described in the previous two chapters.

1. Mundus reflecting in the mirror of students' stories

The essay competition on the theme “*My Mundus Experience*” was announced in December 2005 in the frame of the Action 4 Mundus project ***European Higher Education for the World – Studies and Promotion***. The call was targeted at Mundus students from non-European Union countries (third countries), studying at Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses (EMMCs). We received fourteen essays, nine of them are published in this book. An international panel of project experts assessed all works submitted to the call for essays. The winners were awarded with special opportunities to present and share more widely their experience, concerning both studying at Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses and living in the European Union. The first and second prize winners will participate as speakers in the conference “*Connecting Cultures ... Respecting Differences. A global dialogue for development and sustainability*” – iEARN 14th Annual International Conference, which will be held on 21 – 26.07.2007 in Cairo, Egypt.

These two Mundus students – Charles from the Ivory Coast and Rashid from Ghana, who went through various adventures and challenges of studying and living in Europe – will give presentations and share their experience with other African and international participants of the conference. They will also answer any practical questions about living and studying in Europe. The first of the contest winners is currently still studying in Europe at Masters, in Quaternary and Prehistory (Italy and Spain) and the other, after studies in Europe (Germany, Norway and France) at Erasmus Mundus Masters in International Health came back to work in the hospital in Accra, the capital of Ghana. The third-place winner – Mario from Nicaragua, a Masters student still studying in Germany and planning to come back to work for the rural development of his country – took part in the international seminar „*Bright and dark sides of studying abroad – international students experience*”, which took place on 01.03.2007 in Poznan, Poland. He was invited to give a speech presenting his Mundus success story and promoting among Polish, European and international participants the Mundus programme itself as well as its' ideas of intercultural understanding.

An additional six authors were nominated to be distinguished by publishing their essays in this book. In this publication nine stories are presented, written by the following Mundus students:

- Charles Kpra Dibie from the Ivory Coast, student of EM Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory,
- Rashid Abdulai from Ghana, student of EM Masters in International Health,
- Mario Alberto Arauz Torres from Nicaragua, student of IMRD – International Masters of Science in Rural Development,
- Khady Niang from Senegal, student of EM Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory,
- Siang Fung Ang from Malaysia, student of EMMS – Joint European Masters Programme in Materials Science,
- Charbel Salameh from Lebanon, student of Vintage Masters in Vine, Wine and Terroir Management,
- Diego Masone from Argentina, student of MERIT – European Masters of Research on Information and Communication Technologies,
- Martha Rosintauli Bakara from Indonesia, student of EM Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory,
- Ricardo Chavez from Mexico, student of AMASE – Joint European Masters Programme in Advanced Materials Science and Engineering.

All the essays were very interesting and gave us an in-depth insight into the experience, challenges and problems of non-EU students studying at Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses. We are grateful to all authors who shared with us their experience of life and education in the European Union countries. Reading all these stories was for project team members both

a great pleasure and a source of valuable information. Some of the essays won our admiration and high regard for deeply analysed and richly illustrated stories in the forms of essay as well as Power Point presentations. Others were awarded for very interesting forms of narration, vividly and brightly written narratives. In some stories we also found detailed explanations about the achievements within the Programme and profound reflections on the whole experience. One of the awarded students revealed deep thinking on globalisation, prejudices and racial issues. Many described interesting ups and downs while applying for Mundus scholarships, preparing for their departure and finally – living and studying in Europe. The majority underlined benefits and positive changes in their lives arising from Mundus education and the whole “European adventure”.

The project team elaborated each of the awarded essays using a table-formed protocol. During analysis of essays and working up of the material gathered answers to eight problem groups have been identified:

1. Did the student have any other experience in European Union countries before? Did he/she have any other alternatives? Did the student apply for other scholarships?
2. How did the student learn about the Erasmus Mundus programme, his/her Masters programme and about the Erasmus Mundus scholarship? Why did the student choose to study in Europe?
3. What was his/her reaction after notification of the results?
4. What are the student’s comments about selected aspects of the Erasmus Mundus Masters Course
 - the academic and pedagogic quality of teaching, staff professionalism, and attitudes of staff towards students,
 - help, access to and time devoted to the student from the academic staff and service obtained from the administrative staff,
 - composition and content of the Masters curriculum,
 - local language training and language of instruction,
 - welcome and integration activities,
 - organisation of the Masters course?
5. How does the student assess life at the university and his/her interactions with local and other international students? Does the student have friends at the university? Does he/she feels integrated / accepted?
6. What were the student’s main fears before coming to study at the Mundus programme?
7. What were the main problems that have arisen before the student’s arrival to a European Union country? What problems has the student faced during studies? Is the student satisfied with accommodation, it’s conditions and price?
8. What is the student planning to do after obtaining the European Masters degree? What were the expectations when the student decided to study

in the EU? Have they been fulfilled? What are the best and the worst features of the Masters Course in the opinion of the student? How does the student think the European Masters degree will help him/her in their further career and change his/her entire life? What benefits she/he gained from Mundus?

The following text gives an introduction to students' essays (presented subsequently in section 2 of this Chapter), through the above listed research problems.

2. What we can learn from Mundus students' testimonies?

The nine narrations presented below constitute reach research material concerning non-European students' studying in Europe, the material of a personal and subjective nature. Therefore we consider them fascinating data for phenomenological studies on students' mobility. We believe that the stories presented can also be interesting for all international students exchange practitioners, especially those involved in the Mundus programme. These narrations show problems, difficulties and challenges that students encounter when studying and living in Europe within the first phase of the Mundus Programme. Their testimonies can be useful for programme continuation in 2009-13. At the same time it is great promotional material; the authentic voice of students, who, in the majority, expressed their satisfaction and appreciation of studying and living in Europe and gratitude to the Mundus Programme that gave them the possibility to develop academically, professionally and personally.

While reading their stories, seeing attached pictures, we can imagine a real – but still subjective and individual – picture of non-European students' ups and downs, feelings and experiences gone through while studying in the European Union countries. Through their stories one can learn about how the whole "adventure with Mundus" started in terms of previous experience, trials to get other, alternative scholarships and finding information about the Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses and scholarship. Then the reader will get to know the reasons for choosing to study in Europe and interesting stories about students' reactions to selection results. In a substantial part of narrations students were sharing their opinions about their Masters courses' operation and management (concerning curricula, academic and administrative staff, organisation of Masters course, local language training and language of instruction, welcome programme etc.). They eagerly described their life at the university and interactions with local and other international students, processes of their integration into campus and wider community life. We believe that for any Mundus and other exchange

programmes’ practitioners it can be of great interest to analyse students’ pre-sojourn fears as well as problems and challenges encountered after arrival. Their optimistic plans after obtaining the European Masters degree and after having increased their career opportunities as well as expressed estimations about the value and benefits of studying in Europe at EMMCs form a testimony of the success of the Mundus Programme’s ideas.

Previous experience in European Union countries, other alternatives and offers of scholarships

It used to be important for the performance, at least initially, whether students had any other experience in European Union countries before. Any kind of familiarity with European culture and/ or encounter with higher education influenced the “hard” or “easy beginning” and the whole experience.

Four of nine students had some experience during educationally or professionally oriented visits to European Union countries. Mario from Nicaragua recollects his endeavours to get scholarships blocked by his insufficient language skills: “I applied for admission to several universities in different countries, but I could not be admitted due to the fact that my English level was quite low. Therefore, I decided on investing the savings of five long years, on an English course, this time in London, where I lived for almost eight months” (**Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development**). Siang Fung from Malaysia recalls her previous stay in the EU like this: “As part of my Bachelors, I spent one year in Germany at the Technische Universität Hamburg-Harburg (TUHH). Due to this stay, I know Hamburg very well and I speak German. Therefore, I decided to start my search there” (**Siang Fung, Malaysia, Materials Science**). Their two colleagues had a different kind of encounter with the EU countries and the Europeans. Charles from the Ivory Coast participated during his high school times in a quiz on general knowledge in Brussels in 1997, and Charbel from Lebanon visited Europe as an agricultural engineer and plant protection specialist and spent one month of training in 2004 in France.

Some students haven’t had other alternatives and didn’t apply for other scholarships – like Khady from Senegal – while others were searching intensively for opportunities abroad before – like Rashid from Ghana. He was looking to work placement, has got a job at Ghana Health Service and started searching for other Masters courses. As a result of his endeavours he has gained admission at Copenhagen University but without a scholarship.

Sources of information about the programme, Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses and scholarship

The majority of authors mentioned how they had learned about the Erasmus Mundus programme, their Masters programme and about the possibility of obtaining Erasmus Mundus scholarship.

Siang Fung from Malaysia and Martha from Indonesia were informed at their universities. Siang Fung learned of it during her stay at the Technische Universität Hamburg-Harburg from the coordinator of the Materials Science Masters Course: “I spoke with the coordinator of the Materials Science Masters course, Prof. Karl Schulte [coordinator of MSMC] about my interest in studying that Masters. In this conversation, Prof. Schulte told me about a new Masters programme that the TUHH was planning to launch that year. This programme, the European Masters in Materials Science (EMMS), was different from the conventional Masters Course (...) Prof. Schulte explained to me that this course was part of a plan designed by the European Union, called Erasmus Mundus, to make Europe one of the most important places to do research and develop new technologies. This characteristic sounded interesting and I decided to enroll” **(Siang Fung, Malaysia, Materials Science)**. Martha explains it like this: “I applied for a scholarship to continue my studies in Salamanca, Spain. I knew about this scholarship from my Spanish teacher” **(Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory)**.

Media and the internet were other information channels. Khady got information from a university department member and on TV: “Fortunately, in 2003 one of those responsible in charge of the department [told me] ‘Next year we will enlarge the Programme to third countries’. It was in these terms that I heard talk about the Erasmus Mundus programme on the channel TV Euronews. Two years later I was selected for the Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory and inscribed at the university of Ferrara in Italy” **(Khady, Senegal, Quaternary and Prehistory)**.

UNICEF staff and the internet helped Rashid to get to know about EMMCs: “Whilst in the university, I had the opportunity to do some work with UNICEF and made friends with some of their staff. After I had completed my study at the university, one of my friends at UNICEF, who had been a past student of tropEd strongly advised me to look for study opportunities on the internet” **(Rashid, Ghana, International Health)**.

A friend working in FAO informed Mario: “Suddenly, a friend of mine working for the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), phoned to tell me he had some information concerning an International Masters of Science in Rural Development that would take place in Europe, in four different universities. I was advised to send application form if I was interested” **(Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development)**.

Reasons for choosing study in Europe

Charbel and Martha pointed out academic motivations as determinants of their choice of Europe as an educational destination. Charbel was trying to find a study programme that does not exist at his home country but at the same time is so needed and essential in Lebanon: “Studies that do not exist as yet in the universities, like viticulture and oenology, despite the fact

that the sector of wine is under development in Lebanon where we find about 27 000 ha of vineyards with a production of 6.5 million bottles of wine per year. This problem obliges those who are interested in these subjects to travel to Europe” (**Charbel, Lebanon, Vine, Wine and Terroir Management**). Martha was inspired by the appeal of a scientific career and the ambition to be like her professors (whom she admired): “I have to study abroad, I want to be like my archaeology professors, they are charming, they are critical, and they are very knowledgeable” (**Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory**).

Diego from Argentina had both academic and personal reasons. His parents are Italian and Italy as a location of partner university of his MERIT European Masters attracted him as strongly as his scientific interest for the subject: “I wanted to develop my interests in the research field, and that is something one can only do when studying abroad with a scholarship” (**Diego, Argentina, Research on Information and Communication Technologies**).

Career issues and a desire to develop professional expertise by working in international health organisations motivated Rashid. So it was for professional reasons he wanted to follow a Masters programme abroad, similarly to the case of Khady from Masters of Quaternary and Prehistory. She decided to study in Europe because there was no opportunity to get a degree in her discipline in Senegal: “When I was doing my BA in Prehistory in my country I was aware that after this degree there wasn’t any opportunity to take a Master or PhD programme because all of our specialists are now pensioners. And therefore in Senegal it’s not a tradition for parents to give a school fee abroad in engineering; medical sciences and even the national scholarships are dedicated to the national priority and obviously archaeology isn’t one for a poor country!” (**Khady, Senegal, Quaternary and Prehistory**). Mario’s tutor advised him to start collaboration with a programme sponsored by the EU as the best way towards his professional progress: “Fortunately, I always had a tutor at the university who advised me wisely in times of uncertainties, especially during my graduating dissertation project. This professor advised me to start as a volunteer within a development and cooperation programme sponsored by the European Union, which would help me to gain experience and to collect valuable data for my thesis”. They both knew that it would bolster Mario’s career as they were aware that “presently, it is hard to find rewarding job positions, not only in developed countries but also in developing regions and countries with emerging economies. Employers are always looking for qualified people, with sound academic backgrounds and significant experience, capable of speaking one or more foreign language and capable likewise of joining, and working with multicultural and multinational teams” (**Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development**).

Non-educational/ scientific or not professionally oriented factors were important for Charbel and Martha. Charbel states that he wanted to get – apart from knowledge which was not possible to acquire at home – also contacts and cultural awareness. He agrees with official documents launching and describing the Programme when he presents Mundus as a tool of global understanding: “Erasmus Mundus, a new global scheme, enhances not only the quality and the attractiveness of European higher education worldwide but also, with the Masters courses and the scholarships, provides a framework to promote valuable exchange and dialogue between cultures. Erasmus Mundus is becoming a kind of communication between civilisations” (**Charbel, Lebanon, Vine, Wine and Terroir Management**). What Martha was thinking about prior to her departure to Europe was to “meet new people and new culture, and also have some new friends” (**Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory**).

Reactions to the selection results

The essays’ authors eagerly described what their reaction was after notification of the results. It varied from belief in his/her good luck to considering it as incredible and astonishing. From hesitation and sadness caused by the necessity to leave the nearest and dearest which usually accompanied the excitement of these new undertakings to resolution of serious preparation for changing their life-style and facing challenges after relocation. Khady asks questions: “Why Italy? I don’t know. Would I speak Italian at this time? I don’t think so. Did my name please the Italian jury during the repartition of the selected students? And she answers herself: “I don’t know but I’m very glad to be here because Erasmus Mundus allows to me to live my passion, my dream ‘being an archaeologist’ in Prehistory” (**Khady, Senegal, Quaternary and Prehistory**).

Rashid in his first reaction to being accepted to the Programme could not believe it. Then he was uncertain whether he would be “good enough” for the Erasmus Mundus course. He also confesses to feeling very lucky: “I became conscious of getting to a next level, but Erasmus Mundus never appeared real to me considering the travelling involved and the entire course description, which sounded too impossible for an African student” (**Rashid, Ghana, International Health**).

Marta describes her hesitation and decision making process: “But then, there was still the problem, which scholarship should I choose? Spanish scholarship or Erasmus Mundus? Agh, this was one of the hardest moments in my life. I tried to learn about both of the programmes, as much as possible, and finally I convinced myself, I WILL TAKE THE MUNDUS SCHOLARSHIP. And I did, that’s why I am here now, typing letter by letter on my keyboard, trying to fix up the idea in my head. The beautiful song “Love Generation” escorts my finger to continue my story” (**Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory**).

Mario – whom we got to know personally as a very serious and mature person, due to his participation in our seminar – presented profound and thoughtful resolutions connected with his election to the programme: “Suddenly, once I accepted that studying this Masters programme abroad was not a dream, I began to realise that in order to reach important goals in life, one must prepare mentally for it. I knew I was moving to Europe, not to work as a cleaner or a bartender to earn a living, but to study at university, in the way I always wanted (...) When I was accepted on this programme, curiously, I felt myself torn between two different feelings. On the one hand, I felt very proud because I had finally achieved what I had always been fighting for. However, on the other hand, I regretted leaving behind my loved ones, my friends, my job and my country. I began to feel sad, even though I knew it was impossible to have everything you want in life at the same time. I knew, I had to carry on with what I started a long time ago” (**Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development**)

Charbel describes his reaction as very positive, moreover that “the school has sent many papers concerning our scholarship, the Programme Erasmus Mundus and the list of my future colleagues” (**Charbel, Lebanon, Vine, Wine and Terroir Management**).

Opinions about Masters Courses staff, content, organisation and management

The authors gave many comments about the following aspects of Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses: the academic (professional) and pedagogic quality of teaching, staffs’ availability and attitudes towards students, composition and content of curriculum, organisation of teaching, local language training and language of instruction at their courses, and integration activities organised by hosting institutions. Let us look at their opinions about Masters Courses grouped in terms of staff, content, organisation and management.

The academic (professional) and pedagogic quality of teaching, academic staff’s availability and attitude towards students, help, access to and time devoted to students from the professors and service obtained from the administrative staff.

High-ranking opinions about the quality of teaching were expressed by Khady and Siang, while some of Marthas’ assessment were rather not enthusiastic. Siang evaluates very highly the professionalism and engagement of the academic teachers: “EMMS students are taught by leading professors and senior lecturers who are interested in what qualities constitute our studies. Our instructors are devoted to the advancement of our technical knowledge” (**Siang Fung, Malaysia, Materials Science**). A high opinion about pedagogic quality was expressed by Khady along with remarks about the attitude of academic staff towards students: “Used to

maintaining a very formal relation with the professor at my national university I was stupefied by the relationship between professor and students at Ferrara, which is very convivial” (**Khady, Senegal, Quaternary and Prehistory**).

Rashid underlined advantages from contacts, provided by course organisers, with “major stakeholders in International Health”: “Some of us have been accepted for internship in the WHO headquarters in Geneva and we have also made useful contacts with these organisations (...) The training we got from this programme is up to date, and practical. We also had opportunities to meet people from the major stakeholders in International Health such as the WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, ICRC, Global Fund, MSF and some private companies like the Glaxosmithkline” (**Rashid, Ghana, International Health**).

Mario assesses highly help, attitudes and services, both in academic and administrative matters: “A key aspect to this new life dynamic is related to the fact that I have had the chance to join a diligent work team. Its members are always willing to support each other, not only on issues concerning the academic environment, but also with difficulties that take place outside university, which can influence one’s work performance” (**Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development**). What we know from Rashid is that the staff of International Health Masters office were very helpful during his visa application process. The intensive information exchange and friendly attitude of German staff is shown by the fragments of emails included in his essay.

Composition and content of Masters curriculum

Rashid pointed to two aspects of his course curriculum, which formed his opposing reviews. One was his appreciation of the possibility to develop practical skills provided to students of International Health Masters: “Another important objective met by this programme is accessibility to information. Before this programme I did not know how to access health materials from websites like the WHO, Pubmed, MeSH and many others. But now, I know where to look for any information at any time” The second was a disappointing lack of a flexible programme and elective paths: “Some of us would have preferred to take some courses and not others. I am in track one, and I think that this track is more suitable for people with a medical degree, which I am not. The paradox is that priority is given to the Erasmus Mundus student and non-Erasmus students would not get places for some of the courses. For example, we did some courses in TB and Clinical HIV in Bergen. It was not interesting for the non-medics amongst us (including me) and the medics who where non-Erasmus could not get places because it was full. This had affected our performance and enthusiasm in many instances” (**Rashid, Ghana, International Health**).

Unconventional methods of teaching found Siang’s positive reception: “At times, teaching is extended to outside the classroom. Prof. Dr. Karl-Heinz Schwalbe, head of Institute for Materials Research, GKSS research institute, offers a one day excursion to the institute. These unconditional resource sharing certainly broaden our horizon of contemporary research and development” **(Siang Fung, Malaysia, Materials Science)**.

Organisation of the Masters course

Some aspects concerning organisation of Quaternary and Prehistory Masters course were negatively assessed by Martha: “The institute changed our schedule more than twenty times, and I had to cancel so many things that I planned before. If I can be honest, this is one of the disappointing experiences in this programme (...) In a month we have classes only two weeks for four modules. So, each module intensively will be given in three days, from nine to six o’clock. It was tiring, but I like some modules they gave. Because when I was in Indonesia, I never had those lessons. Each module we had one paper to write and also in the end we will have a last examination. But in another case, in one month we only had one week of classes. The schedule of Masters degree here depends on the professors’ schedule. So every time they wanted, they could change the timetable” **(Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory)**. Other essays’ authors did not express any substantial complaints about operation and management of their courses.

Local language training and language of instruction

Siang Fung participated in a language course: “TUHH had provided us with a two weeks intensive German language course. With small fees paid, this gave us an option to spend our time wisely prior to school opening” **(Siang Fung, Malaysia, Materials Science)**. Most of Charles’ lectures were given in Italian, which he had never learned before, “therefore – he writes – I was extremely happy to find out that the problem has already been taken into account by the Erasmus Mundus leaders who have already signed me up for the Italian courses, So I started attending at the same time language and archaeological lessons” **(Charles, the Ivory Coast, Quaternary and Prehistory)**.

