

## Utrecht Network Position Paper on Erasmus+

The Utrecht Network is a Europe-wide group of 32 universities which cooperate in terms of internationalisation, committed to initiatives that strengthen the international profile of member universities and the cohesion of the group.

One of the unique aspects of the Network is that it has a clearly-defined focus and mission (internationalisation) and that its focus and mission has always been pursued by internationalisation “practitioners”. In the past, this has included academic staff, and, in more recent years, administrators dealing with internationalisation policies and activities. The 32 rectors of the participating institutions have delegated their role to institutional representatives who now are mainly directors of international centres or academic delegates for education internationalisation. The direct involvement of people with such roles makes the Utrecht Network even more unique as its representatives are direct participants in the implementation of international activities within their institutions.

The Utrecht Network acknowledges the importance of the previous and current programmes for higher education institutions, students, staff and for civil society at large, and this importance is reflected in the mission of the Utrecht Network itself. Therefore, the Utrecht Network desires to contribute to the evaluation of the Erasmus+ Programme and, in particular, to share ideas and suggestions for the development of the programme in the future. On one hand, this position paper reflects the willingness to contribute and help shape the future of internationalisation, and on the other hand it reflects the nature of this network of practitioners. Its purpose is to present a technical and operative view on the current and future Programme to the European Commission, one based on the daily management of Erasmus+ projects and actions. It is structured in a quite simple and direct way, referring to already-existing actions and providing comments on the current state of implementation and potential adjustments for the years to come or for the future of the programme.

## **1. General comments on all Erasmus+ actions**

The Erasmus+ Programme is an integrated programme which merges all the previous programmes and actions for education, training, youth and sport. In the opinion of the Utrecht Network, this “integration” is a positive evolution which will not only simplify management procedures, but which will also foster the cross-fertilization of different projects within the actions and the development of cross-sectorial initiatives. Therefore, we think that an additional effort should be put forth to make this integration even more tangible for stakeholders, in particular through the harmonisation of the management rules, of the budgetary issues, of the assessment procedures and of the information provided on the selection results. Some considerations and suggestions are collected below to improve the integration process for the different parts of the programme:

### **Innovation vs consolidation of results**

The concept of “innovation” is at the core of the current Erasmus+ Programme and, taking into consideration the higher education sector, it is also at the core of the new Modernization Agenda recently published by the Commission. The importance of “innovation” and of “modernization” is not under debate. However, despite every funded project being required to disseminate and make use of results at a local, national and international level (and being evaluated for the dissemination/use/sustainability strategy), and despite a dissemination platform having recently been developed by the Commission, it is undoubtable that some of the innovations produced by projects, widely spread all over Europe through the dissemination strategies, risk not having enough time to “digest” the potential of those innovations and might benefit from dedicated consolidation actions. **One suggestion moving forward is therefore to dedicate space to “consolidation or upscaling actions”**, something similar to what it was funded within the Leonardo da Vinci Programme’s projects for the “Transfer of Innovation”, and something similar to what is already funded under KA3 social inclusion projects (upscaling concept).

### **Funding schemes**

Despite the fact that for the great majority of the Erasmus+ Actions the unit cost system has been adopted, there still are some important actions which are still funded through the real costs system, including the visible individual contributions from participating institutions (and not implicit as in the case of the unit costs system). The Utrecht Network considers the unit cost system the most important step towards simplification adopted by the Erasmus+ programme. The most common critique of the programme’s previous management system was the enormous amount of time that project coordinators had to spend collecting financial justifications for staff costs, including payslips and proofs of payment, with the additional critical complication that in education programmes (unlike research programmes), the coordinating institution is always responsible for the whole budget of the project.

**We therefore suggest fully adopting the unit cost system within all Programme actions, including KA3, Jean Monnet Networks and SPORT.**

We also suggest adopting a different approach towards the responsibility of the management of the grant, **from a bilateral approach** (EACEA/NAs vs coordinating institution) **to a consortium approach** (EACEA/NAs to the consortium).

