



Seminar report

“Bridging Asia/Pacific and Europe through
Higher Education Cooperation Projects”

5-6 March 2024 in Tokyo, Japan



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GLOSSARY

DG EAC	Directorate-General Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission
EACEA	European Education and Culture Executive Agency
EM	Erasmus Mundus
EMA	Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association
EMDM	Erasmus Mundus Design Measures
EMJM	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master
EMSI	Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative
EU	European Union
EUTW	European Union Centre in Taiwan
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HRK	German Rectors' Conference
JD	Joint Degree
JP	Joint Programme
MEXT	Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology



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1. Background and objectives

The European Commission and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), through the Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative (EMSI), are actively supporting existing and potential future Erasmus Mundus consortia by organising a series of interactive networking events across Europe and worldwide, as well as online through the Erasmus Mundus Community Platform¹

During the first hybrid regional seminar "Bridging Asia/Pacific and Europe through Higher Education Cooperation Projects", which took place on 5 and 6 March 2024 at Keio University in Tokyo, Erasmus Mundus consortia and policy makers from Asia/Pacific and Europe benefited greatly from presenting their projects, sharing good practices and expanding their networks.

The seminar aimed at:

- exploring policy practices that encourage institutional engagement in international cooperation projects,
- understanding the recurrent cooperation challenges between European and Asian/Pacific institutions, and
- developing solutions that would contribute to increasing Asia/Pacific participation in the Erasmus+/Erasmus Mundus programme.

2. Seminar structure

The seminar (for the agenda see Annex to this document), kicked off with a warm welcome by Yukihiro Ikeda, Vice-President of Keio University², where the seminar was hosted. Yosuke Kobayashi representing the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)³ along with Haitze Siemers, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the EU to Japan⁴, provided additional insightful introductory remarks to set the stage for the discussions. Distinguished speakers from MEXT, the Australian Government Department of Education, the EU Centre in Taiwan and the Ministry of Education & Culture in Indonesia highlighted national policy practices and future objectives to strengthen international student mobility, with a particular focus on inter-regional higher education cooperation between Asia/Pacific and Europe. Delegates from the European Commission, EACEA and the German Rectors' Conference added the European perspective to the discussion, providing information about EU policy objectives and perspectives to boost international higher education cooperation.

A total of 14 project presentations were delivered by representatives of consortia involved in selected Erasmus Mundus cooperation projects between Europe and Asia/Pacific, sharing insights on moving from practice to policy.

The seminar also featured a keynote presentation by Professor Norihisa Miki on the characteristics and perspectives of student mobility programmes and flows at Keio University, including the Erasmus Mundus programme JEMARO. Professor Miki highlighted the challenges related to the mobility of students in Japan, where international mobility lacks recognition on the job market. He gave a speech about the merits of a more diversified student community and its benefits for the Japanese higher education system and employment market.

¹ Link: <https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/erasmusmundusactivities>.

² Link: <https://www.keio.ac.jp/en/>.

³ Link: <https://www.mext.go.jp/en/>.

⁴ Link: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan_en?s=169.

Complementing the contributions from higher education institutions, the voices of Erasmus Mundus students and alumni added first-hand accounts to the narrative, including by alumni active in the Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association (EMA)⁵ and two Master students currently studying at Keio university, benefiting from the practice-orientation of Master studies in Japan and their integration into a research lab.

The seminar also provided a focused platform for disseminating the findings of the EMSI State of Play Report on Euro-Asian/Pacific Cooperation in Erasmus Mundus⁶. Deborah Arnold from NTT DATA who leads the EMSI, addressed the different drivers motivating HEIs from both regions to collaborate in the delivery of joint programmes as well as the outcomes of such cooperations. She presented 10 good practices to key challenges that HEIs are facing, across the four key areas outlined in the report⁷, and encouraged participants to select the ones most pertinent to their own context. The top two selected good practices were face-to-face networking when setting up a consortium and staff mobility. The presentation paved the way for joint brainstorming on solutions to recurring cooperation challenges, which are detailed in the takeaway section further below.

An interactive group discussion explored innovative ways for future programmes and projects to strengthen international interregional cooperation. The seminar concluded with a final panel, which captured the key takeaways of the seminar, further detailed in the takeaway section.

3. National policies and initiatives

Kuniko Takeda from MEXT presented the J-MIRAI initiative⁸ introduced by the Japanese government in April 2023, aiming at increasing the number of Japanese students going abroad. In August 2023, a new policy package was launched with a number of measures towards this aim, including the expansion of scholarships for longer study abroad periods, expanding scholarships for G7/ASEAN, the creation of a co-learning environment as well as enhancement of inter-university agreements.