Siang and Charles seem to be satisfied with the language training offered, as opposed to Rashid, Martha and Khady. They commented on two aspects in a negative way: insufficient local language training and teaching in the local language without students’ proper skills and linguistic preparation: “We also had some major problems with the language. In Berlin, it was ok because we had German lessons every week but here in France, we had French lessons for only one week, which is inadequate. This made our stay a little difficult. This problem was not encountered in Norway, because

English is popular amongst the Norwegians” (**Rashid, Ghana, International Health**); “Another difficulty is that sometimes it’s quite difficult to understand in the beginning when some teachers explained [content] in Portuguese. But some of our professors spoke in Portuguese and in English. But, if the class was given only in Portuguese, sometimes I asked myself, “What is the purpose of taking students from third countries who are not Portuguese speakers?” I noticed that some professors speak English very well, but they didn’t use it in the classroom. So, the final result, I couldn’t understand any things from the class” (**Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory**). Khady was disappointed with instruction in Italian directed to students without proper linguistic preparation: “The prime course was about the evolution of animals, you can imagine the disaster a simultaneous course of evolution and Italian language. Fortunately there was a lot of power point of very strange animals to release and give some idea of the course to foreign students. Sincerely I felt I was wasting my time there” (**Khady, Senegal, Quaternary and Prehistory**).

Khady, Diego, Siang and Charles gave interesting remarks about studying and assimilating local language and culture. “I have to say” – writes Khady – “it wasn’t my only reason, for the life of every day it was a real need to speak Italian (ask your way, any information). The persuasiveness of Italians is unbelievably efficient. With their traditional sentence ‘Mi dispiace no so l’inglese or no so il francese, sono italiano’ (I’m sorry, I don’t speak French, I’m Italian) they don’t give you any choice! Then in less than three months I spoke Italian. Survival question oblige!” Moreover she expresses her satisfaction of cross-cultural gains: “At the Italian course, or centre of experimentation of the accents I was inserted in a very international group with students from Iran, China, Spain, Denmark etc (...) Then we were very different but united by a common objective ‘survive in Italy’ knowing Italian. It was a great and enriching experience. Each of us in addition to the linguistic competence learned about the system of life, culture of the other students” (**Khady, Senegal, Quaternary and Prehistory**). Diego reports “I have learned the language and incorporated much of the culture, which was amazingly familiar to me” (**Diego, Argentina, Research on Information and Communication Technologies**). Siang Fung, apart from referring to language courses, demonstrates her easy linguistic abilities “Since I spent one semester in Portugal, I learned to speak Portuguese fluently” (...) the same was happening with the Danish language” (**Siang Fung, Malaysia, Materials Science**). Due to the stay at the Technische Universität in Hamburg before starting MSMC she also learned German very well. Charles also improved his language skills very quickly: “After three months, I could express myself in Italian, at least on an intermediate level. Speaking Italian helped me overcome my language barrier and gave me a better opportunity not only for my studies, but also to communicate and conse-

quently to make friends with Italians.” (**Charles, the Ivory Coast, Quaternary and Prehistory**). Moreover, Charles explains that although archaeology lectures were conducted in Italian it did not cause much of a problem to him as his “supervisors always give the French or English version of the course or some book references and internet links for which I am very grateful. Thanks to that, I have access to all the resources of the university, like laboratories, library, gallery, bones and lithics collections etc. I have learned and I am still learning about origin, evolution phases of mankind, its environment’s, fauna and flora and prehistoric life” (**Charles, the Ivory Coast, Quaternary and Prehistory**).

Welcome and integration activities

Opinions presented by Siang and Martha about the welcome programme and the care from the coordinator and senior students were very enthusiastic: “When we arrived in Tomar, we went to a restaurant to have lunch and met with the supervisor and director of Erasmus Mundus Masters of Portugal. What a nice and warm welcome” (**Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory**); “TUHH is uncommonly good at organising interactive freshman orientation activities. The International Food Fair was particularly amazing. There we were spoiled with delicious cuisine and various foods from countries all over the world. Kyrgyzstan dancers definitely elevated the merriness of the event to the highest level. Besides, I was thrilled to learn and perform Angklung (a type of Indone musicals) in a group for welcoming ceremony. Also, exciting guided tours around Hamburg were offered. Trips out of Hamburg, such as to Berlin were partially sponsored by the university. The benefits given by TUHH to students are immeasurably impressive (...) As a student of the EMMS programme, we get extra advantages. Co-coordinator and senior students of EMMS were on hand to pass out essential information and all kinds of assistance too. I had so much fun and I hoped this orientation activity was not going to end” (**Siang Fung, Malaysia, Materials Science**).

Charles recalls how he arrived in Ferrara: “(...) All modern conveniences were already waiting for me. The Erasmus Mundus instructors of Ferrara’s university had already organised everything for my studying”. He describes his initial feelings of loneliness and getting lost: “Despite wonderful living conditions in my room, the first day was too hard for me to bear. I realised that I am all alone in a host country with no friends and parents to fall back on. That was the beginning... “. However, soon his “perception of the situation [he found himself in] had undergone a spectacular change”: “All of a sudden I noticed that I am not alone. The people I met greeted me with such warm feelings that all of my fears about being alone and rejected as a foreigner have immediately disappeared” (**Charles, the Ivory Coast, Quaternary and Prehistory**). He describes spending free time and studying together,

cooking and eating, playing football and visiting the city of Ferrara in the company of other international students and concludes – “All this makes me feel comfortable in a totally host country and yet so close, thanks to the friendly attitude of the surrounding”.

Life at the university and interactions with local and other international students. The feeling of integration and acceptance

The analysis of students' narrations was also targeted to investigate the social life of Mundus students. We were trying to find remarks commenting on the following problems: *How does the student assess life at the university and his/her interactions with local and other international students? Does the student have friends at university? Was it difficult or easy to get into contact / friendship with European students? Does the student feel integrated / accepted?*

Charbel relates that he has got friends and feels very integrated due to common activities like contacts with French families, being invited to their homes, going out together as well as common cooking events and country culture presentations: “Also, by participation to many activities in the city of Angers like going to church on Sunday or visiting museums, I have made many contacts with French families who invite me to their houses to discuss the situation in my country and to communicate. Adding to that, I have had two interviews with the radio RCF Anjou (*Radio des Chrétiens Français*) about the religions in Lebanon and an interview with the newspaper *Anjou Agricole* during my visit to the exhibition SIVAL in the park of exposition of Angers” (**Charbel, Lebanon, Vine, Wine and Terroir Management**).

Khady made interesting and thought-provoking observations concerning her initial prejudices about Europeans' racism and “complex of superiority” over Africans which were promptly abandoned: “Ferrara is a very nice city between history and modernity but my first days were really boring. No friends, or any external contact: university – residence with the same trajectory. Indeed like lots of foreigners I came to Italy with my prejudices about Europeans their racism, complex of superiority towards black peoples... and then was naturally contained by the virus of foreign students that I can name ‘Syndrome or Regroupment Between Foreign’. Fortunately I ‘diagnose’ my illness and quickly find the medicine: be in contact with Italians (...) To deny racism is not my objective but I would like to say that sometimes I’m a victim of racism of one person but every day at least ten persons [express] to me their affection and give the desire to continue. And finally I understood why we are living in a world of war, each of us has his own conception of our fellow creatures based on the stereotypes established by his community” (**Khady, Senegal, Quaternary and Prehistory**). She also shares her noteworthy opinions about interpersonal relations in

and outside campus: “I noticed that at the university students are very kind, sociable. At one moment I thought to myself and asked: ‘Why do I feel good at the university and bad outside?’ Nevertheless the kind people that I meet outside are the sons and daughters of the persons that I meet at the university. It was the “deciding moment”. I can’t affirm to have one billion friends but I can say that every day some people demonstrate to you the contrast of your preconceptual idea of them” (**Khady, Senegal, Quaternary and Prehistory**).

Ricardo describes only his contacts with other participants of EMMS – Joint European Masters Programme in Materials Science. He has established contact with students and has been accepted by them. He appreciates the opportunity to learn about Europe and European culture, as well as the possibility to come into contact with international students. He does not express any negative opinions and his essay reveals admiration of cross-cultural encounters and satisfaction with his social life: “As my new classmates started to arrive, I realised that our group has really interesting characteristics, as does our background. All of us come from different countries. Our group is composed of Ilya (Russia), Natalya (Ukraine), Orley (Brazil), and me (Mexico). For me it was really amazing and interesting to see how people with different cultures and traditions have now something in common (...) what was even more amazing was the way in which our cultures get mixed. The every-day interaction and building of friendships led to changes in us” (**Ricardo, Mexico, Materials Science**). Charles recollects his beginning of studying as full of unexpected, nice surprises in terms of social contacts: “After this lesson almost all of my classmates came to me trying to talk and find out about my studies, my country and the reason I came to Italy. Moreover, I’m really excited about having met new people and finding myself in a totally new environment. I immediately realised that this Masters programme will give me lots of opportunities to pursue my academic career” (**Charles, the Ivory Coast, Quaternary and Prehistory**).

Fears before coming to Europe and to study at the Mundus Programme

Mario’s main fears before coming to study at his Rural Development Mundus Programme was “how, after many years to be a student again” and whether he will or will not “be accepted by Europeans”: “I must say that I was also afraid of not being accepted by Europeans as a normal student; I feared I could be perceived as an immigrant labourer, since the immigration phenomenon has been increasing within the European Union member states. Owing to this, many Latin American people have found an opportunity to work and live here recently” (**Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development**). He also describes his concerns about practical matters: “I worried about my accommodation in Europe, as I failed to find something suitable

through the university residence department, the booking process being impossible from my country. I had no other option, therefore, than travelling without a place waiting for me on my arrival. I thought that everything could be arranged along the way, after all, one of the most difficult steps was already done” (**Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development**).

Rashid initially thought that he hadn't enough experience to apply, therefore he was anticipating problems and was unconvinced about his performance as a Mundus student. Mario's anxieties were of a slightly different nature: “As it was a long time since I had left studies, I was afraid to fail in such a sound Masters programme since reading and writing papers until late at night would not be easy for me. Another thing that made me feel uneasy was the fact that I would have to attend at least two institutions in two different countries, which would mean to face not only a new city dynamic, but also a new university environment, in a broad sense” (**Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development**).

Problems before and after arrival to study in a European Union country

The main problem that has arisen before the student's arrival to a European Union country was visa issuing. It was mentioned by Rashid, who described in his essay visa problems, especially with the German embassy.

When it concerns problems that students faced during studies there were several troubling factors like language (daily life use and studying in a foreign language), accommodation (the conditions and the price), location of the hosting university (in a small town not having much to offer culturally, but also even lacking basic facilities – like transportation and communication services) and high costs of living and studying. These issues will be enlightened beneath.

Language problems in not only using Portuguese and Italian in daily life, but also studying in those languages were a matter of stress and inconvenience for Martha and Khady and have already been brought to light above in the section devoted to comments on *Local language training and language of instruction* issues in the frame of our fourth research problem – assessment of the course in students' perception.

Concerning location, of some interest can be the different situation (and opinions shaped by it) of living in a small town, in terms of the attractiveness of staying in such a place, given by two students. One from our Indonesian essay author – Martha, and the other (obtained in the questionnaire survey and cited in Chapter I), from one Ukrainian respondent, who also was located in a small municipality, but – oppositely – appreciated living in a small community. Martha relates many problems arising from the fact that she had to live in a small town without the necessary services for a “foreign university student” and she is embittered by the fact that she has been

moved to small Mação instead of studying in Tomar – a the bigger university centre: “But then everything changed suddenly. The supervisor told me that I had to pack my things because I had to move to another place to study, Mação. I opened my guide book, and searched for Mação, but I couldn’t find it. But in the end I noticed that Mação is a small tiny village, ± 70 kilometres from Tomar. In the beginning there were so many questions in my mind, “why do they move me to Mação”? “Why can’t I stay in Tomar with my friends, and why did the Erasmus Mundus students last year stay in Tomar, and I have to go to Mação”? But the questions stopped in the middle of my tongue” **(Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory)**. Martha claims that there were “some cases that are not matched between Erasmus Mundus objectives and the reality” **(Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory)**. She also complained of accommodation troubles: “Our neighbour who lived under our building, two old persons, always teasing us, even though we didn’t do anything wrong, but they always came and knocked on our door saying that we made some noise” **(Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory)**. Despite many problems and troubles Martha, summing up her essay, expressed her gratitude for the opportunity of studying with a scholarship in Europe given to her: “But anyway, I don’t want to end this story with only complicated stories, there are also some lovely stories I have here. For instance, even though sometimes we have so many things to do for the modules and apart from the Masters programme, but I tried to enjoy. Sometimes I helped the museum to make a guide, and from this activity I learned how to meet people, to speak more in their language, and also gained knowledge of Pedagogy. In the future also, I think this Mundus programme must be very useful for my country and me. I feel I am very lucky because I got this scholarship, even though there are some cases that are not matched between Erasmus Mundus objectives and the reality” **(Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory)**.

The insufficient amount of scholarship and other financial troubles are described by Rashid: “Last but not least, our scholarship funds is not enough for us, considering our travelling and settling expenditure. In fact, each place we go to, we need to get cooking materials like pots, pans and cutlery amongst others. We cannot carry this from one city to the other because it will increase the weight of our luggage. Presently, I have booked a flight for up 724 Euros to go to Ghana tomorrow 30/04/06 to get data for my thesis work. Most scholarships like the DAAD and the Quota in Norway, provide additional funds for the thesis work abroad which is not applicable in the case of Erasmus. In fact, it had taken many months to save this money to obtain a laptop and now voila (...) We had some problems with online transactions in our stay here in Europe, particularly with booking flights. We were sent to Sparkasse in Berlin to open our bank accounts and given only EC cards which we cannot use to book flights via the internet. We always

have to depend on our European friends for this and it makes us dependants each time we need to travel or to buy anything via the internet” (**Rashid, Ghana, International Health**).

Some problematic issues were considered as challenging for students. Mario and Khady refer to challenges of a different nature – connected with coming back to a studying regimen after a break and with unfamiliar procedures and rules used in the education process: “My main challenge once I begun classes was to retake the work rhythm I left behind when I obtained my first university degree nine years ago. I knew that starting all over again would not be easy at all, but I had no other choice if I wanted to fulfil my dreams, and respond to the expectations of all people who had helped me out during the application process. Thus, although I was not here to be the best, I would work hard to survive through difficult moments” (**Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development**); “Contrary to my university of origin, at Ferrara the exams are oral (...). At first, I choose the very easy way, I thought it was a very strange system and very efficient to find weakness. Now after some encounters I indeed realised that the odd was me as I wanted to conserve my system of my old university in another different one. The good reaction was what I can improve with this system. I improved my oral expression; my expression in front of the public...” (**Khady, Senegal, Quaternary and Prehistory**). Charles is still enthused by facing cross-cultural challenges: “There is yet another thing for me to learn, which is Italian culture and mentality. Day by day I find out about new things and therefore open a completely new and exciting horizons for myself” (**Charles, the Ivory Coast, Quaternary and Prehistory**).

Plans after obtaining the European Masters degree. Value and benefits from studying in the EU at Erasmus Mundus Masters Course

Khady plans to come back to Senegal and be a teacher, return to his home country is also declared by Charbel. Mario wrote about his plans to come back to Nicaragua and confirmed it when he came to Poznan. He wants to get a good education in Europe and then focus on developing agriculture in his country, after coming back to his job position in a Dutch organisation. He plans everything thoroughly “It is better to complete my academic engagements now, because when I go back to my country, my priorities will be different” (**Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development**). “On completion of this study” – writes Rashid – “I plan to go to Ghana and continue working for the Ghana Health Service for at least two years. This would give me enough experience to work for the WHO, or UNICEF, WFP etc., in the nearest future” (**Rashid, Ghana, International Health**). As he planned and declared – he did after graduation. He is a public health nutritionist and disease control specialist in Accra, currently working for a local NGO, *The Community Initiatives for Disease Control (CIDC)* to help to reduce

the impact of malnutrition and the incidence of infectious diseases amongst children in rural regions of Northern Ghana.

Finally we were interested in the value of the Mundus programme. The project team elaborated essays trying to find answers to questions like the following: *What benefits students gained from Mundus? How does the student think the European Masters degree will help him/her in further career and change entire life?*

The authors expressed viewpoints both pointing at personal development as well as at benefits for their co-nationals after transfer of knowledge and skills gained in Europe to their home country. The joy of travelling and experiencing Europe accompanied altruistic and global thinking gained from cross-cultural experience. Besides individual future work endeavours and concerns we found some general remarks regarding the future of the Programme and care about other students or potential candidates for Mundus scholarship. Let us give the voice to Mundus students who wrote about the Programme benefits – for themselves and for others.

“I would like to say thank you for the Erasmus Mundus programme” – writes Martha – “for giving us the opportunity to study in Europe. I hope in the next period, there will be some better things to make. In general, I like very much to be one of the Mundus students, although in the process there are so many new bad and good experiences to mature my mind and myself” (**Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory**). Her colleague from Malaysia also reflects generally that the experience gained in the Erasmus Mundus programme will help her to be a better specialist, but furthermore also that it has already helped her to develop her personality: “I consider that the Erasmus Mundus course does not only give me the tools to be a better professional; but also it helped me to grow up as a person” (**Siang Fung, Malaysia, Materials Science**).

An archaeologist from Senegal believes that the European Masters degree will help her and her country to develop: “At last Erasmus Mundus and precisely the Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory is not uniquely an opportunity for me to achieve my formation but an opportunity for my country to renew teaching profession in Prehistory” (**Khady, Senegal, Quaternary and Prehistory**). A noble purpose of return and transfer of knowledge leading to brain gain for Nicaragua guided Mario: “One of the most important things within the Erasmus Mundus Programme, is the opportunity I have been given to set up a network of friends from different countries, which will allow me in future to have contacts for advices and opinions concerning different development settings. This will enable me to count on suitable inputs in order to design accurate strategies and projects to overcome inequality and poverty, mainly in rural areas (...) Erasmus Mundus has definitely been a lucky happening in my life. I am sure that once I have completed the study programme everything will be different as I will be ready

not only to start new studies at an upper level, but also to work in favour of Nicaragua development (**Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development**).

Experiencing the Old Continent, its culture and landscapes, a determination to “learn” Europe and Europeans was noticeable in Ricardo’s, Charbel’s and Charles’ stories: “I believe that six months is not enough to acquire a big experience, even I have made a big step to enlarge my list of contacts. Every day, we have something to discover: France has given me so much but I still have Spain, Portugal and Italy. Meanwhile European countries are becoming one country, but each one has its characteristics and culture so my experience in Erasmus Mundus will be coloured and enriched by each one of these countries” (**Charbel, Lebanon, Vine, Wine and Terroir Management**); “I could visit some cities of Italy and see a lot of beautiful places. I was also able to visit other countries of the European Union, like England, France, Spain and Belgium. These trips really opened my mind and made me think a lot” (**Diego, Argentina, Research on Information and Communication Technologies**); “Summing up my experience in Italy, I can say that it’s too short in time, but full of culture’s interactions and challenges. Then I must admit that am very happy to be part of the Erasmus Mundus programme, which has first and foremost taught me to survive in a new environment and discover lots of things I have never heard of. With all certainty I will gain much from the programme, for which I am eternally grateful especially to the European Community, in particular to the University of Ferrara” (**Charles, the Ivory Coast, Quaternary and Prehistory**).

To cross-cultural experience and skills and a new, global thinking as gains from Mundus studies pointed also Khady, Charbel and Rashid: “My experience first contribute to shape my new conception of relationship with the other (coming from different culture, civilisation...) between professor and students that will serve me in my future mission of teacher. I learned at Ferrara an unbelievable generosity and disposability in the transmission of knowledge. And it’s a duty for me to come back to my country with these qualities” (**Khady, Senegal, Quaternary and Prehistory**); “Erasmus Mundus (...) provides a framework to promote valuable exchange and dialogue between cultures. Erasmus Mundus is becoming a kind of communication between civilisations. This scheme gives an opportunity to prepare for globalisation. As the world is becoming a small village, it’s very necessary to have international contacts. During my time spent in France, I have had the opportunity to participate in many conferences and expositions concerning my specialisation. Profiting from these occasions, I have made many contacts with specialists or students and why not make a business together in future!” (**Charbel, Lebanon, Vine, Wine and Terroir Management**); “Finally, in less than one year, I have visited at least five European countries: Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Norway and now – France. All these

visits are study related. And I still have plans to visit some few others when I submit my thesis” (**Rashid, Ghana, International Health**)

According to Rashid, education within Mundus and contacts still maintained with his Masters organisers are crucial for the perspectives of future work: “My participation in the Erasmus Mundus programme had prepared me well enough to work anywhere in the world. I have met and worked in groups with people from all over the world – from Israel, China, India, USA, South America, Iraq, and most African and European countries. And this has met my objective of participating in the Programme – to prepare myself for International Health assignments worldwide (...) the training we got from this programme is up to date, and practical (...) We are also constantly up-dated by emails on International Health related job postings, from Berlin office especially. Many of us have already applied and still wait for response” (**Rashid, Ghana, International Health**). Mundus students know that nowadays academic research culture needs networking with peers and experts in the field of study from all over the world. As Rashid stated, “know-who” – through having opportunities of contacts with experts in their fields of international renown and joining existing and establishing new scientific network – is as much important as “know-how” today.