### **Information about the selected projects**

The European Commission has developed a “Dissemination Platform” which collects the description and results of all funded projects. The development of this tool is seen as very positive for project applicants who want to check which projects have already been funded in order to avoid duplication or in order to get inspiration on the types of projects which receive funding. It is also considered a very useful tool to search for thematic projects and to create synergies. The Utrecht Network therefore encourages the European Commission to further develop this tool in order to make it even more relevant for stakeholders.

However, in terms of the information flow on selected projects, national agencies (NAs) are still the authorities responsible for publishing the results of the selection rounds for those actions that are now managed at a decentralized level. In many cases, national agency websites are developed in that country’s national language only and it is not easy, and at times impossible, to find timely and relevant information on selection rounds, especially for KA2 strategic partnerships without mastering the language of the national agency concerned. Therefore, we think that the EACEA or the EC should carry out a centralized action on the collection and publication of this information. More specifically, we encourage **the publication of statistics on number of applications submitted in each country on the EACEA/EAC web site**. In addition, **selection results of KA203 and any other decentralised action should be published simultaneously on the web site of EACEA/EAC** in order to let stakeholders clearly find results in a central page, without surfing on NA web pages.

### **Improve the evaluation and selection system**

The first recommendation from the Utrecht Network is to centralize the evaluation of all multilateral actions, stepping back from the devolution to national agencies of some important actions such as KA2 strategic partnerships. If the delegation of selection procedures is not possible centrally in the future programme, we recommend aligning the assessment of projects, delegated to external experts by national agencies, as much as possible. Training sessions such as those organised by the EACEA for LLP-multilateral experts are crucial for the alignment of the group’s assessment culture and methodology. **Those sessions should preferably be made centrally, involving experts from all countries**. If this is not possible, **EACEA should be able to transfer its lengthy experience and significant knowledge gained in the organisation of selection rounds to the NAs**, with a particular focus on the “consolidation” phase. National agencies should be encouraged to recruit and select **international experts** (e.g. by publishing the call for experts in a more accessible way and in English). Indeed, despite SPs being managed nationally, they are not entirely unlike LLP-multilateral projects in their “European” nature. **Country clusters**, like those in Scandinavian countries, could be a resource-saving solution (experts from Sweden, Norway, Iceland have each been assessing each other’s applications and other clusters of countries could do the same). In regards to the scoring system, most of the actions have adopted a ranking from **0 to 100 points, which is not considered adequate to align the experts’ evaluation “culture”**.

For example, a score of “excellent” can now be converted to a number ranging from 26 to 30. Therefore, experts with different “evaluation cultures/approaches” can give a project a score of 26 or 30, both considering it to be “excellent”. This range is far too big and we therefore suggest **adopting a score range from 0 to 5, to eventually be translated afterwards to a final score based on a scale of 0 to 100**. This procedure has been used for the whole LLP Programme and has proven to be successful in avoiding significant differences between experts.

### **Avoid fragmentation and the lack of a sense of community between coordinators**

One negative side effect of the devolution of some important actions to national agencies is the fragmentation of funded projects at the EU level. Despite the considerable and appreciable efforts implemented by national agencies to foster the cross-fertilization and intermixing of national funded projects, it is our opinion that the creation of national clusters of projects is a limited outcome for the EHEA and that the EC should aim at the more ambitious creation of a “community of projects” in Europe. In the previous LLP Programme, the EC and the EACEA organised annual coordinator meetings to share the rules of the action but also, more importantly, to foster networking and the exchange of good practices among projects. In our view, **coordinator meetings for selected projects should be organised on a central level in Brussels**. The limited number of projects selected annually at a national level within each educational component should make this feasible and manageable (e.g.: a yearly coordinators meeting of the newly-funded projects under KA203, bringing together strategic partnership coordinators in the field of HE only). It is our belief that the costs incurred in the organisation of such coordinators’ meetings would be largely repaid in terms of shared knowledge, cross-project fertilization, the dissemination of best practices, networking and time saved by project coordinators and NA officers during the implementation phase. In addition, it would be extremely relevant for newcomers to have a European forum where they can share practices and procedures with colleagues and benefit from the sharing of ideas. The experience from LLP and Erasmus Mundus Action 1 shows how effective coordinator meetings have been in the past, especially in helping project coordinators truly feel the European scope of their projects and the rationale behind EU policies for education.

