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# Planning and delivering jointness in Erasmus Mundus Master's Programmes

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## GLOSSARY

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>BAES</b>               | The Una Europa Joint Bachelor of Arts in European Studies   |
| <b>ChIR</b>               | Erasmus Mundus Master of Science in Chemical Innovation and Regulation  |
| <b>CYBERUS</b>            | Joint Master in Cybersecurity   |
| <b>DG EAC</b>             | Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission                                      |
| <b>E-PiCo+</b>            | Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree programme in Electric Vehicle Propulsion and Control                                     |
| <b>EA</b>                 | European Approach for Quality Assurance   |
| <b>EACEA</b>              | European Education and Culture Executive Agency   |
| <b>EC</b>                 | European Commission   |
| <b>EHEA</b>               | European Higher Education Area  |
| <b>EM</b>                 | Erasmus Mundus  |
| <b>EMA</b>                | Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association  |
| <b>EMAI</b>               | Erasmus Mundus Joint Master in Artificial Intelligence  |
| <b>EMINENT</b>            | European Master on Embedded Intelligence Nanosystems Engineering  |
| <b>EMLE</b>               | European Master in Law and Economics  |
| <b>EMSI</b>               | Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative   |
| <b>EPOG</b>               | Master programme in Economic Policies for the Global Bifurcation  |
| <b>EPS</b>                | European Politics and Society: Vaclav Havel Joint Master Programme  |
| <b>EQAR</b>               | European Quality Assurance Register   |
| <b>ESWOCHY</b>            | European Joint Master in Social Work with Children and Youth  |
| <b>EU</b>                 | European Union  |
| <b>EUROCULTURE</b>        | Master programme in European Politics, Culture, and Society in a Global Context   |
| <b>FAME<sup>AIS</sup></b> | Erasmus Mundus Master's programme Functional Advanced Materials Engineering with Artificial Intelligence for Sustainability |

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>FIPDes</b>     | Erasmus Mundus Master in Food Innovation and Product Design                                   |
| <b>GeoTech</b>    | Erasmus Mundus Master of Science in Geospatial Technologies                                   |
| <b>IMQP</b>       | International Erasmus Mundus Master in Quaternary and Prehistory                              |
| <b>JEMARO</b>     | Japan-Europe Master on Advanced Robotics  |
| <b>LIVE</b>       | Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Leading International Vaccinology Education             |
| <b>MARIHE</b>     | Master in Research and Innovation in Higher Education   |
| <b>ME3+</b>       | Erasmus Mundus Joint Master programme in Management and Engineering of Environment and Energy |
| <b>MEDFOR</b>     | Master Degree Mediterranean Forestry and Natural Resources Management                         |
| <b>PROMISE</b>    | Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters in Sustainable Mineral and Metal Processing Engineering          |
| <b>QA</b>         | Quality Assurance   |
| <b>TISE</b>       | Transition, Innovation, and Sustainability Environments Master's programme                    |
| <b>TROPIMUNDO</b> | Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Tropical Biodiversity and Ecosystems                    |

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Erasmus Mundus (EM) action is part of the Erasmus+ Programme, implemented specifically under Key Action 2 ‘Cooperation among organisations and institutions’. Previously operating under Key Action 1 ‘Learning mobility of individuals’, the European Commission has shifted the focus of the EM action to promote deeper cooperation among higher education institutions across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Now, the EM action falls under the objective of establishing long-lasting partnerships, which not only benefit participating institutions but also positively impact individuals involved, while enhancing innovation in both the programme and teaching practices<sup>1</sup>.

Over the past two decades, through the EM action, the European Commission has funded 585 high-level integrated Master’s programmes<sup>2</sup> delivered by international consortia of higher education institutions. What has set these joint Master’s programmes apart from other transnational collaborative study programmes is the **high degree of ‘jointness’** required across all levels for their successful development and implementation. This is partly due to the Commission’s strong emphasis on jointness, making it a key criterion for awarding EM funding<sup>3</sup>.