In the authors’ conclusions we found some general remarks and reflections like: “I truly believe that all these will open more doors which leads me to a brighter future” (**Ricardo, Mexico, Materials Science**); “I am not the same person that came here, almost one year ago. I am sure, that the experience has made me better” (**Diego, Argentina, Research on Information and Communication Technologies**). Martha appreciates the possibility “to know other cultures and to get friends” (**Martha, Indonesia, Quaternary and Prehistory**) while Mario is sure that the Programme will help him to get new career prospects and is grateful for the chance “to get opportunity of better education” (**Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development**).

Ricardo, invited by the European Commission to Mundus Students Seminar, comments in an interesting way on this first meeting of more than 200 students in Brussels. As he remarks, only then he realized the efforts of the European Union: “Looking at all these students [of Erasmus Mundus] made me understand the magnitude of the European Union’s effort to convert Europe into one of the most important research centres and technology developers. This experience allowed me to realise that we are part of a big project whose aim is to promote the cooperation between Europe and the rest of the world” (**Ricardo, Mexico, Materials Science**).

The essays sent at the competition’s call had positive and optimistic tones and give us grounds to confirm that Mundus ideas of increasing third countries’ education capacities in order to help in their development found a proper realisation within the first phase of the Programme implementation. In this context, Mario’s message will be the best to conclude this text:

"I would like to finish this essay by sending a message of hope to those who live and fight in developing countries and less favoured areas of the rural world, still waiting for the opportunity which might change their lives, and to the people who work behind them. I hope they receive the help I have received myself from the Erasmus Mundus Programme" **(Mario, Nicaragua, Rural Development)**.

2. MUNDUS STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCE IN EUROPE – VOICE OF STUDENTS

Kpra Dibie Charles,

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Università degli studi di Ferrara – Italy

Master “Quaternary and Prehistory Italy-Ferrara, February 5th 2006.

“MY MUNDUS EXPERIENCE”

As a student and a citizen of the Ivory Coast(West Africa), attending now the University of Ferrara in one of the Erasmus Mundus Master Courses “Quaternary and Prehistory” which foresees an interdisciplinary formation, correlated by numerous activities of laboratory and ground, within the archaeological, anthropological and naturalistic disciplines.

Living in Italy, I would like to elaborate on my experience concerning studying and living in the European Union.

Studying at Ferrara’s University

I started the master courses in October 2005, and my first lesson was “Evolution of vertebrates”, which impressed me to the utmost by its elaborated explanations. At the lesson I got to know about mammals’ disappearance and the phases of embryogenesis which was shown by the microscope and projection of slide. This has contributed largely to a new conceptual and epistemological approach regarding my own background.

After this lesson almost all of my classmates came to me trying to talk and find out about my studies, my country and the reason I came to Italy.

Moreover, I’m really excited about having met new people and finding myself in a totally new environment. I immediately realized that this Master program will give me lots of opportunities to pursue my academic career.

The first thing I dealt with during my studies was the Italian language, as most of the lectures are in Italian, which I have never learned before. (fortunately my professors understand at least French or English – the languages I speak.).

Therefore I was extremely happy to find out that the problem has already been taken into account by the Erasmus Mundus leaders who have

already signed me up for the Italian courses, So I started attending at the same time to language and archeological lessons.

After three months, I could express myself in Italian, at least on an intermediate level. Speaking Italian helped me overcome my language barrier and gave me a better opportunity not only for my studies, but also to communicate and consequently to make friends with Italians.

Concerning, archeology lessons, my supervisors always give the French or English version of the course or some books references and internet links for which I am very grateful. Thanks to that, I have access to all the resources of the university like laboratories, library, gallery, bones and lithics collections etc. I have learnt and am still learning about origin, evolution phases of mankind, its environment's fauna and flora and prehistoric life.

There is yet another thing for me to learn, which is Italian culture and mentality. Day by day I find out about new thing and therefore open a completely new and exciting horizon for myself.

Living in European Union

I arrived to Ferrara on the 3rd of October 2005 in the afternoon, where I have to say that all modern conveniences were already waiting for me. The Erasmus Mundus instructors of Ferrara's university had already organized everything for my studying.

Despite wonderful living conditions in my room, the first day was too hard for me to bear. I realized that I am all alone in a host country with no friends and parents to fall back on. That was the beginning...

However, no sooner had I gone to the University than my whole perception of the situation I found myself in, had undergone a spectacular change. All of a sudden I noticed that I am not alone. The people I met greeted me with such warm feelings that all of my fears about being alone and rejected as a foreigner immediately disappeared.

So the following days I made friends with many students from the university and also from my student hotel. Apart from Italians these were the students from different countries, such as Iran, Jordan, Spain, China, Senegal, Denmark, Algeria and so on and so forth. We started to gather round each other, then spending our time studying and eating together ; also visiting the city of Ferrara and others.

Everyone of us proposed to cook his national or traditional dishes as a way to introduce part of his culture. So far I have tasted at the so-called "food party", Jordanian, Algerian, Italian, Senegalese and Iranian food...

At the weekends, when there were no exams scheduled, I often accept invitations from my Italian classmates to play "calcio"(football) and then go to a party. All this makes me feel comfortable in a totally host country and yet so close thanks to the friendly attitude of the surrounding.

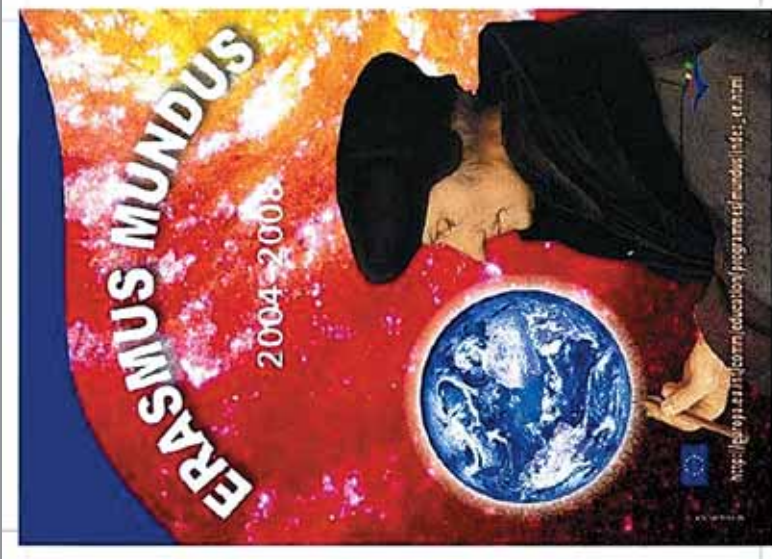
Summing up my experience in Italy, I can say that it's too short in time, but full of culture's interactions and challenges. Then I must admit that am very happy to be part of Erasmus Mundus program, which has first and foremost taught me to survive in a new environment and discover lots of thing I have never heard of.

With all certainty I will gain much from the program, for which I am eternally grateful especially to the European Community, in particular the University of Ferrara.

REMARK: Is joined photographs in a power point



The Erasmus Mundus program is a cooperation and mobility program in the field of higher education. It aims to enhance quality in European higher education and to promote intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries



Studying in the UE



After this lesson almost all of my classmates came to me, trying to talk and find out about my studies, my country and the reason I came to Italy. I'm really excited about having met new people and finding myself in a totally new environment



I got involved in laboratories at universities in Austria, Italy, France and Spain; ...International archeological conference in Portugal
I got to know at least 3 languages of the EU



Day by day I find out about new things and therefore open a completely new and exciting horizon for myself.





Archeological excavation in Italy, Poland an Austria



I immediately realized that this Master program will give me lots of opportunities to pursue my academic carrier



Living in the UE



... all this makes me feel comfortable in a totally host country and yet so close... thanks to the friendly attitude of the surrounding...





FOOD PARTIES



VISITING ITALY



ROME



VENICE



FERRARA



I am so happy to be part of Erasmus Mundus program, Which has foremost given me opportunity to have a top-quality formation in a high institution.

Then, taught me to live in a new environment and discover lots of things... learning languages, cultures, mentalities etc



I gained much from this study program, for which I am eternally grateful especially to the European Community



If you are a graduate student and would like to pursue your education with good scholarships in remarkable conditions, then European Union Universities and institutions are centres of excellence in learning around the world

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html

Name: Abdulai Rashid
Master Course: European Masters in International Health
University: Victor Segalen University Bordeaux 2
Age: 27
Country: Ghana

MY MUNDUS EXPERIENCE

Introduction

My experience with the Erasmus Mundus program is a rather spectacular one and my colleagues always like to hear me narrate it to them whenever such matters cropped up in our routine discussions. I hope that this medium provides me with an opportunity to share my unique experience with the whole world and to mention some of the challenges so that future students may not encounter it.

My narration will begin with how I got information about the program, motivations for application, award of scholarship, visa difficulties, arrival in Europe and studies, and how this program has influenced my career ambitions. In many of the examples in this article, I would attach some relevant email messages to support the reality of my narration.

Information about Erasmus Mundus

Having completed my B Sc in Community Nutrition successfully, my main dream was to get a job and start raising some income to support my mother who was one of the three widows after the death of my father when I was in the first year of my B Sc course at the University for development studies.

Whilst in the university, I had an opportunity to do some work with UNICEF and made friends with some of their staff. After I had completed my study at the university, one of my friends at unicef, who had been a past student of tropEd strongly advised me to look for studies opportunities on the internet. This was a direct contradictory to my ambitions as I was expecting him to offer me advise as to how to find a job, which was my dream at that time. He gave me a number of web addresses including, institute of tropical medicine in Berlin, ITG in Belgium and some others which I never took serious. I did not find any of the websites useful as they were not relevant to my quest for a job. But as my friend kept on asking me about my progress on this matter and I had nothing to tell him, I decided to look for some information at least to have something to tell him whenever he asked me again.

One of the sites I had visited was www.charite.de. I got the contact of the institute of tropical medicine in Berlin and sent an email of enquiry. I got

a rapid response, with detail information about the Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Public Health (DTMPH) and the European Masters Programme in International Health, including contact information for the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship.

I did not waste any time to contact the Erasmus Mundus contact person for information regarding the scholarship such as eligibility, application procedures and deadlines. Again, I got a rapid response addressing all my questions. The information about the programme, the international nature of the course, all the travelling involved made me perceive the programme as impossible and thereby lost any courage to send my application. In addition, my main target at this time was to first secure a job, which was also an important pre-requisite for the programme. More than that, I even needed money for more pressing needs than paying to post application materials abroad.

As my dream came true, I got a job at the Ghana Health Service as a district nutrition officer shortly after completing my studies and then life became stable for me. At this point, I became conscious of getting to a next level, but Erasmus Mundus never appeared real to me. My first impression about the reality of the programme had significantly influenced my decision not to apply.

So I tried other places where Ghanaians commonly went to study – UK, Denmark and Norway. Lucky for me, I got admission to the University of Copenhagen to study masters in international health, but without scholarship and admission fee was 85.000 DKK. This was beyond my accessibility and so I just dumped the admission letter and was then waiting for response from the other institutes that I had applied to.

Some days after I got acceptance for the MIH in Copenhagen, I got an email from the same university which was referring me to the same Erasmus Mundus that I felt unconfident to apply. Part of the email had read

“Thank you for your application for the MIH in Copenhagen.

We have been through your applications and we think there might be a chance that you will be able to obtain an Erasmus Mundus scholarship. Therefore we strongly advise you to go to the homepage <http://erasmusmundus.troped.org> and fill in the application form and sent it to the office in Berlin. They need a full application to consider if you are eligible for a scholarship.

Please apply before the 15 February... It is not possible to be considered for a scholarship if you have not filled in the Erasmus Mundus application form.

We will be a part of the selection committee and therefore we will be able to have a say on you application but you need to apply!”

I read this email together with another one I got simultaneously from Berlin which was a reminder of the application deadline and also encouraging me to apply as soon as possible.

With these two emails of motivation, I convinced myself to finally apply, at least I was not required to pay any money for application unlike other universities in Australia or the US, that entail application fee of usually 50 USD and scaring prospective students from applying.

After application, I never got any correspondence from Berlin and so I thought that my application was rejected and dumped in the dust bin. At this point my hopes were on the University of Bergen (UIB) which I applied under the Quota scholarship.

At this time, I was posted to a remote district in Ghana called Nanumba district with no internet facilities and so I had to travel each time to the city, Tamale to check my emails, to monitor the status of my applications, particular at the UIB where I got a confirmation that my application was registered and pending selection judgment. To my utmost disappointment, I got a very sad email from Bergen whose contents contained

“Your application for admission to Master degree studies at the University of Bergen financed through the Quota scholarship programme has now been processed. We regret to inform you that you have not been admitted to the programme(s) applied for. Your application was carefully considered, but it was not given priority in the final selection...”

This was a dream killing email for me. I was very disappointed and thus convinced myself to settle down at the village and do my work in the district and no longer waste my time and money to travel to the city to read emails; after all, I did not even receive an acknowledgement email from the application I sent to Berlin.

Two weeks after this incidence, whilst in the village, I bought a very beautiful brand new motorbike. So excited about it, I decided to take it to Tamale for the week end. This was on Friday June 17th. I reached Tamale in the night and noticed that there were some mosquitoes in my room that I needed an insecticide to get rid of. This I usually buy from a supermarket at a walking distance. But because of my new elegant motorbike, I decided to go downtown for it. Whilst having fun with my new bike in the downtown, I found one internet café still opened. This was almost getting to midnight. “Get in and see whatz up”, I told myself. When I open my inbox, I saw two mails amongst numerous junk ones – , *Erasmus Mundus Scholarship* and another one, *Erasmus Mundus Scholarship awarded – final notification*:

Dear Erasmus Mundus applicant:

With this email we would like to inform you that you have been chosen by the Erasmus Mundus selection committee as a recipient for the 2005/2006 Erasmus Mundus scholarship for the tropEd European Master of Science Programme in International Health. The final track distribution is pres-

ently underway and you will be informed in the coming days of your specific visa requirements along with further details. An official acceptance letter will be posted to you shortly. Please respond to this email no later than Friday June 17th, 2005 to confirm your acceptance of the scholarship and your intention to join the program for the 2005/2006 academic year.

After reading the first one, I was so confused I did not know what to do. But When I looked at my chronometer, it was still 11.34 pm so I sent a reply accepting the offer before opening the second email which read the same with an extension that “Please respond to this email no later than Monday June 20th, 2005 to confirm your acceptance of the scholarship and your intention to join the program for the 2005/2006 academic year. **If we do not hear from you, the scholarship will be awarded to another candidate.**”

After reading this mail, I got some relief and sent another acceptance email, this time stating the reasons and apologizing for my late response. On the next Monday, I had message that “Your email has been received. Congratulations. You will be hearing from Us shortly with further details”

This was indeed a very pleasing news!

Visa Application and Difficulties

I got all documents I needed for my visa application. Most of these were also faxed to the German embassy in Accra. I submitted my application and attended the interview on the same day – July 19, 2005. It went on pretty easier for me as I was holding a scholarship from the European Commission. I was assured that my visa will be ready on time.

Whilst at my work preparing for my journey to Europe, I got a phone call from an embassy official requesting me to report to the embassy in the first week of September to have my fingerprints taken. I tried to explain to them that I needed to be in Berlin for an orientation program from the 5–9th September but they told me there was nothing they could do about the appointment. I sent an email to my correspondent in Berlin about the turn of events and she negotiated with the embassy to change the appointment to a more convenient date for me and also requested them to send the fingerprints to Berlin electronically to fast-track things. She also assured me that she would do her best and facilitate the speed up of the visa processing from the Berlin travellers authority.

With some few days to the *orientation week* and still no headway, I got an email from my correspondent in Berlin, that explained the reasons for the delay and also giving me some assurance that they would do all it takes to enable me get the visa as soon as possible.

The orientation week had passed and lectures had began but I was still in Ghana. In fact, I signed my Erasmus Mundus contract whilst in Ghana. The visa process was really frustrating but we never gave up.

The visa was eventually issued, and I was able to join to colleagues who were in their 4th week in the programme. On my arrival, I was informed of an exam my colleagues were preparing to take that covers the first four-weeks lectures and I was required to also take part. I had thought that, I could be given some time to settle down and to prepare well enough for the exam but rather, I was given a folder of handouts and told to sit up and to study day and night in order to also do well in the exam as there was no other way. Well, I took the exam and was able to pass even though not everybody had passed in that exam and this was the real beginning of my Mundus Experience.

The good news was that my classmates were very supportive. They had tried to address every question that I had asked.

Challenges

Of course we had some major and minor challenges in the program. For example, some of us would have preferred to take some courses and not others. I am in track one, and personally think that this track is more suitable for people with medical degree, which I am not. But the paradox is that priority is given to the Erasmus Mundus students and non-Erasmus students would not get places for some of the courses. For example, we took some courses in TB and Clinical HIV in Bergen. These were very interesting courses but in fact, not so appealing to most of the non-medics amongst us including me and the medics who were non-Erasmus could not get places because it was full. This had affected our performance and enthusiasm in such instances.

We had some problems with online transactions in our stay here in Europe, particularly with booking flights. We were sent to Sparkasse in Berlin to open our bank accounts and given only EC cards which we cannot use to book flights via the internet. We always have to depend on our European friends for this and it makes us dependants each time we need to travel or to buy anything via the internet.

We also had some major problems with the language. In Berlin, it was ok because we had German lessons every week but here in France, we had French lessons for only one week, which is inadequate. This made our stay a little difficult. This problem was not encountered in Norway, because English is popular amongst the Norwegians.

Last but not the least, our scholarship funds is not enough for us. Considering our travelling and settling expenditure. In fact, each place we got to, we need to get cooking materials like pots, pans and cutlery amongst others. We cannot carry this from one city to the other because it will increase the weight of our luggage. Presently, I have booked a flight for up 724 Euros to go to Ghana tomorrow 30/04/06 to get data for my thesis work. Most scholarships like the DAAD and the Quota in Norway, provide

additional funds for the thesis work abroad which is not applicable in the case of Erasmus. In fact, I had taken many months to save this money to obtain a laptop and now voila!

Career Issues

My participation in the Erasmus Mundus program had prepared me well enough to work any where in the world. I have met and worked in groups with people from all over the world – from Israel, China, India, USA, South America, Iraq, and most African and European countries. We had in fact met almost all citizens in the world except few places particularly, Australia and this has met my objective of participating in the program – to prepare myself for International Health assignments worldwide.

The training we got from this program is up to date, and practical. We also had opportunities to meet people from the major stakeholders in International Health such as the WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, ICRC, Global Fund, MSF and some private companies like the Glaxosmithkline. Due to this, some of us have been accepted for internship in the WHO headquarters in Geneva and we have also made useful contacts with these organizations.

Another important objective met by this program is accessibility to information. Before, this program, I did not know how to access health materials from websites like the WHO, Pubmed, MeSH and many others. But now, I know where to look for any information at any time.

We are also constantly up-dated by emails on International Health related job postings from the Berlin office especially. Many of us have already applied and still waiting for response.

Finally, in less than one year, I have visited at least five European countries – Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Norway and now in France. All these visits are study related. And I still have plans to visit some few others when I submit my thesis.

On completion of this study, I have planned to go to Ghana and continue working for the Ghana Health Service for at least two years. This would give me enough experience to work for the WHO, or unicef, WFP etc., in the nearest future.

AND THAT WAS MY MUNDUS EXPERIENCE.

By Mario Alberto Aráuz Torres,
International Master in Rural development –
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MY MUNDUS EXPERIENCE

I. Introduction

Presently, it is hard to find rewarding job positions, not only in developed countries but also in developing regions and countries with emerging economies. Employers are always looking for qualified people, with sound academic backgrounds and significant experience, capable of speaking one or more foreign languages and capable likewise of joining, and working with, multicultural and multinational teams.