### **Participation of University Networks (like the Utrecht Network) in multilateral projects.**

The rules for staff participation and reimbursement for network member universities is not standardised for all actions of the Erasmus+ Programme. We recommend standardising those rules, possibly favouring the idea of involving and reporting the activities of the staff of universities which belong to the network as part of the network budget, without asking the member institution to become a full project partner if the concerned network is already a full partner for the project.

## **2. Specific comments to relevant programme actions**

### **2.1 Field: Higher Education, Action: KA1, Learning Mobility of Individuals. Sub action: KA103 Mobility of HE Students and Staff**

#### **2.1.1 Reflections on scholarships for doctoral students**

While an important measure to finance the third cycle of higher education studies has been moved from Erasmus Mundus to Horizon2020, namely the Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorate measure, scholarships for doctoral students remain available under the Erasmus+ Programme. However, a study of the use of Erasmus+ scholarships for PhD students within Utrecht Network institutions shows that there are still some barriers which prevent the broad use of doctoral scholarships. Some partners report that KA1 scholarships are used by third-cycle students mainly in the presence of cotutelle arrangements between partners or within specifically-developed international research projects. PhD student mobility thus seems preferred by candidates wishing to move to a specific institution to carry out a joint supervised research project, while mobility for training purposes, including in light of the different structure of doctorate schools and programmes in Europe, it is still less explored. Discussion with PhD coordinators showed that one potential reason for this barrier is that PhD candidates, in absence of a cotutelle agreement or a specific joint research programme, are not keen to lose their research contacts at their home institution to carry out a mid-term mobility in Europe. In order to increase the participation of PhD students in the Erasmus+ Programme, the Utrecht Network suggests providing **shorter scholarships** for PhD students in order to increase their programme participation for less than 2 months

#### **2.1.2 Reflections on the Mobility for Traineeship programme**

While trainee scholarships have been widely used for students to carry out a traineeship period during their studies (mainly first and second cycles) with positive results, traineeship scholarships for students who have already completed their studies are still challenging for some countries. “Curricular” traineeships are indeed considered part of students’ careers by the national laws of many European countries. However, once the student has graduated, the traineeship experience abroad is usually regulated under the labour law of the receiving country and students who have already graduated are considered “workers” rather than students or former students. Laws and regulations on traineeships for students who have already graduated are therefore very different within EU countries and the requirements are often contradictory with the regulations set by the Erasmus+ Programme. The Utrecht Network is aware that the labour laws of member states is not under the control of the European Union and member states maintain exclusive control over labour regulations. Nevertheless, through the open method of coordination (OMC), the EC could take on the issue of the very different regulations on traineeships for students after graduation and **an alignment action is therefore suggested in this respect**.

### 2.1.3 Suggestions for new actions that might be included in the future

#### Creation of a new action under KA1 for “Blended Mobility for Higher Education Learners”

In recent years, through the LLP and Erasmus+ Programme, the European Commission has been fostering the implementation of new forms of mobility, including virtual mobility to be linked to students’ and staff members’ physical mobility. Within the Erasmus+ Programme, European universities have significantly participated in KA2 Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education, showing a growing interest in the development of online learning materials, modules and curricula (in the form of “traditional” E-learning platforms/objects or innovative MOOCs). In addition to the opportunity to develop intellectual outputs, KA2 Strategic Partnerships are a chance to link the outputs developed with Learning and Teaching Mobility component. Learning and Teaching activities for Higher Education learners have been substantially used by funded strategic partnerships to link the development of new e-learning modules with Blended Mobility for Higher Education Learners, in order to obtain funds for student and staff participation in short-term physical mobilities to be added to an e-learning experience before and/or after the physical mobility experience.