Liz Campbell-Dorning from the Australian Government Department of Education⁹ emphasised that Australia predominantly serves as a host nation, with nearly one million international students enrolled in 2023 (more than half from the Asia/Pacific). The mobility of students from the EU is still limited with about 4.500 international students in 2023. She introduced the Australian National Strategy for International Education (2021-2030) aiming at bolstering quality partnerships and international collaboration and strengthening connections between international and local students as well as academics and institutions. The government finances research funds as well as projects to test new models in higher education¹⁰. Additional key topics worth further exploring include (i) enabling international mobility opportunities for a more diversified cohort of students in Australia (ii) achieving a better balance between incoming and outgoing mobility by incentivising outgoing mobility (Colombo Plan¹¹, Australian Awards¹²), (iii) placing the student at the centre of policy, planning and implementation processes, and (iv) fostering sustainable collaborative structures, such as related to recruitment processes and transition from study to work/employment.

⁵ Link: <https://www.em-a.eu/>.

⁶ Link: <https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/search/resources?f%5B0%5D=tags%3A9>.

⁷ The four areas are: mobility, governance and communication, programme quality assurance, and programme sustainability.

⁸ Link: <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/seisaku/kyouikumirai/pdf/230427outline.pdf>.

⁹ Link: <https://www.education.gov.au/>.

¹⁰ Programmes include the Global Science and Technology Diplomacy Fund and Australian Research Council, fostering collaboration with international partners and researchers.

¹¹ Link: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/new-colombo-plan>.

¹² Link: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/australia-awards/australia-awards-scholarships>.

Marc Cheng from the European Union Centre in Taiwan (EUTW)¹³ informed about the need for more institutional cooperations which are drivers of the quality of higher education and economic prosperity in Taiwan. To foster long-term collaboration and to increase the number of collaborations and cooperation agreements, the Ministry of Education has introduced the “Facilitating International Students to Come and Stay in Taiwan Plan” (2024-2028, 5.2 billion NT dollars). An international cooperation alliance in national key areas as well as an international industry-university education cooperation alliance will be established, and 10 overseas bases, including in Europe, are expected by 2025.

In order to meet global standards in Indonesia, the government has introduced eight Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to drive HEIs towards internationalisation. Three of the KPIs (2, 6 and 7) aim at incentivising the development of joint study programmes. There are three types of degree programmes (joint degrees, double degrees, fast-track programme) possible for Indonesian HEIs aiming at engaging in international study programmes, which each requires the permit from the ministry. Joint degrees currently require two collaborating HEIs and a joint degree cannot be awarded in a larger consortium by more partners. Establishing a combined curriculum agreed by both institutions is challenging for HEIs in Indonesia, and there is a limited number of institutions issuing a joint or double degree (less than 200). The government is in the process of developing a fund to enable students from less privileged economic backgrounds to participate in such a degree programme. The Indonesian International Student Mobility Award¹⁴ is the most important national scholarship programme for international non-degree collaborations, primarily targeting Asian countries and to a limited degree Europe and Australia.

4. European policies and initiatives

Giorgio Guazzugli Marini from the European Commission (DG EAC) stressed the supportive and complementary role of the EU in shaping education, for which the primary competence lies in the hands of the Member States¹⁵. The European Pillar of Social Rights recognises the role of the EU in supporting member states to improve education systems through European cooperation. Erasmus+ is the flagship programme of the EU (2021-2027, 26 billion Euro, complemented by additional 2.2 billion Euro from external action instruments) contributing to the achievement of these goals. The programme is instrumental to establishing a European Education Area¹⁶, by supporting student and staff mobility, institutional and stakeholder cooperation as well as policy development. Cooperation with the rest of the world is indispensable for the EU in addressing global challenges such as the green and digital transitions. With almost 40 years of experience with Erasmus+, the EU can provide an innovative regional model for policy makers in other regions of the world. The EU priorities of international cooperation include opening doors with like-minded countries, boosting mobility of students and academic staff, promoting institutional cooperation between HEIs as well as virtual exchanges. On the policy side, EU higher education objectives were defined in 2022 in the European strategy for universities¹⁷ and its four pillars¹⁸, and the European Universities Initiative (2021-2027, over 1.1 billion Euros planned), as its flagship initiative, which at this stage brings together 430 HEIs in Europe in 50 European alliances. On 27th March 2023, the European Commission put forward a communication on a blueprint for a European degree, which can be used by HEIs on a voluntary basis in the future. To boost

¹³ Link: <https://www.eutw.org.tw/index?!=en>.