As I was about to gain my first university degree, lots of questions crossed my mind, regarding my immediate future: What could I do in order to start a career in a country like Nicaragua? Would I be able to find easily a good job position, having no work experience? How could I efficiently respond to the efforts and support received from my teachers, which enabled me to study in the capital city? What can I do in the future in order to help my family, my people and my country?

Fortunately, I always had a tutor at the university who advised me wisely in times of uncertainties, especially during my graduating dissertation project. This professor advised me to start as a volunteer within a development and cooperation programme sponsored by the European Union, which would help me to gain experience and to collect valuable data for my thesis.

This piece of advice proved to be highly precious as it allowed me to finish successfully the research project within eight months. Furthermore, the programme managers asked me to join the planning and monitoring department as a consultant, a position I held for five years. In this period I realized that my career lay far away, abroad perhaps; I also perceived my academic backgrounds and knowledge were not deep enough to face real problems, neither competitive within the field of development and cooperation projects.

I decided then to talk over with my old tutor new approaches for my professional career, which included job positions, higher education at master level, as well as a second language acquisition. In this way, I would be working and studying at the same time, first for a post-graduated degree in Economic Policy and later with English as a Foreign Language.

Once I had reached both objectives I began to think of my master degree, which at the beginning turned out to be more complicated than I thought. I applied for admission to several universities in different countries, but I could not be admitted due to the fact that my English level was quite low. Therefore, I decided on investing the savings of five long years, on an English course, this time in London, where I lived for almost eight months.

II. Erasmus Mundus, my gateway to Europe

Once the English course in London was over, I returned to Nicaragua to retake my life project, that is, the opportunity to start the master degree somewhere. Suddenly, a friend of mine working for the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), phoned to tell me he had some information with regards to an International Master of Science in Rural Development that would take place in Europe, in four different universities. I was advised to send the application forms if I was interested.



Two days later I received an answer via E-mail from the University of Cordoba Rural Development Team, who were still looking for suitable candidates in order to start the master program. I sent then an E-mail to the university admission office to get additional information, getting thus in touch with Dr. Maria del Mar Delgado, who asked me to send my resume with a cover letter, so that she could submit it to the selection procedure.

One week latter, I received a mail from Dr. Delgado informing me that my application had been sent it too late, the selection have being already closed. She advised me to check the programme website in future to be able to apply for the program for a second time. I followed instructions and reviewed every single detail of the course, which made me understand what The Erasmus Mundus Programme was about.

In this way, the International Master of Science in Rural Development – Erasmus Mundus became for me one of the main goals within my future

projects. I began, therefore, to collect all the information required for the application procedure, which took me about three months. Finally, everything was ready for a second attempt and I had just to wait for the official opening of the programme second edition.

Early in January 2004, I received a new mail from Dr. Maria del Mar Delgado, informing me the application procedure was open again, and I was able therefore to submit my application, which I did it in the middle of February. Since the selection of candidates would last up to May, I had nothing else to do but to cross my fingers and pray. But I knew this time everything I would succeed.

At the end of May 2004, the IMRD-Secretariat wrote me, in order to let me know that I was selected not only for the IMRD course, but also for the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Programme. I was so impressed I could not believe it! My departure for Europe was already clear. At that moment I was the happiest person in this world; I knew Erasmus Mundus Programme would change my life.

III. My expectations before starting the program

Once I accepted that studying this master program abroad was not a dream, I realized that in order to reach important goals in life, one must prepare mentally for it. I knew I was moving to Europe, not to work as a cleaner or a bar tender to earn a living, but to study at university, in the way I always wanted. Finally, my efforts and perseverance had been rewarded.



I deeply believe nothing happens by chance; therefore, if this were the great opportunity in my life, I would not fail; such a chance would never turn up again.

I knew I would be meeting interesting people along this new challenging stage in my life, who could give me support whenever necessary, not only during the course, but with the skills and abilities I would be needing in order to do it well.

I already imagined myself enrolled within multinational and multicultural student class sections, speaking about our countries development backgrounds and trends, sharing experience and ideas in development and cooperation with other people, learning from them how to set up new experiences in Nicaragua.

I thought I would find the right answers concerning development pathways for Nicaragua, specifically, the role of international cooperation, private sector and state agencies within this process.

I had been trying to understand why a country like Nicaragua, which has received more money in cooperation than any other in Latin America, re-



mains the country with the lowest rate of development in the world. I hoped to find some explanations within the Erasmus Mundus Programme.

IV. My fears before starting the course

When I was accepted in this programme, curiously, I felt myself torn between two different feelings.



On the one hand, I felt very proud because I had finally achieved what I had always been fighting for.

However, on the other hand, I regretted to leave behind my loved ones, my friends, my job and my country. I began to feel sad, even though I knew it is impossible to have everything you want in life at the same time. I knew, I had to carry on with what I started a long time ago.



I worried about my accommodation in Europe, as I failed to find something suitable through the university residence department, the booking process being impossible from my country. I had no other option, therefore than travelling without a place waiting for me at my arrival. I thought that everything could be arranged along the way, after all, one of the most difficult steps was already done.

As it was a long time since I had left studies, I was afraid to fail in such a sound master programme since reading and writing papers until late at night would not be easy for me. Another thing that made me felt uneasy was the fact that I would have to attend at least two institutions in two different countries, which would mean to face not only a new city dynamic, but also a new university environment in a broad sense.

I must say that I was also afraid of not being accepted by Europeans as a normal student; I feared I could be perceived as an immigrant labourer, since the immigration phenomenon has been increasing within the European Union member states. Owing to this, many Latin American people have found an opportunity to work and live here recently.

V. My challenges within the programme

My main challenge once I begun classes was to retake the work rhythm I left behind when I obtained my first university degree nine years ago. I knew that starting all over again would no be easy at all, but I had no other choice if I wanted to fulfil my dreams, and respond to the expectancies of all people who had helped me out during the application process. Thus, although I was not here to be the best, I would work hard to survive through difficult moments.



The second thing I intended was to avoid feeling homesick and depressed, mainly when I was alone, which was when I missed even the stones of my town streets. Having to leave all my family behind was something really hard for me, but I could understand that if I wished to support them in the future in the way they deserve it, I would have to be courageous enough to keep ahead in this challenging stage of my life.

I also realized this was a great opportunity to show the people who still live and grow up in Nicaraguan less favoured areas, that even someone



who comes from those regions is capable of fulfilling dreams which seems unachievable.

I am convinced that nothing is impossible in this world, if one tries hard. However, you need to have a goal in life because as difficult

it is to reach a target you never had in mind as to return from a place you have never been to.

Finally, I think I miss the means within the Erasmus Mundus Programme that could guide me towards a PhD Program. However, I have decided to work hard in order to link the master degree to this eventual programme. After all, it is better to complete my academic engagements now, because when I go back to my country, my priorities will be another.



VI. My achievements within the programme

I have no doubt that the most important achievement during the time I have been studying within the Erasmus Mundus Programme has been the way of controlling things to survive through the most difficult moments.

Even when overcome by work, I can organize my task and responsibilities owing to the new study habits that I have developed.

A key aspect to this new life dynamic is related to the fact that I have had the chance to join a diligent work team.

Its members are always willing to support each other, not only on issues concerning academic environment, but also with difficulties that take place outside university, which can influence one’s work performance.

Something that makes me feel happy about the Erasmus Mundus





Programme, is the relationship I have established with most of the teachers.

I have found within the university staff, excellent friends as well as advisors, which make me feel confident in times when I have lots of things to do.

I know I can count on them in order to face the programme challenges and take decisions.

Another of my personal achievements concerns the knowledge I have gained in new rural development approaches, as a result of the practical and theoretical work we have done in fields applied to rural settings, mainly in experiences conceived and performed within the European developmental models.

I have also learned a little bit about the mega-trends leading the world we are living in – globalisation, three emerging giant economic super power, demographic explosion, urbanizations, technologic development, environmental problems and non-renewal resources, external debt, new women role, inequity and poverty – all key issues in designing and implementing development strategies.

One of the most important things within the Erasmus Mundus Programme, is the opportunity I have been give to set up a network of friends from

different countries, which will allow me in future to have contacts for advices and opinions concerning different development settings.

This will enable me to count on suitable inputs in order to design accurate strategies and projects to overcome inequality and poverty, mainly in rural areas.

Finally, I would also like to say that I feel at home in Cordoba. The town is very safe and I always have something different to do, which makes me feel really happy. I also have realized that people here are very friendly. Owing to the Erasmus Mundus Programme, I am here, sharing many things with different people, whom somehow have filled up the gap my family left when I left home.

VII. Conclusions

Erasmus Mundus has definitely been a lucky happening in my life. I am sure that once I have completed the study programme everything will be different as I will be ready not only to start new studies at an upper level, but also to work in favour of Nicaragua development. The knowledge and experience I am gaining along the course is shaping the way I usually assess the position of developing countries and its peoples capabilities.

Erasmus Mundus has been the perfect means to combine academic issues as well as extra university activities, which have enabled me to know more about the fascinating history and culture of Europe. Thus, I am deriving a different perspective concerning the contribution that this continent could make to reduce the interstices that enforcement of economic models have generated between developed and developing countries.

I would like to finish this essay by sending a message of hope to those who live and fight in developing countries and less favoured areas of the rural world, waiting still for the opportunity which might change their lives, and to the people who work behind them. I hope they receive the help I have received myself from the Erasmus Mundus Programme.



There is nothing unachievable in this world, provided that people persist on their dreams. Everyone is capable of achieving relevant goals in life, even when things seems at odds, if one works hard enough. Life always offers an opportunity to those who believe in success and fight tirelessly in order to get it.



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MY ERASMUS MUNDUS EXPERIENCE OR MY MEETING WITH THE WORLD

When i was doing my BA in Prehistory in my country i was aware that after this degree there wasn't any opportunity to make Master or Phd programme because all of our specialists are now pensioners. And therefore in Senegal it's not a tradition for parents to give school fee abroad in engineering; medical sciences and even the national scholarships are dedicated to the national priority and obviously archaeology isn't one for a poor country!

Fortunately, in 2003 one of the people responsible in charge of the dep «Next year we will enlarge the program to third countries» it was in these terms that i heard talking about the Erasmus Mundus program on the canal tv euronews. Two years later i was selected for the master Quaternary and Prehistory and inscribed at the university of Ferrara in Italy.

Why Italy? I don't know. Would i speak italian at this time? I don't think so. Did my name pleased to the italian jury during the repartition of the selected students? I don't know but i'm very glad to be here because Erasmus Mundus allow to me to live my passion my dream "being archaeologist" in Prehistory.

Studying in Ferrara

Prehistory is a very large discipline and the first year of the Master in Prehistory at the University of Ferrara is consisted of 12 modules in diverse fields of study. Among them introduction to Paleolithic; cultures of the Mesolithic, archaeozoology, botanic, lithic technology...

The prime course was about the evolution of animal you can imagine the disaster, a simultaneous course of evolution and italian language (che bello!). Fortunately there was a lot of power point of very stranges animals for to release and give some idea the course to foreign students. Sincerely i felt wasting my time there.

Then i decided to reach an acceptable level before following the course at the university. Nevertheless I have to say it wasn't my only reason, for the life of every day it was a real need to speak italian (ask your way, any information). The persuasiveness of italians is unbelievably efficient. With



their traditional sentence “Mi dispiace no so l'inglese or no so il francese, sono italiano” (I’m sorry, i dont speak french, i’m italian) they don’t let you any choice! Then less than three months i spoke italian. Survival question oblige!

At the italian course, or center of experimentation of the accents

I was inserted i n a very international group with students from Iran, China, spain, danmark etc.. the most funny exercise each student with his accent of italian and the professor with her accent of french and english a real “casino”. Then we were very different but united by a commun objective “survive in Italy” knowing italian. It was a great and enriching experience. Each of us in addition to the linguistic competence learn about the system of life, culture of the other students at the Italian course.

Coming back at the university

Now more sure of my italian language the “come back” at the university was more easy in term of relationship with the italian students and some professor who don’t speak french. Used to maintain a very formal relation with the professor at my national university i was stupefied by the relationship between professor and students at Ferrara which is very convivial.

The course of lithic technology was really amazed by my big incompetence, and i was seriously offended in my self-esteem of modern homo sapiens of the twenty one century unable to fabric a tool of the first hominids. Then i realise that all of my conception of hominid through the prehistorical times was based on a wrong and spirit of superiority.

Like us they are able to “get out of a difficulty” in their time and probably we will be some very “primitives populations” for the future generation.

In the other hand, Contrary to my universty of origin, at Ferrara the exams are oral exepcted too. At first, i choosing the very easy way, i thought it was a very strange system and very efficient for to find him weakness.

Now after some accounts i indeed realised that the odd it was me why i wanted to conserve my system of my old university in an other different?.

The good reaction was what can i improve with this system? I improved my oral expression; my expression in front a public...

Living at Ferrara

Ferrara is a very nice city between story and modernity but my first days were really boring. No friends, any external contact: university – residence with the same trajectory. Indeed like a lots of foreigners i came in Italy with my prejudices about Europeans their racism, complex of superiority towards black peoples... and then was naturally contaminated by the virus of foreign students that i can named “Syndrom or Regroupment Between Foreign”. Fortunately i “diagnose” my illness and fastly find the medicine: be in contact with iltalians.



How i reached to this conclusion? Good question!

I noticed that at the university students are very kind, sociable. At one moment i thought with myself and asked to me. Why i feel good at the university and bad outside? Nevertheless the kind people that i meet outside are the sons and daughters of the persons that i meet at the university. It was the “declic moment”. I can’t affirm to have one billion of friends but i can say that every day some people demostre to me you the contrast of your preconcepted idea by their. Know i practice my favourite sport with very simple and nice persons with who a share a lot of things not just sport.

To deny the racism is not my objective but i would like to say that sometimes i’m victim of racism of one person but every day at least ten persons to me their affection and give the desire to continue. And finally i understood why we are living in a world of war each of us have his own conception of our fellow creatures based on the stereotypes established by his community.

Finally one of the other aspects or advantages of Erasmus Mundus is the gastronomical travel and above all free of charge! I tried obviously italian, Iranian, ivorian, spanish, german, algerian... food.

With my experience first contribute to shape my new conception of relationship with the other (coming from different culture, civilisation...) between



At the jordanian diner



Iranian diner with italian friends

professor and students that will serve to me in my future mission of teacher. I learned at Ferrara an unbelievable generosity a disponibility in the transmission of the knowledge. And it's a duty for me to come back in my country with these quality.

At last Erasmus Mundus and precisely the Master in Quaternary and Prehistory is not uniquely an opportunity for me to achieve my formation but an opportunity for my country to renew teaching profession in Prehistory.

Written by:-

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PAINT MY LIFE WITH EMMS



You've got mail!

How did it start? A late night e-mail from Prof. Ana Barros in June 2005 announced the successful candidates of Joint European Masters in Materials Science (EMMS). These students are granted with generous Erasmus Mundus Scholarships. Unbelievable, my name is in the list! The moment of surprise and excitement is one I would not have felt anytime else.

The idea of building up my technical competency in a quality Master programme jointly delivered by three European Universities (Universidade de Aveiro Portugal, Technische Universität Hamburg – Harburg Germany and Aalborg Universitet Denmark) particularly appeals to me. Moreover, this would be my first thus far trip from my home country to the terra incognita, European continent. I had no doubts it would be a rewarding experience.

Flying up, up and away

Time flowed quickly in the sandglass. Four months later, I found myself sitting on the flight, up, up and heading to Hamburg, Germany. I closed my eyes, imagining a Nemo swims out to the wide ocean, expecting lifetime unforgettable adventures and life enrichments.

Friday salutation to Hamburg dense public transport network

Upon arrival, my new friends were there waiting for me. Still thinking would we take a taxi to my Studentwohnheim (student halls of residence) due to my big and heavy luggage, they convinced me that public transport

would be sufficient. Back then I was brought to have first taste of impressive U-Bahn (underground) and S-Bahn (city train) in Germany.

It does not take long for me to notice how complete and integrated Hamburg public transport system is. Reaching every nooks and crannies within the city is possible by taking train, bus, or even... ferries! After all, Hamburg is a „HafenCity“ (port city) housing the second largest port in Europe. Being a caring society, spaces are designed to accommodate baby strollers and wheelchair... and big luggage like mine!

Moin moin!

Hamburger's way to say good morning. TUHH had provided us with two weeks intensive German language course. With small fees paid, this gave us an option to spend our time wisely prior to school opening. There, I felt everybody was a new door to a new world, with diversified background and experience. Whenever there was a break, the corridor will be filled with exciting international students talking with new friends. To me, the delightful environment helped much in elimination of homesickness.

Herzlich willkommen

Welcome! TUHH is uncommonly good in organizing interactive freshman orientation activities. The International Food Fair was particularly amazing. There we were spoiled with delicious cuisine and various foods from countries all over the world. Kyrgyzstan dancers definitely elevated the merriness of the event to the highest level. Besides, I was thrilled to learn and perform Angklung (a type of Indonesian musicals) in a group for welcoming ceremony. Also, exciting guided tours around Hamburg were offered. Trips out of Hamburg, such as to Berlin was partially sponsored by university. The benefits given by TUHH to students are immeasurably impressive.

As a student of EMMS programme, we get extra advantages. Co-coordinator and senior students of EMMS were on hand to pass out essential information and all kinds of assistance too. I had so much fun and I hoped this orientation activity was not going to end.

Commitment to excellence

EMMS students are taught by leading professors and senior lecturers who are interested in what qualities constitute our studies. Our instructors are devoted to the advancement of our technical knowledge. At times, teaching is extended to outside the classroom. Prof. Dr. Karl-Heinz Schwalbe, head of Institute for Materials Research, GKSS research institute, offers one day excursion to the institute. These unconditional resources sharing certainly broaden our horizon of contemporary research and development.

But be prepared, the thorough coverage of syllabus contributes to our most intense life. While dreading the hectic and busy schedule, I appreciate the chance to work hard in a right environment even more. Coping with a steep learning curve amazingly give me the kind of satisfaction I have never had.

Do it the German way

I keep on looking out for German virtues and respectively adapt myself to their ways. The Germans have an excellent reputation of punctual, organized and efficient culture. All these speak volumes of their high work ethics.

Kind deeds can be easy to do, but the echoes are endless

Germans are generally kind and honest. While traveling to Bremen during weekend, I lost my wallet. Realizing my wallet was without any contact details except my semester ticket stating that I am a student in TUHH, I thought I would lost it forever. To my best surprise, two days later, the TUHH International Office received a phone call. It was picked up by a Samaritan and submitted to Fundbüro (Lost and Found office) in Bremen. I was truly grateful that everything was still intact including my full amount of cash. The day I collected my wallet was a cloudy day, but I still can see the sun shining behind the clouds, all because of Germans' honesty.

Obsession with travel

With Germany's strategic location, East European, Scandinavian and Western European countries are equally accessible. This is a great bliss to me as travelling is my perennial favorite. Deep in my heart I know Europe has much to offer, from spectacular cities, impressive architecture, festivals, foods and beautiful nature. My trip to several great European cities of Amsterdam, Paris, Rome, Vatican City last Christmas holiday had impart to much vigor in my mind!

I do not forget those international activities organized by European students. Looking forward to participate in Greifswald International Student Festival this coming May, I sincerely believe it will be invaluable exposure to a diversity of culture and thinking.

Behold the evolution of inordinary master student life

My first semester is now coming to and end. There is more to expect in my coming semesters. When I move to another university, do internship, work on student project and thesis, life is full of possibilities. I truly believe all these will open more doors which lead me to a brighter future. And I will keep my options open, while continuing to paint my life with EMMS.



Photo 1. Herzlich Willkommen beim TUHH! – International Food Fair



Photo 2. Dinner together with EMMS coordinators, Mr Galla, Dr Wittich and Prof. Schulte



Photo 3. Encounter with TUHH President, Prof. Dr.-Ing. Edwin Kreuzer



Photo 4. Memorable view out of my room



Photo 5. Why did the youthful Beatles fall in love with Hamburg?



Photo 6. I like Bremen, but my wallet liked it even more and stayed for a few more days



Photo 7. Aren't we one family? Web cam session with EMMS students in Universidade de Aveiro (UA) Portugal



Photo 8. One day excursion to GKSS Research Institute, Geesthacht

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MY MUNDUS EXPERIENCE

Before October 2005, Erasmus Mundus was for me one of the programmes that provide only scholarships for third country nationals participating in Masters Courses in Europe. But, all has changed after this date...