The Utrecht Network’s suggestion for the remaining years of Erasmus+ or for the programme which will be implemented in the future **is to create a dedicated action under KA1 Learning Mobility of Individuals**, which could make funds available for HEIs to cover short-term mobility actions connected with an online learning component. In other words, we think it is important to offer universities which have developed online modules and which are interested in linking their online modules to short term physical mobility the opportunity to receive short-term grants for students and staff. We think this action would have a twofold positive impact:

1. It would open new forms of mobility to a larger number of institutions, impacting a larger population of students and teachers (considering that funds for the blended mobility of HE learners are now available only for selected strategic partnerships)
2. Results already developed through strategic partnership projects would be enhanced and made even more sustainable.

## 2.2 Field: Higher Education, Action: KA1, Learning Mobility of Individuals, KA107: International Credit Mobility for Students and Staff

### 2.2.1 Status and comments on the implementation of the action

The international dimension of KA107 has been one of the main innovations brought about by the ERASMUS+ Programme and it has largely been used by European institutions, in particular by those which were highly active under the former Erasmus Mundus Action II Programme. National agencies and the commission have been organising a number of evaluation events to collect suggestions and comments on this new action and higher education institutions have been using their forums (EUA, EAIE, NAs meetings etc.) to express critical points on these actions. Nevertheless, the Utrecht Network has collected a list of open or critical issues to be submitted to the EC, despite the fact that many of these issues have already reached EU institutions via other forums:

- a) **Project duration.** Every year HEIs in Europe are asked to submit new applications to finance international credit mobility with partner countries. The establishment of administrative procedures for the mobility implementation with partners that are new to the Erasmus principles is a time-consuming activity which can be repaid only with the possibility of a longer collaboration perspective. The European Commission has decided to adopt a different approach for KA103 and KA107 scholarships. While for KA103 it has adopted an “ECHE approach” and ECHE institutions are annually awarded a certain amount of scholarships based on their past results, for KA107 it the “project approach” described above has been adopted. The Utrecht Network’s recommendation is therefore to adopt the same principle for both actions. In other words, a “country entry procedure” could be established which would enable institutions to get scholarships for the concerned country for the whole Programme period, without submitting a new application every year. Should this approach be considered impossible to adopt and the “project approach” is to remain the guiding principle, then we suggest the establishment of **a dual application procedure** within the application process, similar to the procedure which was adopted for intensive programmes within the LLP Programme. Dual application procedures would allow for the annual submission of new applications to request funding for scholarships with new partners or with new countries/lots, and a second facilitated application procedure could be allowed to add 2 years to applications that have already been funded. In this way, successful projects funded during year “x”, could be re-submitted for renewal for 2 additional years with a minimal application procedure (years  $x + 1$  and  $x + 2$ ).
- b) **Flexibility in the framework of approved projects.** Additional flexibility in the amendment/adjustments of scholarships is recommended. At present, adjustments/reallocations of mobility flows are only possible within partner institutions of the same partner country. When available (that is to say, when funds are granted for mobility exchanges with two or more institutions of partner countries within the same region), **we advise allowing adjustments or reallocations of mobility funds within partner countries belonging to the same “region” rather than within the same country only.** We also suggest a more flexible approach to changes on “incoming” and “outgoing” numbers, as well as more