¹⁴ Link: <https://iisma.kemdikbud.go.id/>.

¹⁵ Article 165, Treaty of the functioning of the European Union

¹⁶ Link: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/>.

¹⁷ Link: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/document/commission-communication-on-a-european-strategy-for-universities>.

¹⁸ The four pillars are: (i) Strengthen the European dimension in higher education and research, (ii) Consolidate universities as lighthouses of our European way of life, (iii) Empower universities as key actors of change in the twin green and digital transitions, (iv) Reinforce universities as drivers of Europe’s global role and leadership.

learning mobility, the European Commission has put forward the communication “Europe on the Move”¹⁹, addressing the challenges linked to international mobility.

Tilman Dörr from the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK)²⁰ emphasised Germany’s role as a global player in international cooperation²¹ and addressed the political, social and economic aspects that are important for the policy developments and objectives in the European Higher Education Area²². He stressed the value of Erasmus+ as a main driver for internationalisation processes, despite persisting barriers and discussed the pros and cons related to the planned joint European degree²³ as well as aspects concerning its potential future implementation²⁴. HRK has called for (i) the provision of adequate funding for the alliances from EU funds, (ii) the funding of institutional research cooperation in the alliances as well as (iii) support for the variety of instruments of cooperation, also beyond EU-funded alliances. Related to Asia/Pacific cooperation, a more strategic approach towards internationalisation is needed. German HEIs are seeking to expand their institutional partner networks with universities in Asia/Pacific and there seems to be a trend towards more comprehensive partnerships, going beyond student and researcher mobility, as well as a need for enhanced information exchange, reduced regulatory barriers and a multilingual approach.

Jacques Kemp from EACEA informed the participants of the 2024 Call for Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters²⁵ (deadline: 15 February; budget: 150 million Euro), under which 140 applications were submitted, of which 32 or 33 are expected to be selected for funding. 42 submissions were received from previous 2021 and 2022 Erasmus Mundus Design Measures²⁶ projects, indicating a positive reception within the higher education community towards the new programme, which can be used as an initial stage preceding the application for an Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters. He emphasised the networking opportunities of the Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative (EMSI), allowing Erasmus Mundus-implementing HEIs to meet and exchange good practices (examples: conference “Boosting the potential of joint degrees in Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Programmes”²⁷ in Brussels in 2023 and the Study Visit in Munich²⁸ in March 2024, enabling administrative staff to exchange practices and solutions related to programme management and administration). The Erasmus Mundus Community Platform²⁹ established by EMSI invites academic and administrative staff from Erasmus Mundus consortia to register and actively participate in thematic online discussions in addition to benefiting from access to Erasmus Mundus related documents, news and events.

¹⁹ Link: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/news/europe-on-the-move-a-proposal-on-the-future-of-learning-mobility>.

²⁰ Link: <https://www.hrk.de/home/>. HRK is the association of universities in Germany accounting for 90% of matriculated students in Germany. It is the political and public voice of universities in Germany that provides a forum for the process of forming joint policies and practices.

²¹ There are 35,000 partnerships with over 5,700 partner institutions worldwide. Germany currently ranks third as hosting country for international students globally.

²² Link: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/higher-education-and-research/european-higher-education-area>.

²³ The pros addressed include opportunities for cooperation and mobility, reduced national quality assurance regulations, potentially increased visibility of joint degree programmes in the EHEA, the cons: refer to the concrete added value of another seal unclear, increased administrative burden due to additional criteria, the unclear status related to other degrees and the impression that existing possibilities and instruments are sufficient.

²⁴ These are related to (i) subsidiarity, (ii) the autonomy of institution, (iii) the integration of non-EU partner institutions as well as (iv) the compliance with national educational standards. He introduced the opportunities and challenges related to the European University Initiative for which.

²⁵ Link: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-2/erasmus-mundus>.

²⁶ Link: https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-organisations/cooperation-among-organisations-and-institutions/erasmus-mundus-design-measures-emdm?facets_field_eac_tags=185.

²⁷ Link: <https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/basic-page/annual-conferences>.

²⁸ Link: <https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/emc/studyvisits>.

²⁹ Link: <https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/organization/erasmus-mundus-community>.

5. Key takeaways from the presentations and discussions

During the project presentations and the discussion on mapping the solutions to recurrent cooperation challenges, participants stressed the importance of institutional collaborations and student mobility as an essential vehicle for people-to-people exchanges across borders, fostering mutual understanding and peace between countries and different regions of the world. The specific challenges and solutions presented by the projects, will be juxtaposed to the outcomes of EMSI's State of Play report, and made available on the Erasmus Mundus Community Platform³⁰.