Lebanon, country of Phoenician, capital of culture of Arab and middle east countries, and despite the civil war that has shattered all the basic systems of policy and economy, is still the sunshine of education and culture in the region with its higher education universities. Even with all these features, there are some important studies that do not exist yet in the universities like viticulture and oenology despite the sector of wine is under development in Lebanon where we find about 27 000 ha of vineyards with a production of 6.5 million bottles of wine per year. This problem obligates those who are interested in these subjects to travel to Europe to study and then to return to the country to work. And this was my case.

When my teacher has told me about the master vintage in ESA, I was very interested to do these courses maybe for religious reasons and what the wine signify and because of my interest to specialise in something that develop my country. At this day, I was in my final training in the 5th year of agricultural engineering in Lebanese University. So I begin to prepare my papers like other Lebanese students and I sent my documents. After the first selection, we proceed to the second step: interview of 1 hour by calling separately for all the students. This step too was difficult because we must prepare a presentation on viticulture and wine sector in Lebanon for fifteen minutes which then is preceded by forty five minutes of questions. After hours and hours of searching, the presentation is successfully done.

One week after, the school inform me that I was selected from Lebanon and the next step will be the sending of the list of students to Brussels to receive the scholarship. Two months later, we receive it from European Commission and we begin the procedure to take the visa. The school has sent many papers concerning our scholarship, the program Erasmus Mundus and the list of my future colleagues; this was an occasion to discover more



Fig. 1. The master vintage students in ESA with their flags and a cup of wine



Fig. 2. Lebanese – Brazilian night with Lebanese dishes and wines

this program and its wealth concerning the number of students. I took my visa rapidly due to my scholarship and October 2005 has arrived...

Arrival to France and especially to Angers, north west of the country, I begin to meet other students. For one month, we have had a preparation session of French course to ameliorate the language level. Meeting with students from 20 countries from all the continents is very enriching (Fig 1).

I was so glad to discuss, to exchange our ideas and day after day, we begin to become friends. Many activities are than prepared together like presenting the specialities of each country. For example, as the Lebanese food are worldly well known and as cooking is one of my hobbies, I benefit from that to let my colleagues and other students discover my country from all the sides especially from cooking side. Distribution of postal card was also one of my policies to present my country as well as via power point presentations. Erasmus Mundus has also given me the opportunity to meet other foreign students especially those that have a Lebanese origin (Fig 2).

Also, by participation to many activities in the city of Angers like going to church on Sunday or visiting museums, I have made many contacts with French family who invite me to their houses to discuss about the situation in my country and to communicate. Adding to that, I have made two interviews with the radio RCF Anjou (*Radio des Chrétiens Français*) about the religions in Lebanon and an interview with the newspaper *Anjou Agricole* during my visitation to the exhibition SIVAL in the park of exposition of Angers.

Erasmus Mundus, a new global scheme, enhances not only the quality and the attractiveness of European higher education world wide but also, with the master's courses and the scholarships, provides a framework to promote valuable exchange and dialogue between cultures. Erasmus Mundus is becoming a kind of communication between civilisations. This

scheme gives an opportunity to prepare for globalisation. As the world is becoming a small village, it's very necessary to have international contacts. During my time spent in France, I have had the opportunity to participate in many conferences and expositions concerning my specialisation. Profiting from these occasions, I have made many contacts with specialists or students and why not a business together in the future!

My experience in Erasmus Mundus will be well developed at the end of my masters. I believe that six months is not enough to acquire a big experience even I have made a big step to enlarge my list of contacts. Every day, we have something to discover: France has given me too much but I still have Spain, Portugal and Italy. Meanwhile European countries are becoming one country, but each one has its characteristics and culture so my experience in Erasmus Mundus will be coloured and enriched by each one of these countries.

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MY MUNDUS EXPERIENCE

My family name is *Masone*, original from the *Molise* region in southern Italy. My grandfather *Luigi Masone*, fought in the II World War, in the lines of the Italian army, spending thirteen years out of Italy. When the war was over, he came back to his little town, *Frosolone*, to meet my grandmother. Together they decided to emigrate to Argentina, with their son, my father, looking forward to a better life, as the situation in Italy was despairing.

Lives like those ones, were really hard, and producer me great admiration. As a great honour to my grandfather I am now back “home”, taking a Master Course in his land, at the Politecnico di Torino, as part of the Erasmus Mundus Scholarships Program.





My particular experience was stronger because of my family history towards this country, which I was always taught to consider as my second land. I have learnt the language and incorporated much of the culture, which was amazingly familiar to me. It is like if I could sense that my roots were here.

In regards to the academics, I may say that I have seen

and studied a lot, and that some concepts although already known were reviewed from other interesting points of view. The Politecnico di Torino allowed me to develop my interests in the research field, and that is something one can only do when studying abroad with a scholarship, when the everyday worries are not present, and you can just focus on your studies and interests.

I could visit some cities of Italy and see a lot of beautiful places. I was also able to visit other countries of the European Union, like England, France, Spain and Belgium. These trips really opened my mind and made think a lot. I am not the same person that came here, almost one year ago. I am sure, that the experience has made me better.

In the first picture below I am the one of the left, with the white and red sweater. This picture was taken at Avignon, France, during a weekend with a French friend I have made at the Politecnico di Torino.

The second picture is our apartment in Torino. I am the second from right to left, with the grey shirt. The others are all students of the Politecnico di Torino, from France, Germany and Spain.

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“MY MUNDUS EXPERIENCE”

The first time is not always bad, just be courageous to try, you will find the answer by yourself. I always create this sentence in my mind, to motivate myself to do something that I have never tried before. There is nothing to loose if you’re trying something new. As long as you know what you are trying. This sounds very easy, but in fact it’s not always that simple...

My name is Martha Rosintauli Bakara, I am from Indonesia, from one island called: Sumatra and I lived there until I was 18, because continued my study in another island, Java. I studied archaeology for my undergraduate in Gadjah Mada University, one of the state universities in my country. Three years before I finished my undergraduate, I took a Spanish course at my University. One reason motivated me to follow this course was: I wanted to know one Latin Language, but in the same time I have another aim was to look for the scholarship in Spain.

In 2002 I said to myself... “I have to study abroad, I want to be like my archaeology professor, they are charming, they are critical, and they are very knowledgeable”. Most of them did their master studies in a foreign country. Unconsciously, they have motivated me a lot. I had a very nice Spanish teacher. She also gave me a lot of support to continue that course, and even though it was very difficult for me, I still kept on trying. And finally, after I finished my undergraduate studies, I applied for a scholarship to continue my studies in Salamanca, Spain. I knew about this scholarship from my Spanish teacher. This scholarship offered for all the students in Indonesia who studied Spanish. At the same time, I also submitted an application for the Erasmus Mundus programme, this programme i was told about by one of my archaeology professors. Both of these scholarships interested me a lot because I have strong motivation to take a further study and eagerness to widen my perspectives both in academic and in social relationship, and also I heard that to study prehistoric and heritage management in Europe is one of the best options.

In May 2005, the sponsor from Spain sent me an email, telling me that I would receive the opportunity to study in Spain. I was very happy; finally,

the dream came true, thank God!!! I went to Jakarta, our capital, to prepare all the needed documents. I needed one week in Jakarta to set up everything, and after that I came back to Jogjakarta (the place where I studied). I brought all of my documents and also paid a lot to translate all the documents into Spanish. When I went to the embassy with 2 other persons who received this scholarship, we just confirmed and show the letter showing that we passed the selection. After that, the people who work in the Spanish embassy suggested us to come back again to make the visa. In that moment, I noticed that they will give one year and schengen visa. After two days back in Jogjakarta, I received an email from Erasmus Mundus, saying that I get the Mundus grant, stay in at least two European countries for two years. The first country where I would study was Portugal¹, and the second one was France². I cried a lot, because I was so happy. Things that I never imagined before would become real. I pinched my arm, just to make sure that I was not dreaming. But I didn't dream, I cried once again, and couldn't even think to whom I should tell this beautiful news first. Unbelievable!! The next day, I spoke with my professor, also the supervisor for my thesis in Gadjah Mada University. His name is Daud Aris Tanudirdjo. He was one of my favourite professors at my university. Sometimes I felt that he is not only my teacher, but all at once I felt that the pedagogic things he gave me are like from a father and a friend. He was very happy when he heard that I finally I got the Mundus grant. But then, there still was the problem, which scholarship should I choose? Spanish scholarship or Erasmus Mundus? Agh, this was one of the hardest moments in my life. I tried to learn both of the programs, as much as possible, and finally I convinced myself, I WILL TAKE THE MUNDUS SCHOLARSHIP. And I did, that's why I am here now, typing letter by letter on my board, trying to fix up the idea in my head. The beautiful song "Love Generation" escorts my finger to continue my story. But before I start telling my story in Portugal, I would like to tell the process of making my Portugal visa.

Oh my goodness!! This was a hard and long story. But I will explain only a bit from the whole story. First, it seemed that it's not difficult to apply for the visa, because I showed all the documents they need. They said that I only need 3 weeks and then I will get my visa. But in fact, I had to wait for 7 weeks. Unbelievable!! But maybe, if I didn't call to the embassy every day, my visa will be given in 12 weeks (maybe). When I asked what the problem was, they only said that the embassy in Portugal has to look for my documents once again. Oh my God, I couldn't believe in this. So, for more than 3 weeks they didn't do anything with my documents. I was so disappointed because in that

¹ Instituto Politécnico de Tomar (IPT) & Universidade de Tras-Os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD).

² Museum Nationa D'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN).



Fig.1. Map of Mação, Portugal

moment I had to prepare for my flight, and it's not easy to look for the air travel to Portugal. Maybe it will not be a big problem if I can book my flight to other European country and make a transit from that country, for instance, from Germany to Portugal. It's more common and easier from Indonesia. But another problem I had: I DON'T HAVE SCHENGEN VISA. So if I want to fly from Indonesia to Germany, and then look for a flight to Portugal, I have to make another transit visa in German embassy. What a complicated situation. So finally, I decided that I will look for the flight ticket if I get my Portuguese Visa. And thank God that I took that decision; otherwise I will lose my flight because the embassy was late 4 weeks to make my Visa. And finally I took my flight from Malaysia (another country near Indonesia) because it's easier to get to and also less expensive. But well, now here I am, in my beautiful village, with my vague feeling.³

Today is a rainy day in Mação⁴. I am too lazy to do anything, even though I have so much homework to do. I was too tired the last 7 days, having class in another city, Vila Real, and we also had a presentation about Rock Art in Montalegre. It was as well a tiring and an exciting day. Because of that I said to myself that today I just want to relax my mind, stay in bed and write a short story about my Mundus Experience. Before starting the story, here I would like to show the place I live, a small tiny village with a total area of 400 km²; it is located in the heart of Portugal. The population is small, only around 2.000 persons, but most of the young people study in another big city.

³ Don't ask me why, but every time I have to remember all these stories, I have this feeling. Strange? I think the same J

⁴ Mação is the name of the village where I live and study.



Fig. 2. IPT. In the left side is the residence, inside of the institute. The right side is some buildings in IPT

In mid of September 2005, I arrived in Portugal. One of the professors picked me up at the Lisbon airport. It was a long trip from Indonesia to Portugal. I had 3 transits, and waited one time 12 hours in one country, and then again for several hours at another airport and finally arrived in Lisbon. But then the story begun, my luggage was lost. The airline company didn't transport my baggage. Thank God that I had a picture of my bag in my mobile phone, so it was not difficult to identify. But still, I had to wait for 2 days, until they delivered it. My professor and I went to Tomar, the city where I began to study; with my small duffle bag and one big poster in my hand. It was still summer, and it was very hot, I felt like in Indonesia.

When we arrived in Tomar, we went to a restaurant to have lunch and met with the supervisor and director of Erasmus Mundus Master of Portugal. What a nice and warm welcome. After that, we went to the residence of IPT (my Institute), and that was the start of my life in Europe. But I still had "jet lag". I liked my bed, my residence and the atmosphere. Even though in the beginning I didn't know anybody, but I could feel that the people were very open and welcome. I experienced this the first time when I tried to ask for my dinner in the canteen of the IPT, next to my residence. First I thought that I would have difficulty to communicate with other people as I didn't speak Portuguese, and couldn't even understand a bit. I tried to speak Spanish to the woman, because I thought she might understand me. And definitely yes... she spoke Spanish fluently, and she asked me so many things and also told me the story why she spoke Spanish, and she also told me that I could ask whatever I wanted for extra-food; chilli, pepper, more salad, more meat, etc... What a kind woman.

The second day, in the afternoon, I took my luggage from the bus station; I walked to the city, more or less 3 kilometres. Quite far, but I just wanted to have my luggage back. On the way to the station, I saw two girls that I have seen in my residence, too. I walked toward them, and asked the way to the

city. First I used English language, but then mixed with Spanish. One of them understood and spoke English, and they showed me the direction. Finally I got my big luggage and waited for the bus to go back to the residence. I arrived there at dinner time, and I went to the canteen. Once again I saw the two girls that I have seen on my way to the station. They called me to sit down with them, and we started talking and these were my first friends in Portugal. Every night, we had dinner together and they asked me to go together to the city to have a walk and also they presented me to their friend, and we went together to a birthday party from one of their friends. Since that moment, I didn’t feel lonely at the residence, and in the beginning, they helped me a lot, like offering me the mobile phone, and gave me information about many things in the institute, etc. I was so happy and I started learning to speak Portuguese from them. Little by little, even though sometimes they made a joke with bad words, but it was funny and I liked them very much.

But then everything changed suddenly. The supervisor told me that I had to pack my things because I had to move to another place to study, Mação. I opened my guiding book, and searched for Mação, but I couldn’t find it. But in the end I noticed that Mação is a small tiny village, ± 70 kilometres from Tomar. In the beginning there were so many questions in my mind, “why do they move me to Mação”? “Why can’t I stay in Tomar with my friends, and why did the Erasmus Mundus students last year stay in Tomar, and I have to go to Mação”? But the questions stopped in the middle of my tongue. I was there to study, and I should follow what my supervisor said. But I couldn’t hold my question, and I asked my supervisor. He said that the place in Mação was more appropriate to study because it had a nice library and museum for prehistoric and rock art. It was very difficult at the first time, because I had to leave my friends in Tomar and I stayed with some male students in one apartment. One of them was very nice, he was a second year student, and he will go to France to do his research.

In the first week we didn’t make anything, only went to the library and had a walk around the village. But we didn’t need so much time to walk around it. In 30 minutes all parts of the centre were finished, and there were not so many interesting things to see. One thing that quite disturbed me was the way the local people looked at us. Maybe because it was the first time for them to see some strangers and that’s also true, they never saw so many stranger students (from Senegal, India, China, Brazil, and Indonesia) in the same time... For them it’s a bit shocked and also for us, because we were expecting to stay in a university atmosphere. But another problem came into my life. Our neighbour who lived under our building, two old persons, always teasing us, even though we didn’t make anything wrong, but they always came and knocked our door saying that we made some noise. Even to answer a phone was a forbidden thing in our apartment. We had to speak slowly, and we had to be careful to wash our dishes. Can you



Fig. 3. the left side is my old apartment (with the old brat neighbour). The right side is the picture with my lovely house partners last year, and behind us is our new apartment

imagine how terrible was our life, everyday we have to be afraid of them and I didn't feel comfortable because finally we found that they started disturbing our life, they played with the lift in our building when we went out, they hit our floor from downstairs, they woke up in the morning and made some noise, and also always yelling in front our face if they met us. For me, it was like a "Duplex" movie, even worst. But thank God, finally our supervisor moved the girls to another apartment, close to the museum the place we study. And I enjoyed more to stay here, indeed. Even though there were so many things I need, but they didn't supply it. Internet⁵, appropriate refrigerator, heating, and so on...

The time is running, and now I can feel there are so many changes; better and worse. The local people can receive us, I tried to adapt to my new environment, have some real friends, and we started our class. But still there were some problems. The institute changed our schedule more than 20 times, and I had to cancel so many things that I planned before. If I can be honest, this is one of the disappointed experiences in this program. When I tried to talk about this problem, the fact is I was the wrong person, so the conclusion is: I am an Erasmus student and I have to follow whatever they told me. Otherwise, I will be blamed for doing the right thing. So if you can imagine one illustration, you have to stay in the place that you don't like, but you are trying to adapt to that place, and then come some problems, and you are alone to face all of these problems, and still... you are the wrong person because you are an Erasmus student. But then, after I spoke with my supervisor, I have some solutions for my problems in changing my schedule. In this master, not only I and other Erasmus students complained about the schedule, also another Portuguese master student. Another bad thing that I hate very much is: people always talked about the

⁵ We only accessed internet in the museum. And the museum open from 09.00-17.30.

money we or I have. It seemed that it was my mistake if I am a Mundus student, I have much money, and another people have to speak and always take care of my money. Or maybe because I am from the third country, so that people thought that I don’t know how to organize or take care of my money? But in another part, did they know that every time I have to be worried because Erasmus Mundus never sent the money on time. One time in the beginning of this year, I had to borrow money from another student because Erasmus Mundus haven’t sent me money yet, for almost three months. But the people, who always talked about our grant didn’t know about this situation. Oh, *meu deus!!!* Every time I heard about this blablabla, I just wanted to close my eyes and take a deep breath. “You have to finish your money in Europe; Erasmus Mundus gave you this grant to spend in Europe, not to send to your country”. Even now, when I am typing this sentence, I am very sad that I have to remember about it once again. If I am not wrong, I think I know what I am doing with this funding, I buy books if I need, I travelled if I had enough time; because it’s almost impossible for me to stay in the whole month in this little village, I went to some congresses if I wanted to attend (but sometimes I **have to** attend one congress because I am an Erasmus Mundus student)⁶, I went to hospital or doctor if I was sick, I ate in the restaurant or canteen if I didn’t want to cook, I went to coffee shop if I wanted to. I used that money to support my life here in Europe and also to support my study. Especially in the winter, I had to buy so many things to survive my small body. I wasn’t used to the cold season, and I had to buy so many things to be survived. Otherwise I will be very fragile and easy to be sick. And it’s not a good condition. I’ve had so many problems with my skin here in Portugal, and I had to go to hospital and the dermatologist and make some treatments. I never thought that all of this could happen to me. Here I will show the changing of my skin.

Another mysterious question that I still don’t know the answer is about Mundus insurance. Two times I asked to our secretary, and she said that I have to ask to our supervisor. And then, when I met with our supervisor, I asked him about the rule of the insurance, and he said that I have to ask to our secretary. I was tired. I didn’t know to whom I should confirm. So, until now, if I had to go to hospital and pay for the medicine, I paid with my money. Sometimes I am wondering, maybe because all the people thought that Erasmus student can pay everything with the grant, so no need to use insurance. So, they thought that it’s not necessary to inform. Even though

⁶ It’s not only for congress. Even for the modules we choose. In this degree, we have obligatory modules, and also optional ones. And in the beginning they asked us to choose optional modules. But in fact, in 2 months later the secretary sent us email saying that Erasmus Mundus student HAS TO attend ALL the modules. Wow... Erasmus Mundus student always be a “special” exceptionL.

I knew there is insurance for the students. But nobody told us how it worked. This is just one example of miscommunication in my program. But if I read on the Erasmus Mundus' objectives, all the things seemed so perfect. But in fact it's not like what I thought. Before I thought that this program was well prepared, but in one part it wasn't. But from the story I heard, I think in another Mundus countries are more organized and well prepared. Especially about the schedule, like I wrote beyond.

In a month we have classes only 2 weeks for 4 modules. So, each module intensively will be given in 3 days, from 9 to 6 o'clock. It was tiring, but I like some modules they gave. Because when I was in Indonesia, I never had those lessons. Each module we had one paper to make and also in the end we will have last examination. But in other case, in one month we only have 1 week class, or maybe no class. The schedule of Master degree here depends on the professors' schedule. So every time they wanted, they could change the timetable.