- flexibility for requests to change study levels (Bachelor/Master/PhD; e.g: those changes should not be subject to formal amendments).**
- c) **The role of National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs) as “training pivots” for partner institutions.** In the first phase of the programme, NEOs have played a crucial role in disseminating and promoting the international scope of the Erasmus+ Programme in (some) partner countries. For the second phase of the Programme, we recommend providing NEOs with a more operative role in order to increase not only the number of participants in partners countries but also **the quality of the mobility experiences of beneficiaries**. In particular, reflecting on the experience of the first two years of implementation, we have detected a need for many newcomers to be trained on the Erasmus+ principles (recognition, equal treatment, no-fee principle). We believe that the induction on the ECHE principles and procedures should be the responsibility of the European institutions. Our suggestion is therefore that NEOs, where available, should take on a **training/induction** role on the principles and procedures of the Erasmus mobility since the need has been clearly detected from European institutions.
- d) **Outgoing students:** We acknowledge that the ICM Action was conceived to foster the flow of incoming students from partner to Programme countries, more than the other way around. However, scholarships are also available for EU students to carry out their mobility in partner countries and it has been noted that this option is not fully exploited by European students, especially in countries where their institution is initiating the collaboration for the first time or at institutions from partner countries where the academic offering is mostly in the national language. In order to foster the participation of EU students in this Action as outgoing students, **we suggest providing short-term mobility options to allow the participation in one-month intensive courses or two-week summer schools**. It is our opinion that this action would foster scientific collaboration between the institutions from the Programme and partner countries and would positively affect the sustainability of their relations. In some partner countries, it is common practice, when designing their academic offering in English or in another vehicular language, for institutions to start offering intensive courses or summer schools instead of regular course units belonging to specific degree programmes.
- e) **Organisational support for institutions in partner countries:** Organisational means should be available to participating institutions in partner countries based on the successful sending and receiving of participants. The “reimbursement” should be issued afterwards by proof within the Mobility Tool. Potential partners’ shouldn’t feel the need to “quarrel” over the organisational means which have been the reward of the applicant organisation so far. Besides, setting up financial agreements requires and ties up too many administrative resources which should be used to support the participants.
- f) **Mobility Tool:** This tool should be accessible to **partner country institutions** as a way to be transparent and to apply for organisational support from the EC KOMM after the projects are completed. **Incoming PhD students**, as suggested for KA103, **should be allowed to visit more than one institution during their mobility in other programme countries**. For a PhD candidate, having the opportunity to be in Europe and to visit more than one research institution, attending conferences and scientific workshops without being restricted to one location, could be an extraordinary experience which would foster professional growth and employability. Thus incoming PhD students should be accepted by one institution according to a



specific IIA but they should be allowed to spend part of their mobility in another programme country's institution. This kind of experience should be outlined in their Research Agreement. **Incoming Teaching Staff Mobility:** Teaching Staff Mobility from partner institutions, especially from far-away countries, usually last more than a week (2 or 3 weeks). The current rule for their participation is to teach for a minimum of 8 hours per week in order to be eligible. With this rule, visiting staff are asked to teach 16-24 hours during their stay. However, it might be difficult to fully integrate those hours within a course unit of 40 hours of frontal lectures because it would mean halving the course allocated to the visiting professor. As a result, in many cases seminars from invited teaching staff are offered as additional lectures to students. In order to foster the full integration of visiting scholars within regular course units we **suggest revising and decreasing the minimum number of teaching hours** required for mobilities which are longer than a week.

### **2.3 Field: Higher Education, Action: KA1, Learning Mobility of Individuals, Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJD)**

The Utrecht Network acknowledges the crucial role played by Erasmus Mundus I and II and by the EMJMD Action for the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area internationally and, more importantly, their contribution to the progressive alignment of national education systems in the EU. Thanks to the enthusiasm of the community of practitioners that have implemented it, Erasmus Mundus has significantly contributed to the debate on the modernization of the national legal frameworks in the EU and has been an engine of innovation inspired from the top (the EC) and driven from the bottom (HEIs). Although many steps still need to be taken to make the development of joint programmes in Europe a usual, “easy” standard, the Utrecht Network encourages the EC to maintain this action in order to further stimulate the process of “normative innovation”. However, some adjustments of the action and its functioning are suggested below:

1. The EMJMD, as it is now, allows the participation of consortia by awarding double, multiple or joint degrees, with a clear preference for “joint degrees” which are considered preferable. The Utrecht Network stresses the fact that **the founding principles** of the Erasmus Mundus model, namely the integration of the curricula and of organisational aspects, **are as important as the kind of diploma ultimately awarded to students**. The same results in terms of scientific, cultural, intercultural and personal abilities can be achieved with multiple degrees when the above-mentioned principles are respected and demonstrated. Therefore, we recommend that project evaluation is based more on the substance of the study programme than on the form of the final certification awarded.
2. The **Erasmus Mundus brand name** has been a fruitful experience launched by the Commission in the previous Programmes, which was substituted for one year only by the Erasmus Mundus Quality Review and Catalogue (with some important differences, in particular on the funding, which are acknowledged). The experience of the brand name has been found to be very important by the Erasmus Mundus coordinators who have tested it. After a period of funding, it is extremely important to be able to maintain the Erasmus Mundus brand, in order to be sustainable in the long run. The Utrecht Network recommends the **re-establishment of the Erasmus Mundus brand name action**, to be available for consortia which have already received EC funding. This action would also permit the inclusion of more newcomers in the Erasmus Mundus “world”. We recommend linking the brand name with a supporting funding scheme including at least the lump sum required for the consortia to cover some of the management and coordination costs.
3. The accreditation of newly developed joint programmes requires time and effort from all actors involved in the process and is sometimes dependent on external factors. The EMJMD’s requirement so far is to demonstrate the accreditation of the national qualification on which the joint programme is based, without imposing the proof of the accreditation of the whole joint programme at the time of the application. The preparatory year is therefore considered by many HEIs as the year in which the accreditation should be completed and not rather as the year in which the joint programme has to be fine-tuned and promoted worldwide. It is the opinion of the Utrecht Network that this option jeopardizes the smooth launch of the newly-funded programmes and favours the re-selection of already funded consortia. One potential way out could be **to place a stricter requirement on the accreditation at the time**

**of application, along with the addition of a new action for curriculum development projects to be added to KA203** (see the next chapter).

4. One last technical remark is left to be made on application evaluation procedures. The evaluation reports, comments and recommendations that applicants receive every year from the independent experts in charge of application reviews are very carefully and professionally completed. Those reports are quite informative and useful for future submissions and we acknowledge that the quality of the reviewers is extremely high. However, despite the comments on each one of the 4 evaluation criteria being very informative, those same comments are not openly associated to a score, and only the total score is received by the applicant. It is important, for transparency and for the improvement of project quality, that applicants **receive the scores assigned to each evaluation criteria and not only the total score of the project.**

## **2.4 Field: Higher Education, Action: KA2 Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices, KA203: Strategic Partnerships for HE**

The KA203 Action is one of the most innovative actions of the E+ Programme, in its structure and priorities as well as in the way it is managed. It holds great potential for HE system innovation, but, being the most innovative action of the Programme (at least under the management aspect), it is also that in which the Utrecht Network identified the highest number of potential adjustments and improvements.

The devolution of its management to national agencies was a significant improvement in terms of the quantitative involvement of HEIs, including newcomers, in multilateral Erasmus initiatives. However, it is our opinion that the increase in the number of participants only partially depends on the fact that the managing structure is “closer” to the applicant. It is our opinion that a significant factor for the increase in the number of applications (if we consider KA203 the direct evolution of LLP Erasmus Multilateral projects) is also the fact that the successful “LLP Erasmus – Intensive Programmes” action is not available anymore within Erasmus+. We also believe that an increase in the number of applications does not necessarily signify an improvement in terms of quality. It is our conviction, on the contrary, that the low success rate of this action, which is a direct consequence of the increased number of applications submitted, could have a boomerang effect in the long run. Below we have grouped some considerations and potential adjustments we would like to suggest for the future:

### **2.4.1 Suggestions for the current functional mechanisms of KA203**

- a. Participation in Learning and Teaching Activities. The current programme rules for Learning and Teaching Activities limit participation to the students and staff of institutions that are full partners of the project. Learning and Teaching Activities, and Joint Staff Training Events in particular, are a high-impact, innovative feature of this action. However, **their impact would be enormously greater if they were open to external staff and participants, offering a grant for participants invited by the coordinating institution.**
- b. The application form currently in use for strategic partnerships has only one positive element: the fact that the spaces allowed for answers are blocked and the system does not allow applicants to exceed the character limit as defined by the E-FORM. However, on the other side of the coin, the application still is highly difficult to manage and to share with partners for the co-development of a project considering its size and its peculiar functions. It doesn't allow for the inclusion of tables or graphs, which are extremely useful in summarising processes or structures, and it doesn't include a formatting system. **A text description of the project is therefore recommended as part of the application, as with KA1 JMD or KA2 Knowledge Alliance Projects.**