Key takeaways from the seminar presentations and discussions are presented in four categories: (i) The merits of the Erasmus Mundus programme, (ii) The value of networking for European-Asian/Pacific cooperation, (iii) Components for impactful Erasmus Mundus study programmes and (iv) Visibility and student support:

(i) The merits of the Erasmus Mundus programme

The 14 project presentations showcased a wide range of specialised trans-regional study programmes bridging disciplines, underscoring the continuing need to exploit the opportunities offered by the Erasmus Mundus programmes in different disciplinary fields. For higher education institutions, participating in Erasmus Mundus programmes offers unique benefits, facilitating synergetic cooperation between targeted partners with very specific expertise worldwide, enabling the joint design and implementation of competitive and highly specialised study programmes³¹. The programme facilitates access to a global talent pool and enables the training and retention of talented students and future graduates.

(ii) The value of networking for European-Asian/Pacific Cooperation

Networking platforms between higher education institutions and stakeholders have been identified as tremendously useful for initiating and deepening contacts at institutional and personal level, which are often the initial sparks for the development of new Erasmus Mundus programmes. These platforms, promoting dialogue and the exchange of information and best practices, should be designed to address various aspects of student mobility structures and formats, to explore effective strategies for encouraging student participation and to streamline administrative and cooperation mechanisms. EMSI's Erasmus Mundus Community Platform, its conferences, regional seminars and webinars were highlighted as particularly relevant, enabling networking and strengthening capacities. The seminar also called for the sharing of information and outcomes from ongoing Erasmus Mundus programmes, which serves as a valuable guide for higher education institutions, especially for newcomers who are often unaware of existing programmes in place. This facilitates access to established cooperation projects and helps in designing innovative and complementary study programmes. Moreover, the relevance of selecting appropriate times for the mobility of staff was highlighted (preferably during the semester to enable mutual learning from teaching practices and facilitating the co-design of pedagogical approaches).

(iii) Components for impactful Erasmus Mundus study programmes

A holistic approach to the implementation of Erasmus Mundus programmes fosters impactful transnational higher education offered by institutions from Asia-Pacific and Europe. Engaging in partnerships between academia, industry and the community, and offering industry internship and practical experience during the study programme, is a boosting factor for employability and talent

³⁰ Link: <https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/search/resources?f%5B0%5D=tags%3A9>.

³¹ The drivers and benefits of Euro-Asia/Pacific cooperation has been discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of EMSI's Euro-Asian/Pacific Cooperation in Erasmus Mundus State of play report (<https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/emc/euro-asian-pacific-cooperation-erasmus-mundus-state-play-report>).

retention. The integration of research projects into the curriculum is a distinctive feature of Master programmes in Japan and should be proactively promoted by consortia working with a Japanese higher education institution. Equitable partnerships with reciprocal mobility flows foster sustainable and long-lasting projects. The exchange of good practices in designing tailor-made measures to promote mobility in the desired direction helps higher education institutions to generate new ideas and develop a targeted approach towards this goal. There is value in strategically considering short-term mobility activities as a complementary offer prior to longer-term programmes such as Erasmus Mundus. These activities provide participants with a tangible experience in the host country, which may motivate them to undertake longer stays abroad in the future. Short-term international mobility activities are particularly relevant for students when they are credited and integrated into the curriculum, for example as an optional course.

(iv) Visibility and student support

Mapping Erasmus Mundus programme opportunities and improving marketing efforts can increase transparency for students and encourage and increase student participation in inter-regional mobility activities between Asia-Pacific and Europe. Higher education institutions are encouraged to contribute to increasing students' resilience and their willingness to step out of their comfort zone and embrace new cultural experiences through participation in international student mobility programmes such as Erasmus Mundus. A proactive approach to language learning, ideally with English integrated into the curriculum at undergraduate/bachelor level, helps to break down language barriers at an early stage. Encouraging students to learn the local language of the host country can open doors and foster a sense of belonging during the mobility period. It is also crucial to consider the needs of a diversified student group, including those for which the organisation of mobility periods is more challenging, including socio-economically disadvantaged groups but also part-time and working students.