Another difficulty is: sometimes it's quite difficult to understand in the beginning when some teachers explained in Portuguese. But some of our professors spoke in Portuguese and in English. But, if the class was given only in Portuguese, sometimes I asked to myself, "What is the purpose of taking students from third countries which are not Portuguese speakers?" because I noticed that some professors speak English very well, but they didn't use it in the classroom. So, the final result, I couldn't understand any things from the class. For me, it was not a problem if the professors spoke in Portuguese, as long as there was a balance for the Mundus student who didn't speak Portuguese (for Brazilian students, it wasn't problem). For instance, they could provide a Portuguese language course in this little village. I asked about this case since I arrived in Portugal, but they always said that they are trying to find it out. For the Mundus students from last year, it wasn't a big problem because they stayed in Tomar city and they had Portuguese language course there. Meanwhile we couldn't get that opportunity because we live in a tiny village, far away from nowhere. Well, as long as we have sufficient public transport, we still could find away to have Portuguese language course in another town or city next to Mação. But another problem is the public transportation took the passenger to the next train station only at 11 o'clock, and at 18.00. So the conclusion is the public transport is very limited. For all of this impossibility, I decided to learn Portuguese "autodidactamente". I met Portuguese people or met some friends from Portugal, I heard they spoke, and I started speaking in Portuguese. Or I bought books for children to learn vocabulary and simple grammar, and then I practiced little by little. It was very hard in the beginning. But now I am trying to accustom myself to speak in Portuguese. One "crazy" thing I made was to present my work in a congress, and I spoke in Portuguese. I was very nervous, but I tried my best in that moment.

Now, I am thinking to find out information about my second year in France. The first thing that I will do is following French course. But still I have to search for the place to study this language. Agh, why is everything much more difficult here in Mação, compared with Indonesia? Sometimes I just wanted to “run away” for a while to Spain or to France, or to Italy, Germany, wherever... but it’s not that easy because each time I was planning to get out from Portugal, I had to apply for the new Visa. Another difficulty I found. But is that usual? For instance, each time I wanted to attend one congress or symposium or I would like to visit some archaeological sites in another Schengen country, I couldn’t make it spontaneously, because I need more time until I got my Visa. Phyfs...

But anyway, I don’t want to end this story only with complicated stories, there are also some lovely stories I have here. For instance, even though sometimes we have so many things to do for the modules and apart from the master program, but I tried to enjoy. Sometimes I helped museum to make a guide, and from this activity I learn how to meet people, one more way to speak in their language, and also gain knowledge of pedagogic thing. In the future also, I think this Mundus program must be very useful for my country and me. I feel I am very lucky because I got this scholarship, even though there are some cases that are not matched between Erasmus Mundus objectives and the reality.⁷

Other things that I like are: meet new people and new culture, and also have some new friends, even though sometimes it’s not easy to meet because some of them stay in another city. In this case, I miss my life in Indonesia, and also sometimes I felt home sickness, and also food sickness.

If I missed my friends here, I came to their city to visit them, and every time, I have such a new experience once again. Or maybe I invite them to my apartment to have Indonesian dinner together.⁸ Beneath, I will show some pictures with some activities in Mação.

Before ending this story, I would like to say thank you for Erasmus Mundus program for giving us opportunity to study in Europe. I hope in the next period, there will be some better things to make. In general, I like very much to be one of Mundus students, although in the process there are so many new bad and good experiences to mature my mind and my self.

If you have any doubt, please send a message to my email:
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⁷ Each Mundus countries have their own rule, not general rule.

⁸ Thanks a lot to Mathias Lai for cooking the nice Indonesian food in this little villageJ.



Fig. 5. Some images describing three kinds activities: helping making a guide in the museum (a&b), Indonesian dinner in our apartment (c&d), and watching football match in our village with some friends (e)

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MY MUNDUS EXPERIENCE

After finishing my bachelor in Polymer Chemistry, I decided to study a Master in Materials Science. I took this decision because I wanted to get deeper knowledge about polymers and composites as structural materials. Therefore, I started to look for possibilities. I decided that a European University could be the best option since Europe is known for its high quality research institutions and technological development.

On the other hand, as part of my bachelor, I spent one year in Germany at the Technische Universität Hamburg-Harburg (TUHH). Due to this stay, I know very well Hamburg and I speak German. Therefore, I decided to start my search there. I spoke with the coordinator of the Materials Science Master course, Prof. Karl Schulte, about my interest of studying that master. In this conversation, Prof. Schulte told me about a new master programme that the TUHH was planning to launch that year. This programme, the European Master in Materials Science (EMMS), was different from the conventional master course. It involved the participation of two other universities: Aalborg Universitet (AAU) in Denmark and Universidade de Aviero (UA) in Portugal. Prof. Schulte explained me that this course was part of a plan designed by the European Union, called Erasmus Mundus, to make Europe one of the most important places to do research and develop new technologies. This characteristic sounded interesting and I decided to enrol.

The first lecture week was a really interesting one. As my new classmates started to arrive, I realized that our group has really interesting characteristics, as our background. All of us come from different countries. Our group is composed by Ilya (Russia), Natalya (the Ukraine), Orley (Brazil), and me (Mexico). For me was really amazing and interesting to see how people with different cultures and traditions have now something in common. Nevertheless, what was even more amazing was the way in which our cultures get mixed. The every-day interaction and building of friendships led to changes in us. The most notorious and funny was maybe the language. Ilya and Natalya were speaking some Spanish and Portuguese; and Orley



Fig. 1. The group that start the EMMS at TUHH. From left to right: Me, Ilya, Natalya, Prof. Karl Schulte (course coordinator), Mr. Randolph Galla (TUHH staff), and Orley

and I were speaking some Russian. On the other hand, we learn about each others culture.

Other experience that made me think about the difference of the Erasmus Mundus courses happened also at the end of the first semester in February 2005. A trip to Aveiro, Portugal was organized for the TUHH students in order to meet the UA students and the AAU professors. We called this event: "TUHH meets UA". During this meeting, the professors of the three universities exposed the research topics available at each university. This allowed us to identify the strengths of each university. I realized that visiting the two other partner universities will allow me to take advantage of these strengths. I could have the chance to have a deeper knowledge on the areas at which each university has more experience. Therefore, I decided to do it in that way.

I spent my second semester at UA. During my stay in Portugal, another important event took place: the first Erasmus Mundus Student meeting in Brussels. The Erasmus Mundus staff decided to gather the students that



Fig. 2. “TUHH meets UA”: Students and professors of the three partner universities came together for the first time

are participating in all the Erasmus Mundus programmes. More than 200 students from different countries came to Brussels to meet their colleagues and to hear the first report about the results of the programme’s first year. Looking at all these students made me understand the magnitude of the European Union’s effort to convert Europe into one of the most important research centres and technology developers. This experience allowed me to realize that we are part of a big project whose aim is to promote the cooperation between Europe and the rest of the world.

After the meeting in Brussels, I spent my third semester in Denmark. At AAU, I made a research project. Working on this project, I realized that my stay in Germany and Portugal was useful. Since I get a really deep understanding of some phenomena, the way in which I approach some problems was different. This made easier to find creative solutions for the problems found during the development of the research project. On the other hand, from the cultural point of view, I discovered that there were also some changes. Since I spent one semester in Portugal, I learned to speak Portuguese fluently. This allowed me to interact more with the Portuguese speak-



Fig. 3. Erasmus Mundus students at the first meeting in Brussels

ing people and let me understand better their culture and way of thinking. At the end of the semester, the same was happening with the Danish language.

I will start my last semester in April and I can see that there is a big difference between the before and after of the Erasmus Mundus experience. After these three semesters, I can see that I succeed in improving my knowledge on materials science. On the other hand, I also realize that from the cultural point of view it was also an interesting experience. I did not only learn about the culture and language of three European countries where I stayed, but also the ones of the countries of the people that I met during the course. I discovered that Europe is not only rich in technological development; but also in culture. Therefore, I consider that the Erasmus Mundus course does not only give me the tools to be a better professional; but also it helped me to grow up as a person. Both aspects will help me to adapt to a world that is more connected and continuously changing.

Conclusion

Value and benefits of Mundus – promotion of the Programme using students’ feedback and alumni testimonies

Katarzyna Hadaś, Wojciech Nawrocik

*I informed some students, teachers and researchers of our country about this Programme because the education/teaching system is excellent in European countries. It's in English, we can learn from different countries, we can get global ideas about our courses. After finishing this Programme we will be good thinkers of rural development. And lastly – it is the great opportunity to see Europe (**Bangladesh 32 M IMRD – International Masters of Science in Rural Development**).*

As a conclusion we will initially present a kind of promotional material, based on students’ feedback. The reader will find selected students’ opinions expressing their satisfaction with life and study in Europe, appreciation of the quality of Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses and their gratitude for the possibility obtained to develop academically, professionally and personally through studying within the Mundus Programme.

In the second section of this concluding text we will present the proposal for further studies and analyses which emerged from the research conducted up to date. We will introduce the concept, elaborated by the our project team targeted to: 1) promotion of EHEA in third countries by using Mundus students’ and alumni’s feedback and 2) promotion of brain gain for third countries through Mundus programme by displaying testimonies of alumni’s successful return for transferring knowledge and skills from Europe to their (developing) countries.

1. The value of the Mundus Programme and benefits of studying at EMMCs as seen by students

For the purpose of promotion of the Programme's and its EMMC's values and advantages we gathered here students' opinions underlining very differentiated aspects. They vary from the high quality of education to the renown of the consortium, from availability and help of academic staff to no age limit for candidates, from international scientific exposure to promise of future career perspectives, from self-development to contributing to the development of home country when coming back, from the value and modernity of knowledge gained to improvement of language skills, from benefits of cross-cultural experience to those coming from receiving generous scholarships.

The expressions cited here representing a particular Masters Programme may not be current and do not cover all advantages and profits listed by students in the entire study. It responds to the approach and the goal of this study, which remain to not assess particular courses but to show the Mundus Programme as a whole. Other and complementary opinions gained from questionnaires can be found in sections of Chapter II devoted to both benefits, criticisms and suggestions for improvements, as well as in Chapter I, describing students' various – both positive and negative – experiences. The composition presented beneath shows opinions of some 40 nations' representatives who studied at 27 Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses. The following list shows the number of opinions cited below, which is relevant to the number of respondents at every course:

1. Agris Mundus – Sustainable Development in Agriculture Masters Course – 7
2. ALGANT – Algebra, Geometry and Number Theory – 1
3. AMASE: Joint European Masters Programme in Advanced Materials Science and Engineering – 1
4. Crossways in European Humanities – 6
5. EMIN – Economics and Management of Network Industries – 3
6. EMM-Nano – Erasmus Mundus Masters of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology – 3
7. EMMS – Joint European Masters Programme in Materials Science – 2
8. EuMAS – European Masters Course in Aeronautics and Space Technology – 2
9. EURO-AQUAE – Euro Hydro-Informatics and Water Management – 3
10. European Legal Practice – LL.M. Eur – 1
11. European Masters in Global Studies – 9
12. European Masters Programme in Computational Logic – 7

13. FUSION-EP – European Masters in Nuclear Fusion Science and Engineering Physics	– 1
14. IMRD – International Masters of Science in Rural Development	– 7
15. International Masters “Vintage”: Vine, Wine and Terroir Management	– 2
16. International Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory	– 11
17. M.E.S.C.: Materials for Energy Storage and Conversion	– 3
18. MA LLL – European Masters’ in Lifelong Learning: Policy and Management	– 1
19. MA SEN, Masters in Special Education Needs	– 6
20. Masters of Applied Ethics	– 5
21. MEEES – Masters in Earthquake Engineering and Engineering Seismology	– 1
22. MERIT – European Masters of Research on Information and Communication Technologies	– 1
23. MONABIPHOT – Molecular nano- and bio-photonics for telecommunications and biotechnologies	– 2
24. MSc EF – Masters of Science in European Forestry	– 4
25. MSPME – Masters in Strategic Project Management	– 4
26. tropEd – European Masters of Science Programme in International Health	– 7
27. WOP-P – Masters on Work, Organisational and Personnel Psychology	– 1

The benefits of studying at EMMCs, as seen by students, were extracted mostly from answers to three questions in our questionnaire: *How do you think the European Masters degree will help you in your further career? Would you recommend to a fellow-student that he/she apply for a / this Erasmus Mundus Masters? Why?* and *Please summarise the best and the worst features of your Masters Course and/ or your hosting institution*, but they were also found in comments and answers to other questions. Their analysis resulted in identification of *10 + 1 benefits that Erasmus Mundus Programme offers to international students*, addressed to third country nationals and catalogued according to their peers’ – Mundus students – opinions as follows:

1. High-quality education at Masters Courses jointly run by a consortia of Europe’s best universities.

2. Updated expertise in various academic disciplines including innovative and cross-disciplinary studies and access to modern infrastructure and resources.

3. Fascinating Europe’s culture and cross-cultural experience of studying in at least two different European countries with fellow students from all over the world.

4. International scientific exposure at various European universities and worldwide professional and personal relationships with scientists and students.

5. First-rate welcoming and hosting services and helpful staff.

6. Unique opportunity to obtain an officially recognised double or joint degree opening perspectives for doctoral studies or an interesting career.

7. Useful knowledge, technology and skills to transfer to home country or wherever needed in the world.

8. Practical use of European languages and living in a multilingual environment.

9. Prestigious scholarship enabling living well, focusing on studies and enjoying social activities.

10. Valuable lesson of adaptability and self-management skills.

11. Wonderful place to study and experience – Europe!

The list presented above shows the Mundus Programme's attributes and qualities and is displayed in the leaflet, promoting the Programme and accompanying this book. We would like as many students as possible (and other interested parties) to read these comments, as they were written by their peers, coming from countries all over the world, who had already studied in Europe at Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses. We think that Mundus students' testimonies will contribute to attracting their countrymen to European higher education institutions.

As a conclusion of our book we decided to emphasise – in a broader scope than it was presented in our leaflet – Mundus values, advantages and gains expressed in students' opinions. They are grouped in 11 blocks referring to previously categorized *10 + 1 benefits of Mundus*.

1. The Erasmus Mundus programme offers high-quality education at Masters Courses jointly run by consortia of Europe's best universities. The high-class training and service offered for international students has a positive impact on their future life and work.

– *I have access to books, libraries, texts, movies, exhibitions, galleries etc. that I could hardly reach if I do my research in Macedonia;*

– *The possibility to get a good recommendation from a professor;*

– *I will have the possibility to apply for a job in the EU or in international organisations;*

– *I feel supported and respected as a human being and as a student;*

– *I've met wonderful professors and I am proud of it.*

I can say that I feel very well accepted both by the administrative and the academic staff. In Macedonia the professors were less kind to the students than in Europe but I hope that after this experience each Mundus student could evidence in his own country the European educational system (Macedonia 27 F Crossways in European Humanities).

– The professors are very good researchers. They always teach us their research or something newly published (...) The best features are very accessible professors, polite and with disposal to help us, a lot of help for all our procedures with respect to getting our visa, housing, administration, etc. Some excellent professors with very good knowledge, Good food with good price (...) **(Mexico 31 M MONABIPHOT – Molecular nano- and biophotonics for telecommunications and biotechnologies).**

– Through this programme, I'm able to get a wider view of the future technology and applications in the discussion during the lectures, lab practice and exercise. This will further prepare me to be a more leadership – like contributor in the industry **(Malaysia 26 F EMM-Nano – Erasmus Mundus Masters of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology).**

- 1) The best: the teachers are well-academically prepared;
- 2) The administration is very efficient;
- 3) We can have access to laboratories equipped with Internet connection during the lectures;
- 4) The scholarship allows us to live well and comfortably;
- 5) We are exposed to the studies of many countries **(Brazil F 23 International Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory).**

– It is a rich Programme from all sides, it can give us a global point of view of Europe from inside Europe, also it gives a chance to have international relations. The best feature of my Masters Programme is that I can study the temporary wine knowledge, and I haven't found any worse feature of it **(Lebanon 23 M International Masters Vintage: Vine, Wine and Terroir Management).**

2. Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses offer updated expertise in various academic disciplines including innovative and cross-disciplinary studies and access to modern infrastructure and resources available at the universities team up into consortia running the EMMCs.

– I consider this Programme as a great and practically unique opportunity for young people in science to get involved in international cooperation in solving scientific problems which are common to all people and to do it even just from the step of education. Moreover, this lets you know people from different countries, to widen and extend your knowledge and understanding of (and in) different cultures... So I had to use this opportunity **(Russia M 23 FUSION-EP – European Masters in Nuclear Fusion Science and Engineering Physics).**

– Since I did a bachelors in physics, I was naturally interested to do my Masters. I was guided by some people that Europe is better for pure sciences. The infrastructure for nanoscience and nano technology is pretty good in Europe. Particularly the participating universities in the Erasmus Nano Programme have a strong reputation in this field. KU Leuven has been pretty well known for

their reputation in nanotechnology. Chalmers has very good infrastructure for experimental research in the field of nanoscience and nanotechnology. Delft is rated as one of the best institutes for nano research (**India 23 M EMM-Nano – Erasmus Mundus Masters of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology**).

– The best features of the Masters course is that we are in close contact with the happenings in the research field and applicability of the knowledge in reality. It feels good to be learning something useful and new every day. This information and knowledge might not be available in books and yet we can relate them to what we had learned previously (...) This European Masters degree has helped me to understand and know more about the research opportunities and prospects and definitely helped to open up my options in my future career. Many organisations and universities are involved in this Masters degree and this definitely has helped me pave my path to my future career by getting to know what activities are engaged in by them. This Masters degree will not only be a good stepping stone for my future career but also help me realise and decide what is best for me given the mobility and exposure (**Singapore 24 M M.E.S.C.: Materials for Energy Storage and Conversion**).

– This programme is aimed at producing graduates who are not merely knowledgeable theoretically but also competent practically. Its balance concept attracts me to apply for this programme (...) It gives me a great opportunity not only to learn and gain knowledge from the high calibre academic practitioners in Europe but also a chance to meet people (locals and other top achievers of MSPME international students and learn from them. In addition, studying and living in Europe will definitely help to shape my character and outlook not only academically but also in life and professionally. All these experiences and skills learned would definitely help me to approach my life personally and career in future (**Malaysia 28 F MSPME – Masters in Strategic Project Management**).

– I can list: quality of education, ECTS (credits) and degree obtained from European universities, very up to date knowledge, actual meaning of research, I learned on this programme – all this will help my career (**Pakistan M MA SEN, Masters in Special Education Needs**).

3. The Erasmus Mundus Programme provides for familiarisation with Europe's fascinating culture, having a cross-cultural experience of studying in at least two different European countries, enjoying diversity with fellow students from all over the world.

– Hopefully there are cultural differences because meeting other cultural identities is one of the most important strengths of this Programme (...) It is a powerful tool. It is an over-whelming experience to be added to the personal CV (**Morocco 31 M Agris Mundus – Sustainable Development in Agriculture Masters Course**).

– The programme gives a European perspective on international relations, which is important to understand in a global setting where the EU is starting to play an influential role in global politics. I think, to be able to call oneself a political scientist one has to be able to understand and relate to the EU perspective in order to have an impact on how your home country will interact with the EU and what this will mean for future relations between the home country and the EU **(South Africa F European Masters in Global Studies)**.

– The knowledge that I have about the European country and their system is a valuable asset for me as a person who came from Asia. It's a great opportunity to study abroad, to know more advance sciences and to absorb the values of European culture **(Indonesia 23 M MSc EF – Masters of Science in European Forestry)**.

– The lectures are given by highly qualified professors. The academic staff is very helpful. I feel integrated in Hanover, I get on with the other European students and I take part in their parties. I think that the European Masters degree can help me to do Ph.D. studies **(Burkina Faso 26 M European Legal Practice – LL.M. Eur)**.

– Since we are just some people doing this Masters in a very important field it's very important for our future. Moreover the life in the university and the residence is very good. Thanks to our Programme we have many friends from all over the world and we learn about many cultures, actually the integration is very easy. I like to be with people and I participate in different parties or cultural activities **(Morocco 22 F M.E.S.C.: Materials for Energy Storage and Conversion)**.

– I could visit some cities of Italy and see a lot of beautiful places. I was also able to visit other countries of the European Union, like England, France, Spain and Belgium. These trips really opened my mind and made me think a lot **(Argentina M 27 MERIT – European Masters of Research on Information and Communication Technologies)**.

– This Masters programme is held in three European countries in which it gives me opportunities to learn about Europe cultures, norms and education system. Besides, this course is closest to my working experience and my education **(Malaysia 28 F MSPME – Masters in Strategic Project Management)**.

– In my opinion, the best feature of this programme is the opportunity that is offered to you, not only to study in different universities on all the course, but also the chance you have in order to know different cultures and experiences around Europe (...) We will never have a chance like this in Latin American Countries, The course perspective and its focus is so broad in this programme, which makes you feel competitive everywhere **(Nicaragua 32 M IMRD – International Masters of Science in Rural Development)**.

4. Erasmus Mundus provides an opportunity for international scientific exposure while studying at various European university centres and for establishing worldwide professional and personal relationships with scientists and students.