## 2.4.2 Suggestions for new sub-actions or new initiatives

### Priorities vs funding

Starting from the analysis of the structure of the LLP Programme – Erasmus Multilateral Projects, it should be noted that some important and successful elements have not been maintained in the KA203 Action within the Erasmus+ Programme. In particular, smaller scale projects such as Intensive Programmes or Accompanying Measures have not been continued. In addition, the Erasmus Multilateral Projects were organised in “priorities” which were essentially the priorities of the Agenda for the Modernization of European Universities (COM2006, 208 and COM2011, 567). For each one of those priorities, a dedicated budget was allocated in order to ensure that a certain number of projects could be funded under each one of the priorities. Within Erasmus+, KA203 priorities did not disappear. On the contrary, the evaluation criteria give more weight to projects’ compliance with political priorities (Cf: relevance criteria is weighted 30% and dissemination and impact criteria weighted 30%). However, despite each project being forced to demonstrate its compliance with priorities, separate funding is not ensured for each priority. We believe this aspect might be inhibiting the reception of applications addressing specific priorities and we therefore **suggest exploring if (and how) a subdivision of the budget per priority would be possible and beneficial for the diversity of the projects submitted**.

### Action structure, project size and new potential activities

The comparison with previous Programmes, in particular LLP – Erasmus Multilateral projects along with the comments previously presented under the Erasmus Mundus Action, leads us to suggest that a number of potential changes or adjustments be made to the current structure of the KA203 Action:

- I. A re-introduction of the **Intensive Programme** Action to potentially finance the creation and implementation of international summer/winter schools and short-term programmes. European universities consider summer/winter schools and short-term programmes an important step for the internationalization of curricula and for the development of new study programmes. We therefore recommend the re-introduction of this very important action within the new programme.
- II. The possibility of developing **smaller scale projects**. Smaller scale projects like accompanying measures or the exchange of good practices are not possible within KA203, while this option is offered for strategic partnerships for School, VET and Adult Education. We therefore suggest expanding this opportunity to KA203 as well.

Options I. and II. can be merged with the creation of a small-scale projects sub-action including intensive programmes.

- III. Introduction of a separate sub-action or priority for **curriculum development projects**. This action should be reserved to those consortia aiming to develop joint/multiple degrees, fully accredited by the end of the project, with the aim of applying for Erasmus Mundus funding only once the joint curriculum has been fully accredited and is ready to be promoted. We acknowledge the fact that the possibility for curriculum development projects already exists within the current

KA203, but we recommend the creation of a separate action or priority specifically for this purpose in order to facilitate connections between actions within the same Programme and to **increase the sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Courses**.

- IV. **Structural projects**. Looking back to LLP – Erasmus Multilateral Projects and Networks, where HEI structural networks have been funded in the first phase of the Programme and where structural projects have been always possible under specific priorities, and considering the structure of capacity-building projects in which both joint projects and structural projects are possible, **we are now advocating for the inclusion of a KA203 sub-action entirely devoted to structural cooperation between HEIs**. The ratio is not a simple transfer of the capacity-building model for structural projects to KA203, and there is no need for the involvement of ministries within KA203. However, the cooperation between institutions aimed at developing better services, organisation and management, to exchange best practices at an administrative level and to provide training for the staff, in other words, **institutional cooperation** rather than a disciplinary/departmental/academic cooperation, **should be fostered through a dedicated action in order to avoid competition between disciplinary and structural projects**. We strongly believe that this measure would contribute in the realisation of the two sectoral priorities established for KA203 by the EC: *“Improving institutional and system-level governance, transparency and feedback mechanisms”* and *“promoting internationalisation, recognition and mobility, supporting changes in line with Bologna principles and tools”*.