6. Conclusion

The seminar appraised the benefits of Erasmus Mundus for Euro-Asia/Pacific higher education collaborations due to its interdisciplinary and collaborative approach, enabling synergies and contributing to talent attraction and retention in the participating countries. Networking platforms were identified as highly significant for institutional collaborations, capacity building and matchmaking in existing Erasmus Mundus programmes, enabling people-to-people exchanges and fostering the exchange of good practices. The Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative (EMSI) is an effective EU initiative already in place, providing opportunities for Erasmus Mundus consortia to meet, exchange good practices and ideas, and enhance their competences. Equitable partnerships striving to balance mobility flows, as well as meaningful student support mechanisms were identified as additional key elements for impactful Euro-Asian/Pacific cooperation and international student mobility experiences. Looking to the future, the European Commission will consult Erasmus Mundus consortia and stakeholders to draw on their expertise in shaping the future direction of Erasmus Mundus in the framework of the Erasmus+ successor programme 2028-2034. The results of the seminar will also be considered in the conceptual design of future activities and events organised in the context of EMSI.

Annex: Seminar agenda

Tuesday, 5 March 2024 - 09:30-18:00h

Time	Session
09:30 > 10:00	Onsite registration with welcome coffee & online check-in
10:00 > 10:30	<p>Welcome & introductory remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yukihiro Ikeda, Vice-President, Keio University Yosuke Kobayashi, Director, International Affairs Division, Higher Education Bureau, MEXT Haitze Siemers, Deputy Head of Delegation, Delegation of the EU to Japan <p>Moderator: Giorgio Guazzugli Marini, Deputy Head of Unit, International Cooperation, DG EAC</p>
10:30 > 10:40	Group photo
10:40 > 11:00	Icebreaker / Getting to know the participants
11:00 > 12:30	<p>Session 1: Policy practices that encourage institutional engagement in international cooperation projects. Representatives from ministries in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kuniko Takeda, Deputy Director, International Affairs Division, Higher Education Bureau, MEXT, Japan Hyesoo Kim, Team Head, European & African Affairs, Directorate for International Affairs, National Research Foundation of Korea (online) Liz Campbell-Dorning, Director, South Asia International Engagement Branch, International Division, Australian Government Department of Education (online) Marc Cheng, Executive Director of EU Centre in Taiwan (EUTW) and Coordinator of Erasmus+ National Focal Point (ENFP), Taiwan Kevin Leonard Michael Marbun, Team Leader of Quality Assurance, Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education & Culture, Indonesia (online) <p>Moderator: Michael Hörig, Director Brussels Office, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)</p>
12:30 > 13:30	Lunch
13:30 > 14:15	<p>Session 2: Hybrid discussion (on-site / online) on mapping solutions to recurrent cooperation challenges (including feedback in plenary)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deborah Arnold, NTT DATA - Introduction to the State of Play Report
14:15 > 15:00	From practice to policy: Examples from cooperation projects (Part I)
15:00 > 16:00	<p>Session 3: Current developments in European Higher Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Giorgio Guazzugli Marini, Deputy Head of Unit, International Cooperation, DG EAC Tilman Dörr, Head of Division Education, German Rectors' Conference (online) <p>Moderator: Jacques Kemp, Head of Sector, EACEA, European Commission</p>
16:00 > 16:15	Coffee break

Report on EM regional seminar in Tokyo (March 2024)

Time	Session
16:15 > 17:45	From practice to policy: Examples from cooperation projects (Part 2)
17:45 > 18:00	Wrap-up of Day 1 and presentation of assignment for participants on site
18:00	Dinner and Networking in a local restaurant

Wednesday, 6 March 2024 – 10:00-16:00

Time	Session
08:30 > 9:30	Working breakfast at the hotel (assignment for the parallel working groups)
10:00 > 11:00	Session 4: Keynote address Prof. Norihisa Miki, Project leader, JEMARO Erasmus Mundus Master, Keio University
11:00 > 12:00	Parallel working groups (on-site/on-line) on solutions for increasing participation in Erasmus+/Erasmus Mundus (including feedback in plenary)
12:00 > 12:15	Coffee break
12:15 > 13:30	Session 5: Reflections from different stakeholders and closing remarks Student testimonials from JEMARO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ana Rebeca Hernandez Maldonado (from Mexico) • Jann Warnecke (from Germany) Followed by a panel discussion with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giorgio Guazzugli Marini and Jacques Kemp, European Commission • Yoko Kitaguchi, Erasmus Mundus Alumna • Prof. Markku Hauta-Kasari, Project Leader and Programme Director IMLEX Erasmus Mundus Master • Kuniko Takeda, MEXT
13:30 > 14:30	Lunch
14:30 > 16:00	Campus Tour (optional)