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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Accompanying document to the**

**Proposal for a**

**DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL**

**establishing an action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education  
and the promotion of intercultural understanding through co-operation with third  
countries (Erasmus Mundus) (2009-2013)**

**Executive Summary of Extended Impact Assessment integrating ex ante evaluation  
requirements**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Higher education is subject to a phenomenon of growing internationalisation as a response to the process of globalisation. The Community and its Member States must therefore seek to prepare their citizens and their workforce for a global environment by including an international dimension in their higher education systems in an appropriate and efficient way.

Higher education institutions are arenas for inter-cultural dialogue and exchange. An education and mobility programme based on international links and exchanges of individuals can enhance the political, cultural, educational and economical links between the European Union and third countries.

The overall aim of a future Erasmus Mundus programme should be to enhance the quality of European higher education and to promote dialogue and understanding between peoples and cultures through cooperation with third countries as well as to contribute to the development of third countries in the field of higher education. In concrete terms, the new programme should:

- fund high-quality joint master and doctoral programmes offered by a group of European and possibly third-country higher education institutions;
- grant full-study scholarships to European and third-country students to follow these joint programmes as well as short-term scholarships to European and third-country academics to carry out research or teaching assignments at these joint programmes;
- develop co-operative partnerships between European and third-country higher education institutions as a basis for exchange of students and academics at all levels of higher education with a view to enhancing the international cooperation capacities of higher education institutions in third countries;
- support transnational initiatives, analyses, studies, projects, events and other activities aiming at enhancing the attractiveness of European higher education in the world.

Three basic policy options need to be considered in relation to the future programming period of the Erasmus Mundus programme (2009-2013):

1. Continue the Erasmus Mundus programme in its current form;
2. Continue the Erasmus Mundus programme in a modified form and;
3. Discontinue Erasmus Mundus when the current programme comes to an end in December 2008.

A comparative assessment of these policy options shows that option 3 has got the weakest impact on the programme's needs and objectives. While option 1 fares well in the assessment, option 2 nevertheless has clear advantages over option 1.

Under option 2, the following modifications were assessed in detail which - because of their combined beneficial impact - are all suggested to be integrated into a new Erasmus Mundus programme:

- Extension of the programme to include funding for **doctoral studies**;
- Inclusion of financial support for **EU students** within the scope of the programme;
- Better integration of **third-country higher education institutions** into the programme;
- Integration of the Erasmus Mundus **External Cooperation Window** into the programme.