## **2.5 Field: Higher Education, Action: KA2 Cooperation for Innovation and Exchanges of Good Practices, Capacity Building for HE**

The timing of the publication of the **national and regional priorities which apply to CBHE partner countries and regions**: the “**National and Regional Priorities Applying to CBHE Partner Countries and Regions**” document plays a key role for potential applicants and partners to be able to assess whether project ideas might comply with the specific priorities listed in such a document. As a matter of fact, only upon the publication of such a document, potential consortia are in a position to define if their project idea is eligible or not, and whether it makes sense to submit it or not, in the framework of the CBHE. Therefore, we recommend an earlier release date for the publication of the **National and Regional Priorities Applying to CBHE Partner Countries and Regions** document.

## **2.6 KA3 Support for Policy Reform: Social Inclusion Projects**

In 2016, the Erasmus+ Programme successfully launched the first call for proposals for KA3 Social Inclusion Projects. The first call was characterised by a multi-sector nature, with a clear focus on the integration of marginalised people, including refugees. The second call for proposals was published in March 2017 again with a multi-sector focus, but also with a clear, crucial role played by the school education sector. 2 months were allotted for the preparation and submission of applications and the info day of this call was organised less than one month before the deadline. Unlike other Programme actions which are recurrent every year, with similar priorities and structures and with very similar deadlines, KA3 Social Inclusion proved to be different from one year to the next and it has been impossible for stakeholders to start the project development procedure in advance. **We therefore recommend publishing information on this important action with more lead time and organising information days shortly after the call has been published.** We also suggest **limiting the changes on the focus of the action from one call to the next**, in order to allow institutions to develop projects with a mid-term funding possibility perspective. Some of the above-mentioned recommendations, in particular the recommendation on the timely availability of information, are also valid for KA3 Forward Looking Initiatives (call published at the end of January with a deadline of 14 March).



## 2.7 Jean Monnet Action

The Utrecht Network acknowledges the important role that the Jean Monnet Actions have played in the last 15 years for the development of the EU studies worldwide and recognises that this Action, in the last years and particularly within the Erasmus+ Programme, have fostered the dialogue with civil society and stakeholders outside the Academic world, especially through Projects and Networks. It also recognises the importance of the geographical focus of this action and the attempt to foster the inclusion of non-European partners within the action, both via modules and chairs and through their involvement in the networks. Starting from the Utrecht Network member's analysis of the current experiences within the JM Action, the following suggestions are provided for the future Programme:

1. On the content side, we recognise the success and the quite positive impact of the **“Learning EU at School”** Actions. These actions have been launched as stand-alone calls in the last years of the LLP Programme and are now formally included within the Erasmus+ Programme. However, projects to bring the EU to Schools are now possible within the JM Projects, together with potential actions on Cross-fertilization and Spread Actions, and are mixed with many potential activities under the Innovation Projects strand. We believe, for the future of the EU, that the development of specific Jean Monnet education/training initiatives in schools, targeting students and teachers, is a central issue in order to contribute to shaping European and global citizens. Therefore, **we encourage the strengthening of JM Projects in terms of funding and we suggest the creation of a dedicated action, with a dedicated budget line, for the development of projects which bring the values of the EU and the principles of global citizenship education to primary and secondary schools.** Within JM Projects, we also encourage **the transformation of the “cross-fertilization strand” from a unilateral to a multilateral and transnational initiative**, opening the possibility of formally including partners when the projects are directly aimed at “jointly developed content and co-teaching for students involving several institutions” (as is currently indicated in the programme guide).
2. On the administrative side, most of the Jean Monnet Grants have been managed by unit rates and lump sums already within the LLP Programme. This particular management structure is recognised as an important simplification which was the precursor to the simplifications adopted within the Erasmus+ Programme. However, the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence and Jean Monnet Networks are still organised with a budget based on real costs, including contributions from partners. Considering the positive experience of KA2 Actions, where grants of 300,000 to 1 million euros are managed with unit rates, **we recommend adopting the unit rate system for all the Jean Monnet actions** in order to simplify the reporting system allowing scientific coordinators to be entirely devoted to the implementation of their scientific activities.