– *The course content is really great, and meeting people from all over the world that are interested in the same field, as you are, is very informative and exciting. And studying in a different country is a chance to learn a new culture and compare it with others you know, which is a valuable learning experience outside of the classroom. Sometimes it's frustrating to be out of your comfort zone, but in the end it's worth it. Even aside from the course content, leaving a two-year Programme with a solid grasp of two new languages is very valuable in itself (USA 24 M Agris Mundus – Sustainable Development in Agriculture Masters Course).*

– *It's a great opportunity to see different cultures and get a great education at the same time. It will improve my appeal as a human resource. This international experience in Europe is really something. I have been studying with the best researchers in the world (Mexico 27 M European Masters Programme in Computational Logic).*

– *Good chance to learn academic and other knowledge in an international environment. Of course I am satisfied! (China 21 F EMIN – Economics and Management of Network Industries).*

– *We also had opportunities to meet people from the major stakeholders in International Health (...) some of us have been accepted for internship in the WHO headquarters in Geneva and we have also made useful contacts with these organisations (...) The training we got from this programme is up to date, and practical. We also had opportunities to meet people from the major stakeholders in International Health such as the WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, ICRC, Global Fund, MSF and some private companies like the Glaxosmithkline (M 29 Ghana tropEd – European Masters of Science Programme in International Health).*

– *The best feature of the host institution like the Danish University of Education is that it has one of the world's largest collections of educational books and journals in the National Library. There is an excellent environment for research and a dedicated faculty with qualified teachers (Nepal 34 M MA LLL – European Masters in Lifelong Learning: Policy and Management).*

– *When I started this Masters programme my main expectations were to further my own knowledge of special education needs, to meet people from other countries, and to adjust to being in a new environment. My expectations have been exceeded. I didn't think that the course I applied for would have twenty-six students from nineteen different countries. The course content has been exceptional and living in Holland has been brilliant (Canada 26 F MA SEN, Masters in Special Education Needs).*

– *It is a good chance to start a good life and to meet many international students (Jordan 23 M International Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory).*

5. Universities within the consortia organising EMMCs offer first-rate welcoming and hosting services and helpful staff. Properly functioning courses await students with efficient organisation and administration of hosting facilities, language training, health and advisory services and scholarship scheme operation.

I got much help from the professors and administrative staff here. It's very different from my country, the professors here are very kind and ready to help you with your projects, exercises and lectures. They also require me to work hard and I am very pleased about that. Even in the social life I get a lot of help from my coordinator (Vietnam 25 M European Masters Programme in Computational Logic).

– *Everything is well organised and personal problems are paid great attention (Cameroon MSc EF – Masters of Science in European Forestry).*

– *At the University of Bergen, the quality of the lectures is superb, the administration and professors are fantastic, and the settling-in period was done with great ease due to the welcome and good will of the institution (USA 25 F tropEd Masters in International Health).*

– *Those specific difficulties such as printing materials, internet accesses and information of living at a new place, etc. have been all met with the help from the institutions. All of them are quite open to listen to our voices and needs and the feedbacks of the course given are routinely gathered from the students (China 28 F tropEd – European Masters of Science Programme in International Health).*

– *I am very happy with the overall organising committee of the course and grateful for the help and care that the professors had offered in helping us to integrate into this programme (F Singapore M.E.S.C.: Materials for Energy Storage and Conversion).*

– *The academic staff is very helpful, from study to accommodation. It is troublesome for foreign students living in Europe. Especially as we have to go to different countries in the two years. I am quite grateful for the professors' patience and help (Mexico 31 M MONABIPHOT – Molecular nano- and bio-photonics for telecommunications and biotechnologies).*

– *We are living in the dormitory inside the campus. It's a little expensive (480 euros/month), but it is near the classrooms, library, and offices of the professors. We have our own rooms (some of us have to share a room with a roommate), own bathroom public kitchen, etc. Everyone here is very friendly and glad to help. So I am quite satisfied with the accommodation (China 22 F MONABIPHOT – Molecular nano- and bio-photonics for telecommunications and biotechnologies).*

– We received a warm welcome on the first day when we arrived in London by the administrators in this programme. All this was new to me, overwhelming, challenging but at the same time I felt like a real master's student (**Swaziland 35 F MA SEN, Masters in Special Education Needs**).

It is great that all of my course mates are stationed in the same/close hall of residences. Hence, it is easy for us to interact and work in groups for assignments or even conduct study groups. The activities organised by the university Chaplaincy also gives opportunities for international students to interact (**Malaysia 28 F MSPME – Masters in Strategic Project Management**).

6. Erasmus Mundus gives a unique opportunity to obtain an officially recognised double or joint degree, opening perspectives for further mobility possibilities and for doctoral studies or an interesting career both in the home country and in Europe or elsewhere in the world thanks to up-to-date knowledge and diploma. It is a considerable contribution to one's dossier, not only a CV item, but valuable knowledge and skills capital behind this item.

– I think it will help me, when I get back to Argentina, to find a good job. The most important Companies in Argentina are Europeans or from the United States and they prefer not to work with local professionals, so I think that studying in European institutions will help me to find a good job (**Argentina 27 F AMASE: Joint European Masters Programme in Advanced Materials Science and Engineering**).

– It will help me in terms of experience definitely! It is because I have experienced myself how beneficial it is to be involved in this programme. Especially to my Masters programme, I think as ethics is something more crucial currently and later, then it would be better to have more and more Masters students in this area (**Indonesia 41 M Masters of Applied Ethics**).

It will make me competent in a field in which I was not. It has broadened my horizons, allowing me to consider other work possibilities. It will raise my prestige and add another title, hence making me more attractive for hire and allowing a higher salary (**Colombia 29 M Masters of Applied Ethics**).

– Certainly the experiences and additional skills acquired do contribute to my success in my future career undertakings. It's indispensable for the career in Europe. For a career in Russia it's also a big plus (**Russia 25 M European Masters Programme in Computational Logic**).

– I am planning to follow a career on a cultural exchange programme to promote the culture of my country abroad. I think my studies in Europe will open a number of opportunities in the field of diplomacy and cultural exchange, as well as in academic field related to the study of human studies and languages (...) I believe that a European Masters degree achieved in

three universities will give me access to cultural instances in Europe (**Mexico F Crossways in European Humanities**).

– Graduating from EM, we definitely have much many perspectives for our future professional/academic activities. We can apply for Ph.D. and continue professional activity at the University. Besides, holding the Masters degree gives a higher possibility to get a good job-position. After this Masters we have good adaptation abilities, are not afraid to face difficulties, which is one of the demands of employers (**Russia 23 F European Masters Programme in Computational Logic**).

– It is a very good degree as we get a double degree after finishing Masters. It is highly seen after finishing the course. I would definitely recommend my friends and relatives to apply for this as they get a very good opportunity to complete their studies under such a highly dignified institution. They can also get a good scholarship to finish their studies (**India 22 F EMIN – Economics and Management of Network Industries**).

– In Australia, not so many people have Masters degrees as in Europe or the US, so I presume it will give me an edge over other graduates. Also, it allows me to specialise in the area I wish, and with the extra qualification I imagine that companies would be more likely to use me in this area (**Australia 23 F MEEES – Masters in Earthquake Engineering and Engineering Seismology**).

– It will definitely help since my background is forestry and natural resource management and I have worked in this field in Nepal and in India. Now this Masters in European forestry will help me to be influential in the European arena (**Nepal 29 M MSc EF – Masters of Science in European Forestry**).

– It will be very helpful for my future career, since I want to be a scholar, so the professional training in a competent academic institution would help a lot for promoting my academic knowledge basis and research approach (**China M European Masters in European Masters in Global Studies**).

– Obviously, this Masters will make a big difference in my life. It's going to be easier for me to get a job (comparatively), but more importantly, I now have the requisite knowledge and skills to get started. I have previous work experience but it would make a lot of difference even if I go to the same job now (**Ghana 27 M tropEd – European Masters of Science Programme in International Health**).

– Since, we are just some people doing this Masters in a very important field and we will have five degrees at the same time it's very important for our future activities. I want to work in a big company to do the application of my studies (**Morocco 22 F Materials for Energy Storage and Conversion**).

– Since used to work for the project back in my country Nepal, I used to dream myself being a project manager and working in top managerial position. This course module is likely to help widen my learning and

experience in the field of Project Management. And, this Programme is not available in my country (**25 M Nepal MSPME – Masters in Strategic Project Management**).

– European degree is a worldwide recognised degree, and this is very essential for my future career. Definitely, it is good a way to explore a different culture and at the same time earning a degree (**Malaysia M 23 Sustainable Development in Agriculture**).

– I will have a double diploma and maybe triple diploma at the end that it will be an advantage for me as a candidate for a job because I am doing my Masters in three European countries like France, Spain and Italy (**Lebanon 23 M International Masters Vintage: Vine, Wine and Terroir Management**).

– It will be surely helpful in my career but the most important thing is the knowledge I will gain from this study (**Cambodia 33 M International Masters's in Quaternary and Prehistory**).

7. Erasmus Mundus works against the brain drain and in favour of brain gain for developing countries. It gives the opportunity to transfer useful knowledge, technology and skills to the alumni's home (developing) countries or elsewhere, where needed in the world.

– I would like to pursue my Ph.D research and would like to focus on bioethical issues of my country, practices followed in clinical and research medicine. I would like to form a pressure for the government to include bioethical laws in the legal framework of the country. I will try my best to introduce this subject at graduate and undergraduate levels and also in medical institutions. I have been teaching in a college for the last eleven years. This degree will help in my profession I will be able to introduce this subject at graduate and undergraduate level. I am also a board member of studies so I think I will be able to make these changes in the education system of my country. I will also promote self-initiated study methods in my educational institutions (**Pakistan F Masters of Applied Ethics**).

– I think a European joint Masters degree will advance your career as it deepens your own professional knowledge. Moreover, the experience of learning in different countries allows you to take various methods and strategies back to your home country to put into practice there (**USA 24 M Agris Mundus – Sustainable Development in Agriculture Masters Course**).

– If I get a chance I would like to work a couple of years and then go to my motherland and share my knowledge with them and do my duty towards them (**Sri Lanka 25 M EuMAS – European Masters Course in Aeronautics and Space Technology**).

– European countries are doing much more in the forestry sector. But, in developing countries forest protection and the livelihood of the people is

only one theme of forest management. So, I would like to learn how we could manage our forest as productive forest commercially in a sustainable manner (**Nepal 29 M MSc EF – Masters of Science in European Forestry**).

– I will go back home to the Philippines and contribute somehow to society with the things I learned here in Europe during my Erasmus Mundus years (**the Philippines 26 F European Masters in Global Studies**).

– I will go back in my country and I will join my profession – I am a junior university teacher I believe that after completing this degree successfully I will be more competent than other students, because this degree is a combination of so many subjects, from different famous institutions and after all this the degree from European country – a developed country. Always students of developing countries try to pursue higher studies in a developed country, so, I think, I will have more chance to get Ph.D studies/scholarship/fellowship for development of my career (**Bangladesh 32 M IMRD – International Masters of Science in Rural Development**).

I have been working in Nicaragua's rural development since I was graduated, so that I can enhance my knowledge and experience in order to work better in my countries agriculture development (...) I would like to go back to my country in order to apply the knowledge I get here. Once I complete the course, I will be enough prepared in order to face different situations in development issues, in this way I could help to design and apply accurate police instruments, aims to overcome poverty and inequality (**Nicaragua 32 M IMRD – International Masters of Science in Rural Development**).

It really helped me with the nice experiences, new knowledge and information that make me see the world with a different view of it all. The programme really provides me with sufficient knowledge to start developing more options of economic activities in my country (**Malaysia M 27 IMRD – International Masters of Science in Rural Development**).

– I want to gain knowledge in prehistory in general, and want to use this knowledge to pass on to other students in Cambodia because the study of prehistory has just begun in my country in the real sense (**Cambodia 33 M International Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory**).

– I plan to go back home and implement some of the things I learned during the course i.e. reflective practice. I wish to continue doing research on special education issues in my country and to write and publish papers, make use of the networks established through this programme. The dissertation is going to be my starting point for further research in my country (**Swaziland 35 F MA SEN, Masters in Special Education Needs**).

– I will disseminate the knowledge gained at my Masters studies by conducting state level and national level seminars and conferences for special educators. I will conduct collaborative action research to improve the quality of deaf education and inclusive education (...) I am sure the deaf students, the teachers of the deaf in special schools and inclusive schools

and also the teacher trainees in Tamilnadu, India will be benefited by the knowledge I gained. I can talk to them more confidently referring to the successful practices in SEN in the West (**India 58 F MA SEN, Masters in Special Education Needs**).

– My country needs people in this field to augment the EFA goal by 2015. This course is not offered in my country and is required for professional development of teachers and educators with Inclusion being the policies of governments in many countries (**Bangladesh F MA SEN, Masters in Special Education Needs**).

8. Studying at European universities at EMMCs provides opportunities for improvement of foreign languages proficiency through practical use of European languages and living in a multilingual environment.

– The possibility to travel in all these wonderful European cities and regions; The possibility to study and to learn three European languages and to know different European cultures and mentalities; The possibility to exchange ideas and experiences with the Mundus students from all over the world and with the local professors (**Macedonia 27 F Crossways in European Humanities**).

– TUHH had provided us with two weeks intensive German language course. With small fees paid, this gave us an option to spend our time wisely prior to school opening (**Malaysia 25 F EMMS – Joint European Masters Programme in Materials Science**).

– After three months, I could express myself in Italian, at least on an intermediate level. Speaking Italian helped me overcome my language barrier and gave me a better opportunity not only for my studies, but also to communicate and consequently to make friends with Italians (**Ivory Coast 27 M International Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory**).

– It's very good to read in Italian and English language. In a short time I learned the basic Italian because I didn't know anything (**Colombia 26 F WOP-P – Masters on Work, Organisational and Personnel Psychology**).

9. The Mundus Programme gives prestigious scholarships enabling the grant holders to live well during studies in Europe, focusing on studies and enjoying social activities. It is a unique offer of funded education of high quality.

– So far this is the only Programme that give such tremendous intercultural skills, good scholarships and pretty good academic Programme (**Ukraine 25 M Crossways**).

– I do feel at home in Germany. The financial support gives freedom and the feeling of security in a foreign society (**Russia M 23 EMMS – Joint European Masters Programme in Materials Science**).

– The best feature of Euro Aquae Masters was multi-culture communication with the students from all over the world and many practical exercises. I would recommend the Programme if one wants to work abroad (especially in Europe), work in the foreign companies or would like to have a chance to study abroad. It is quite a rare chance to study in so many countries with so many different foreign students (**Japan 24 F EURO-AQUAE – Euro Hydro-Informatics and Water Management**).

– I want to absolutely recommend the Programme, especially when taking into consideration how expensive Masters programmes are in the US. It is a wonderful opportunity, not only financially, but also in the experience (**USA 25 F tropEd – European Masters of Science Programme in International Health**).

– The scholarship was really a lot, and I can also study in the country which I dreamed about (...) But it is really interesting that we can go to other countries in Europe, really easy. It is important to know how the others groups are working about the same subject we work in the Masters in Portugal. Also to learn other languages, it is really important (...) Absolutely yes, because in the third world we do not have many opportunities to find a scholarship to study outside of our countries. The Programme is really serious, and offers great possibilities to learn in four different countries. The teachers are excellent (**Colombia F International Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory**).

10. The programme created possibilities for personal development through international environment, cross-cultural relations and cultural benefits. It is a source of “globalmindness” and international awareness. It causes positive changes of personal characteristics prior to the experience and after it and gives life-span benefits. It is a valuable lesson of adaptability and self management skills.

– I think that I have learned in this course. The practical approach is going to help me throughout my life (**India 25 M Hydroinformatics and water management**).

– It is life changing experience, not only the opportunity to study abroad and obtain higher education but because the entire experience is a challenge from the work to adapting to new situations both of which I think is character building and will highly influence your life once you are done studying (**South Africa F European Masters in Global Studies**).

– I learned a lot from my teaching staff and fellow students not only in the academic area but also working experience. I learned a lot of diverse cultures and perspectives in an international arena (**China F tropEd – European Masters of Science Programme in International Health**).

– I would recommend this Masters degree to somebody interested in deepening an academic career on cultural and social studies because it is

a programme that opens many opportunities of academic growth whilst giving the chance to learn in a multicultural and varied context **(Mexico F Crossways in European Humanities)**.

– One of the best features has been the academic experience at – so far – two different universities, this includes being able to study new subjects at very high level or even subjects I had studied before from new approaches in the company of students with different backgrounds and points of view; **(Mexico F Crossways in European Humanities)**.

– In spite of everything, it is a chance to be more approached to France to Europe and to enrich the personal experience. To have learned something or not, it's ourselves to decide and to make the effort **(China F Crossways in European Humanities)**.

– I'll surely go back to my home country. There is not a single day when I don't feel growth in my ethical, social and educational values while being in this Programme. Not to mention, there are times when I feel ten feet under the ground **(Pakistan 23 M EMIN – Economics and Management of Network Industries)**.

– The special thing with the Programme is that I am able to go to different countries and this will broaden my perspective and I think this is something good for personal development **(Malaysia M Materials for Energy Storage and Conversion)**.

– Studying and living in a foreign land(EU countries) helps to broaden ones' mind not only academically but also interpersonally and culturally. It tests ones' ability to live and survive in an environment out of their comfort zone and unpredictable circumstances. It helps to mould one's character and assists them to be more mature in the outlook of their lives in future, personally and professionally **(Malaysia 28 F MSPME – Masters in Strategic Project Management)**.

– I think my study experience of European Masters study not only gives me a degree but also gives me a chance to develop an International academic mind and it is really helpful to my future – **(Argentina M International Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory)**.

– As I said previously, the teachers who are academically prepared, the universities that are well-equipped and the experience of living with people from different countries, from different cultures, will be valuable for the rest of my life **(Brazil F 23 International Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory)**.

– The Masters course in MNHN-IPH is very broad, associated with many different subjects, I think it is good for me to do the research in the future, because what I have learned here has really widened my mind and it gives me more inspiration not only on my subject but also on other parts of my life **(China M International Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory)**.

11. Taking into account all the above listed advantages and profits that students claimed to get from the Erasmus Mundus Programme we feel entitled to the premise that for providing a good education, Europe can be seen as a better place than its competitors in a global market (like the US, Canada, Japan, Australia). Europe is just a wonderful place to study and experience. Moreover there are special advantages of having a multiple or joint *European degree* over a single degree of an acknowledged higher education institution elsewhere in the world.

– *It is a very good opportunity to study advanced mathematics, and the style of mathematics in Europe is totally different from that in U.S., but I think I prefer the one in Europe (China 24 M ALGANT – Algebra, Geometry and Number Theory).*

– *The Erasmus Mundus Programme is the best scholarship of Europe. Particularly the Masters Programme, which I am studying, is so good. And also the scholarship amount provided by the European committee for third country people like me is so good. I totally like this Programme very much. Generally people from India, like me, used to go to the U.S.A. and Canada for higher studies. But I was interested to study in Europe, because in Europe there are so many world reputed universities. It is the best university in Ireland and also it is involved in so many research activities. Also the method of teaching and relationships with student and staff are brilliant. Therefore I decided to study in Europe (India M 26 Agris Mundus – Sustainable Development in Agriculture Masters Course).*

– *I think it will be very helpful since this is a European degree, which not every one can obtain (Indonesia 23 M European Masters Programme in Computational Logic).*

– *The academic excellence is the best, the weather condition is the worst. My expectation was excellent study and I have got that... (Ethiopia 29 M EURO-AQUAE – Euro Hydro-Informatics and Water Management).*

– *It will allow me to be more competitive in the industrial world. It gives a wider range of knowledge/experience than typically seen from native degrees (Canada 23 M EuMAS – European Masters Course in Aeronautics and Space Technology).*

– *The experience until now convinces me that this programme is a good choice according to both academic and living standard. Now most of the elite students in China hold the dream to study in USA, which I can not condemn, but it may be dangerous that the future elites of China possess narrow background and perspective from a homogeneous education system, but not the perspectives from other major powers and civilization, namely a global perspective lacks. So it is necessary to introduce more Chinese elite students to study in Europe (China 25 M European Masters in Global Studies).*

– My main aim is to get well qualified and go to my country and spread good education, to change the education system. For that only a good European education can help (**India 22 M EMM-Nano – Erasmus Mundus Masters of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology**).

– Is the best experience one can have, in a personal and a professional way. Yes, it is a great opportunity. Especially for people of south America, where there are not such opportunities (**Colombia 26 F Work, Organisational and Personnel Psychology**).

11a. Studying at Mundus is a life-span experience, one's character changing factor or a wonderful experience, but ... what then? ... ask some students who are aware of the necessity to open to Mundus alumni farther prospects by offering them professional career or Ph.D. studies advice and support.

