



Joint Masters Launch Conference 20. September 2002

On 20 September 2002, EUA launched its Joint Masters Project at a conference held at the Fondation Universitaire in Brussels. Developing out of growing interest in European Masters programmes and collaborative teaching and research in the European higher education policy arena, this project aims to identify good practice in existing Joint Masters programmes to establish models for creating and sustaining joint masters programmes in Europe. This EUA project is supported by the European Commission through the Socrates programme.

About the Joint Masters Project

Eleven networks involving over 100 higher education institutions were selected from a pool of 60 applications. The networks vary in size from 4 to 27 institutions, and offer Masters programmes in subjects ranging from International Health and Tropical Medicine, to European Urban Culture, and European Construction Engineering.

Participants and speakers

The launch conference was attended by participants including professor and student representatives from each of the 11 networks, members of the EUA Board and Council, members of the Bologna Follow-Up group, National Secretaries of Rectors' Conferences, government representatives, and secretariat from the European Commission.

EUA President Eric Froment opened the Conference with a presentation that highlighted the importance of this new project within EUA's overall objectives and work plan. He stressed that the project should provide concrete results for the next phase of the Bologna Process, and that the outcomes would feed into the Graz Convention of Higher Education Institutions in May 2003 as well as the meeting of European Ministers of Higher Education in September 2003 in Berlin. For Eric Froment, lessons should be learned on how universities can work together across national boundaries to achieve common goals: "This Joint Masters Project will show how our members are already working together, promoting the core academic values of cooperation and partnership among universities, and illustrating that competition is not the only force which drives innovation and progress in the higher education sector in Europe."

David Coyne, Director for Education and Culture at the European Commission, also addressed the conference on behalf of the European Commissioner, Mme Viviane Reding. David Coyne explained that the Commission had chosen to support the Joint Masters Project because of its potential in taking forward positive reform of European higher education within a two-tier structure, and because practical solutions should emerge to help overcome current barriers to European higher education cooperation. The EUA project would also provide important insights into preparations for the Commission's proposed Erasmus World Programme, which aims to

make European higher education more attractive, to promote greater mobility, and to encourage the development of real European Masters' Programmes.

The morning plenary session also offered the opportunity to present the findings of an important new EUA study titled, "Survey on Master Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe," and written by Christian Tauch of the German Rectors' Conference and Andrejs Rauhvargers, Secretary General of the Latvian Rectors' Conference. Christian Tauch emphasised the current variety and lack of clarity regarding the architecture of Masters degrees in Europe. Andrejs Rauhvargers explained the recognition difficulties that arise in offering so-called joint degrees through the partnership of institutions in different countries: in reality joint programmes lead usually to joint certificates rather than joint degrees, as appropriate legislation to permit genuine joint degrees is not yet in place in most European countries.

The full version of this survey, that systematically describes and analyses the interrelated issues of Masters degrees and joint programmes, is available as an EUA publication, and can also be downloaded here as a pdf-file ([link](#))

Key issues

During afternoon sessions, participants split into five working groups focusing upon key themes for joint masters degrees. Discussions centred on quality assurance, recognition arrangements, course integration, student support including language issues, and organisation of mobility. These sessions gave representatives from each of the eleven networks the opportunity to meet each other, to learn how each network handles issues differently, and to clarify how the project will progress.

At the end of the day, there was great anticipation and enthusiasm for the future development of the project, and agreement on the importance of further research and reporting on key aspects of each programme. A common action research framework will now be developed, and initial research will be undertaken within each network. The findings will then be shared and analysed in meetings involving representatives from all networks, and project conclusions and recommendations will be developed.

For further information on the project, please contact Kate Geddie at kate.geddie@eua.be

European University Association (EUA)

42 rue de la Loi, B-1040 Brussels
Tel. +32 2230 5544 Fax: +32 2230 5751
info@eua.be

10, rue du Conseil Général, CH-1211 Genève 4
Tel. +41 22 329 2251 Fax: +41 22 329 2821
info@eua.unige.ch
www.unige.ch/eua