– My main expectations were to be equipped with the skills and I guess so far things are nice but maybe if in European courses we have the placement cell then the popularity of these courses would be really high. There should be placement cells for the entire course so, a lot of students all over the world would be attracted to join these courses (**India 25 M EURO-AQUAE – Euro Hydro-Informatics and Water Management**).

– It should help, otherwise it is a loss of two years. Universities should take care of their students in this respect and help them to have a good career afterwards (**India 27 M MSc EF – Masters of Science in European Forestry**).

– It is really hard to say because since it is a new Programme it might not yet be well known in a country like Cambodia. Still, I hope for the good (**Cambodia 26 M European Masters in Global Studies**).

2. Concluding remarks and implications for future research

The research undertaken within our Mundus project bring both recommendations for future Programme developments and implications for further research.

During our studies on Mundus we noticed that some students seem to misunderstand the educative mission of the European Union embodied in giving an opportunity to non-EU students to study at Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses. Some students have seen it as an activity leading to a brain drain: *What I would suggest is that the Programme should aim at getting more matured students who have had some professional experiences as such an aim would benefit the EU in terms of exploiting the young and professional minds of those outside Europe to come and*

contribute to the EU aspiration of locating itself at the central position of EU – non-EU countries bilateral relations (**Malaysia 27 M European Masters in Global Studies**). Well, Europe tends to get more foreign students, but there is a need to stress that the brain drain and *exploiting the young and professional minds of those outside Europe* is definitely not the idea underlying the Mundus Programme and justification for such a statement comes from the spheres of the EU policy and philosophy. There are four main reasons for which the EU invites international students. Firstly, the European Union needs students from all over the world, especially those who are active in science and engineering as their research contributions can bolster scientific progress and the EU competitiveness. Secondly, in a world connected by technology, economic links and global challenges, it is vital that our – European – students understand how to learn and work alongside those representing different cultures from all over the world. Thirdly, through the contacts with third countries' students and scientists the European Union can spread its interests, ideas and values across the world. It can be achieved by many means, but perhaps the single most effective one is by educating the world's elites. We have to get non-European students acquainted with our political and economic systems, and help them to understand our, European point of view, based on pluralism, humanism, individualism, freedom, solidarity etc. But we do not intend to patronise them – Europeans also have to try to understand and accept a different – Asian or African – mentality and sets of values represented by visiting students from other spheres of culture. These students, when they come back after completing studies can become influential leaders either worldwide or locally. It will surely make a difference in their lives after having a positive experience in Europe. It may happen that they will take back home an appreciation of European values, its ideas, history and culture but also for European products. They can become ambassadors of closer, more positive relations with the European Union and its Member States. And fourthly, they will take home knowledge and skills gained at European universities in order to improve economy, education and governance, to modernise services and policy, to enhance economic growth and improve the quality of life in their (developing) countries or elsewhere, where needed, in the world. And this last possibility we consider to be the most valuable among all the benefits offered by the Erasmus Mundus Programme. The will to transfer knowledge, skills and technology gained in Europe, leading to reversed brain gain for developing countries, became evident during the analysis of students' motives for choosing studies in Europe and their plans after completing studies in Europe.

When collating research material the researchers were positively surprised finding out how many students declared to *take various methods*

and strategies back to your home country; establish research centres; influence home policy and undertake other knowledge-based actions in order to overcome poverty and inequality and contribute somehow to society of their homelands or work as a pioneer for future world. It is very moving as we did not ask students whether they wished to transfer knowledge gained in Europe to their developing countries, which could have resulted, in some cases, writing things to please the researchers. Some students' declarations were already cited in the first section of this text among those illustrating benefit nr 7 – referring to knowledge transfer from the EU towards third countries. Let us give a few more examples and start with one of the respondents, who cited his motivation letter which he sent with his application, emphasising his interest in deepening his computer science knowledge and skills and the will to contribute to better perspectives of his country and nation: *I would like to collaborate with active people with strong skills in theoretical and applied computer science, I believe that my education gives me the opportunity to learn and actively cooperate and make contributions with my knowledge in this area. I actually know that the educational level at my country is not so strong as in European or United States of America education; however I would be pleased to learn from effective people, I believe this experience will help to change that perspective in my country. I have been working in social and educational projects; I know that computer science can be applied to develop constructive projects (...) This programme will develop in me strong skills to help other people to formalise and understand concepts* (**Mexico 25 M European Masters Programme in Computational Logic**).

Among reasons why Mundus students have chosen to study in Europe we frequently found the wish to transfer the knowledge gained in Europe to their home country. Such a will emerged also from analysis of students' answers to questions about plans and reasons. Here we will cite and comment on a few such students' declarations. Many students declared returning home after Masters completion with the aim of contributing to development of knowledge, new areas of competence, effectiveness and modernisation of their home services and policy, economic growth or improvement of the quality of life in their countries. Such a plan – of exploiting the new know-how that is generated in European higher education institutions and applying it *to make a difference somewhere in Africa, Latin America or Asia* – some students already had before coming to Europe. A Thai student did not specify areas of planned transfer but expressed his inspiration by *the challenge to study in the developed country in order to gain knowledge as much as I can to improve the developing countries, particularly Thailand* (**Thailand 27 M Agris Mundus – Sustainable Development in Agriculture Masters Course**). Others specified how they would like to contribute to their homelands' development. One of the Namibians hopes for application of the acquired knowledge of

livestock production in his home country upon completion of studies: *Europe is surely a different environment as opposed to my home country, technologically well advanced etc., socio-culturally different as well with a high degree of multilingualism. Therefore it is for these reasons that I chose to study in Europe. In addition to that, I am presented with a good opportunity of acquiring complex and scientific know-how needed to boost the overall development of my country and many other African countries (Namibia 30 M Agris Mundus – Sustainable Development in Agriculture Masters Course)*. One of the Pakistani students has been interested in applied ethics and especially in bioethics, which was not taught in his country. He chose EM Masters of Applied Ethics to introduce the bioethical legal system in his country: *I have been interested in the application of philosophy to live situations; in my country only theoretical philosophy is taught. I was interested in applied ethics and especially in bioethics, which is not taught as a discipline in Pakistan. I think there is a dire need of bio ethicists in Pakistan and a need to formulate a bio ethical legal system in order to keep a check on the medical practices. Paternalism has given authority to medical professionals, which they are misusing. These are a few of the reasons I opted for this Masters programme. I needed funding also for my studies, that is why I selected Erasmus Mundus programme (F Pakistan Masters of Applied Ethics)*.

Two groups can be extracted from all students who declared to transfer European science and know-how. One proclaimed coming back to their country, the other – represented also by students from the developed regions – was ready to go anywhere to an underdeveloped country. Some selected plans of those who want to contribute to the development of their countries will be cited here: *I will go back home and continue my job. My main aim after completing this course is to stimulate, at certain level, Indonesian societies to be more concerned to attitudes ethically both locally and globally (Indonesia 41 M Masters of Applied Ethics)*; *I plan to go back home to the Philippines and contribute somehow to society with the things I learned here in Europe during my Erasmus Mundus years (the Philippines F European Masters in Global Studies)*; *After going back to my country I will present the proposal to make adaptations in teacher training programmes and in tutoring practice of my own university (Pakistan M MA SEN, Masters in Special Education Needs)*; *My plan is to produce a data base system and a research centre for the different historical sites, reconstruct the ancient culture, belief, practices and history of our ancestors or ancient people, and preserve them in a museum (Ethiopia M International Masters in Quaternary and Prehistory)*; *After my degree I will go back to Cambodia and teach and research in prehistory because in Cambodia a lot of work is to be done in prehistory (Cambodia International Masters's in Quaternary and Prehistory)*; *My career goal is to improve*

primary health care where most needed. This Masters programme will equip me with the knowledge and the ability to pursue my goal (**China F tropEd – European Masters of Science Programme in International Health**).

Food, health care and infrastructure know-how are most urgently needed in the Third World and some Mundus specialists are ready to join organisations and individuals of good will anywhere in the developing world: *I want to be a key player in practical projects in impoverished nations in Africa, Asia, and South America. The expertise in the field reached here in Europe, from my view, is achievable also in these poor nations if systematically followed in all honesty* (**Nigeria IMRD – International Masters of Science in Rural Development**); *Basically at present I am getting international exposure. Apart from this I am learning so many new techniques and methods in my field, which I have done previously. So I hope at the end of this programme I will be moulded as a knowledge-bowl in my field (food processing). So that I can work as a pioneer for future world* (**India M 26 Sustainable Development**); *My greatest ambition is to get a job with an international organisation that works in the developing country. I would be happy to return home and work but I am also happy about working in another developing country* (**Ghana 27 M tropEd – European Masters of Science Programme in International Health**); *I would like to work in rural development and education in a developing country. Hopefully the academic work and professional contacts I make during the Masters will prepare me for this and open the door to relevant job opportunities in this field* (**USA 24 M Agris Mundus – Sustainable Development in Agriculture Masters Course**).

The authors of essays also expressed not only their concern about personal development but also the will to work for the good of their co-nationals by transferring knowledge and skills gained in Europe to their home countries. Khady plans to come back to Senegal and be a teacher, return to his home country is also declared by Charbel from Lebanon. Mario plans to come back to Nicaragua – he wants to get a good education in Europe and then focus on developing agriculture in his country after coming back to his job position in a Dutch organisation: *It is better to complete my academic engagements now, because when I go back to my country, my priorities will be different* (**Mario, Nicaragua, IMRD – International Masters of Science in Rural Development**). *On completion of this study, I have planned to go to Ghana and continue working for the Ghana Health Service for at least two years. This would give me enough experience to work for the WHO, or UNICEF, WFP etc., in the nearest future* (**Rashid Ghana tropEd – European Masters of Science Programme in International**). As he planned and declared – he did after graduation. He is a public health nutritionist and disease control specialist in Accra, currently working for a local NGO, *The Community Initiatives for Disease Control (CIDC)*, to help reduce the impact

of malnutrition and the incidence of infectious diseases amongst children in rural Northern Ghana.

It must be remembered that expertise and skilled people are needed in disfavoured regions and the brain drain is definitely not the intention of the Erasmus Mundus Programme. This makes the existence of contributors to transfer technology and knowledge to developing countries the most valuable outcome of this European initiative. The gathered research material, outlined above, brings implications for farther studies and analyses on the impact of the Mundus Programme. The Universities of Poznań, Hannover and Zaragoza are eager to continue conducting studies on the attractiveness and perception of the European Higher Education in the eyes of students from non-EU countries, including Mundus students. The project team will propose a new project: **European Higher Education for the World 2 – Studies on international students mobility and brain gain**. Within this proposal of new studies we will employ improved tools and we plan to cover the wider scope of the surveyed and interviewed students, using the current project as a pilot study and building on its experience. The project will consist of two stages:

- I. Studies on international students mobility – brain drain and brain gain *in global perspective*.
 1. **Studies on international trends in brain drain and gain** – theoretical analysis of the literature and global statistical data.
 2. **Studies on Mundus students plans and visions of their future after completing Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses** – empirical research, quantitative and qualitative (collection of data by survey and from students' essays sent to the competition).
- II. Studies on brain gain *in individual perspective*.
 - **Brain gain case studies** – phenomenological study – portrayals of Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses' Alumni – professionals who transferred knowledge and skills from Europe to their developing countries. Students identified within our current project, who declared coming back to their home country after studies to contribute to its development, will be asked to write stories describing the *Mundus impact* and will be encouraged to write post-grant diaries to gather material for future video interviews with the winners of the competition "*What I brought back to my country after completing Mundus Masters studies in the European Union?*"

The research to be carried out in these two stages will result in two publications and a DVD documentary film, promoting and investigating the issue of brain gain impact by documenting changes in the life of Mundus alumni and their environments.

We do think that the promotion strategy using students' and alumni feedback is very effective and should be used also in the *Global Promotion Project*. In our opinion, this is one of the best ways to promote the Programme

– using authentic Mundus students' and alumni's voice to attract other international students looking for educational opportunities abroad. The source of the success of the US or Australia in attracting international students lays in a consistently improved image of their higher education through strong promotion. How can European universities successfully position themselves in a global context? By demonstrating EMMCs' excellence and using their alumni as ambassadors of studying in the European Union. Their testimonies, together with well-prepared information to the world public about European higher education, continuously increasing quality of host institutions' services as well as diversification and flexibility of the educational offer in the European Union, will make it more attractive for students from all over the world. We will conclude with the comment of one Argentine student demanding using students' feedback for making changes and improving Programme's operation: *During the Programme we were asked to write two reports about our experience. I consider feedback on this kind of report very important for management of the course, and I think that it would be rewarding for us (the Erasmus Mundus students) to receive a summary of the results and conclusions of the reports* **(Argentina 27 F European Masters Programme in Computational Logic)**.

Established in 2007

- Comem Erasmus Mundus MSc – Coastal and Marine Engineering and Management, <http://www.comem.tudelft.nl>
- DILL – International Master in Digital Library Learning, <http://dill.hio.no/>
- EURMed (Etudes Urbaines en Régions Méditerranéennes), <http://erasmus-mundus-eurmed.univ-cezanne.fr/>
- European Masters Course in Software Engineering, <http://www.fi.upm.es/emse>
- European Master in Animal Breeding and Genetics (EM-ABG), <http://www.emabg.wur.nl/>
- FAME – Functionalised Advanced Materials and Engineering, <http://www.fame-master.com>
- GEMMA: Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies, <http://www.ugr.es/~gemma/>
- IMESS: International Masters in Economy, State and Society, <http://www.imess.eu/index.html>
- IMMIT: International Master in Management of Information Technology, <http://www.tukkk.fi/tjt/immit>
- JEMES – Joint European Master Programme in Environmental Studies, http://www.tuhh.de/eciu-gs/pro_joint_jemes.html
- LCT – European Masters Program in Language and Communication Technologies, <http://lct-master.org>
- MA Human Rights Practice (Erasmus Mundus), <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/admissions/>
- MaMaSELF – Master of Materials Science exploiting European Large Scale Facilities, <http://mamaself.univ-rennes1.fr>
- Master of Science in Computational Mechanics, <http://www.cimne.com/cm-master/>
- Master of Science in Geospatial Technologies, <http://geotech.uni-muenster.de>
- ME3 – European joint Masters in Management and Engineering of Environment and Energy, <http://webi.emn.fr>
- Mundusfor – Formation de professionnels de la formation, <http://www.ugr.es/~mundusfor/>
- MUNDUS MAPP – Erasmus Mundus Master's in Public Policy, <http://www.mundusmapp.org/>
- OPSCITECH: Optics in Science and Technology, <http://www.master-optics.eu/>
- Philosophies allemande et française dans l'espace européen, <http://www.europphilosophie.eu/>
- SAMHC – Advanced Masters in Structural Analysis of Monuments and Historical Constructions, <http://www.msc-sahc.org/>
- SUFONAMA – Sustainable Forest and Nature Management, <http://www.sufonama.net>
- TPTI: Techniques, Patrimoines, Territoires de l'industrie: Histoire, Valorisation, Didactique, <http://www.tpti.eu/>

Established in 2006

- AGRIS MUNDUS – Sustainable Development in Agriculture Masters Course, <http://www.agris-mundus.eu/agris-mundus/>
- ATOSIM: Atomic Scale Modelling of Physical, Chemical and Bio-molecular Systems, <http://www.erasmusmundus-atosim.cecam.org/>
- CoDe – Joint European Master in Comparative Local Development, <http://www.mastercode.unitn.it/>
- EMIN – Economics and Management of Network Industries, <http://www.upcomillas.es/emin/>
- Master of Science in Photonics, <http://www.master-photonics.org/>
- EUROCULTURE, <http://www.rug.nl/et/onderwijs/internationalesstudies>
- Europubhealth – European Public Health Master, <http://www.europubhealth.org>
- FUSION-EP European Master in Nuclear Fusion Science and Engineering Physics, <http://www.em-master-fusion.org/>
- IMIM: International Master in Industrial Management, <http://www.imim.polimi.it/>
- M.A. Degree in Economics of International Trade and European Integration, <http://webhost.ua.ac.be/eitei/>
- MA LLL – European Master's in Lifelong Learning: Policy and Management, www.dpu.dk/mall/
- Master of Bioethics, <http://www.masterbioethics.org/index.html>
- M.E.S.C.: Materials for Energy Storage and Conversion, http://www.u-picardie.fr/mundus_MESC/
- MONABIPHOT – Molecular nano- and bio-photonics for telecommunications and biotechnologies, <http://www.ens-cachan.fr/monabiphot/>
- MSPME, Masters in Strategic Project Management, <http://www.mspme.org/>
- NordSecMob – Masters programme in Security and Mobile Computing, <http://www.tkk.fi/Units/CSE/NordSecMob/index.html>
- PHOENIX EM – Dynamics of Health and Welfare, <http://mundus-healthwelfare.ehess.fr/>

Annex: List of available Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses with scholarships

QEM – Models and Methods of Quantitative Economics, <http://www.univ-paris1.fr/rubrique1297.html>

SUTROFOR – Sustainable Tropical Forestry Erasmus Mundus Masters Course, <http://www.sutrofor.net/>

VIBOT – European Master in Vision and Robotics, <http://www.vibot.org>

WOP-P – Master on Work, Organizational and Personnel Psychology, <http://www.erasmuswop.org/>

Established in 2005

AMASE: Joint European Masters Programme in Advanced Materials Science and Engineering, <http://www.amase-master.net/>

Crossways in European Humanities, <http://www.mastermundushumanities.com>

EMMAPA: Erasmus Mundus Master in Adapted Physical Activity, <http://www.erasmusmundus.be>

EMM-Nano – Erasmus Mundus Master of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, <http://www.emm-nano.org/>

Erasmus Mundus Masters – Journalism and Media within Globalization: The European Perspective, <http://www.MundusJournalism.com>

EuMAS – European Masters Course in Aeronautics and Space Technology, <http://www.aerospacemasters.org/>

EUROMIME: European Master in Media Engineering for Education, <http://www.euromime.org>

European Master in Global Studies, http://www.uni-leipzig.de/zhs/erasmus_mundus

GEM: Geo-information Science and Earth Observation for Environmental Modelling and Management, <http://www.gem-msc.org/>

International Master „Vintage”, Vine, Wine and Terroir Management, <http://www.vintagemaster.com>

MA SEN, Master's in Special Education Needs, <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/>

Master of Applied Ethics, <http://www.liu.se/ffk/eng/maefolder/index.html>

Master of Industrial Mathematics, <http://www.win.tue.nl/esim/>

MESPOM: Masters of Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management, <http://www.mespom.org>

MSc in Network and e-Business Centred Computing, http://www.sse.reading.ac.uk/EMMSC_NeBCC

SEFOTECH.nut: European MSc in Food Science, Technology and Nutrition, <http://www.sefotechnut.org/>

SpaceMaster – Joint European Master in Space Science and Technology, <http://www.space-master.se/>

Established in 2004

ALGANT – Algebra, Geometry and Number Theory, <http://www.math.u-bordeaux.fr/>

CoMundus – European Master of Arts in Media, Communication and Cultural Studies, <http://www.comundus.net/http://www.mediastudiесеurope.net/>

EMCL – European Master's Clinical Linguistics, <http://www.emcl-mundus.com>

EMMME – Erasmus Mundus Master of Mechanical Engineering, <http://www.emmme.com>

EMMS – Joint European Masters Programme in Materials Science, http://www.tuhh.de/eci-gs/pro_joint_mat.html

EuMI – European Master in Informatics, <http://www.eumi-school.org/>

EURO-AQUAE – Euro Hydro-Informatics and Water Management, <http://www.euroaquae.org>

European Joint Master in Water and Coastal Management, <http://www.ualg.pt/EUMScWCM/>

European Legal Practice – LL.M. Eur, <http://www.jura.uni-hannover.de/>

European Master in Law and Economics, <http://www.emle.org>

European Masters Programme in Computational Logic, <http://european.computational-logic.org>

HEEM – European Masters Degree in Higher Education, <http://www.uv.uio.no/hedda/>

IMRD: International Master of Science in Rural Development, <http://www.agri-econ.ugent.be/IMRD/>

International Master's in Quaternary and Prehistory, <http://web.unife.it/progetti/>

MEEES – Master's in Earthquake Engineering and Engineering Seismology, <http://www.meees.org>

MERIT – European Master of Research on Information and Communication Technologies, <http://www.meritmaster.org>

MSc EF Master of Science in European Forestry, <http://gis.joensuu.fi/mscef>

NOHA MUNDUS – European Master's Degree in International Humanitarian Aid, <http://www.noha.net.org/>

tropEd – European Master of Science Programme in International Health, <http://erasmusmundus.troped.org>