In this context, ‘jointness’ refers to **the level of integration within a joint study programme across all its components**, including student admission and selection criteria, course coherence and delivery methods, performance assessment, administrative and financial management, student services, promotion, recruitment and awareness-raising strategies, as well as the awarding of degrees<sup>4</sup>. Establishing and implementing joint procedures across these components is therefore key to achieving jointness and ensuring compliance with the Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA<sup>5</sup>, which cover all key aspects of joint programmes, in terms of joint design, implementation, delivery and quality assurance<sup>6</sup>.

With the aim of supporting EM consortia in sharing knowledge, expertise and good practices on the topic of jointness, the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) organised a **thematic seminar** in the framework of the Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative (EMSI) on 7 and 8 November 2024 in Brussels, Belgium. This seminar was informed by a dedicated **state of play report** prepared by EMSI for the EACEA.

This publication consists of two parts:

**PART 1: State of Play on Jointness in Erasmus Mundus Master’s Programmes** presents the findings of the desk research, interviews and survey, conducted to provide input to the thematic seminar entitled “Planning and delivering jointness in Erasmus Mundus Master’s programmes”.

**PART 2: Proceedings of the Thematic Seminar on Jointness in Erasmus Mundus Master’s Programmes** provides an overview of the main outcomes of the aforementioned seminar and introduces additional insights for the future.

The publication closes by drawing together the overall conclusions from each part.

<sup>1</sup> European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme Guide (Erasmus+, 2023), p. 225: [https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-11/2024-Erasmus%2BProgramme-Guide\\_EN.pdf](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-11/2024-Erasmus%2BProgramme-Guide_EN.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> EACEA, Ferencz, I. and Kupriyanova, V., 20 years of Erasmus Mundus – Beyond borders and boundaries (Publications Office of the European Union, 2024), p. 9: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/767054>.

<sup>3</sup> EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus master courses – Best practice guide based on survey results and analysis (Publications Office of the European Union, 2017), p. 21: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/019359>.

<sup>4</sup> EACEA, 20 years of Erasmus Mundus – Beyond borders and boundaries, Op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> EQAR, Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA (EQAR, last accessed September 2024): <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/agreed-standards/>.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme Guide, Op. cit., p. 288.

## 2. PART 1: STATE OF PLAY ON JOINTNESS IN ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTER'S PROGRAMMES

### 2.1. Methodological approach

To provide context and support expert-level discussions among participants during the thematic seminar, the state-of-play report presents an overview of the different levels of jointness achieved by consortia across the various components of EM Master's programmes. It also consolidates joint approaches currently adopted by EM consortia to address challenges hindering the achievement of jointness in the design and implementation of these programmes.

The first step in preparing this state-of-play report involved conducting **desk research to collect background information** on jointness in EM Master's programmes. Due to limited literature available on this topic, three **exploratory semi-structured interviews** were conducted with a total of six representatives from three different higher education institutions currently delivering EM Master's programmes. These were selected for their extensive experience participating in EM projects that are among the longest running. The interviews aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the topic, refine the research approach, and identify additional experts, stakeholders, reports, or publications for further consultation.

The findings from the desk research and interviews were consolidated into a **survey targeting individuals with administrative or academic experience** in designing and delivering EM Master's programmes. The survey aimed to (i) provide deeper insights into the overall level of jointness achieved by consortia across various components of EM Master's programmes; (ii) assess the extent to which factors impacting jointness and relevant joint practices had been identified in previous data collection efforts; and (iii) gather any additional relevant information on these aspects.

The survey remained open for eight weeks, resulting in a total of **104 responses**. Participants represented 80 higher education institutions from 25 countries, primarily within the European Union (EU). Of the respondents, 73% were involved in only one EM Master's programme, covering a total of 57 EM projects, of which 74% were coordinators and 24% full partners<sup>7</sup>. Additionally, 48% of the respondents were academic programme coordinators, 27% were administrative programme coordinators, 20% were administrative staff supporting the programme, and the remaining 5% were academic staff teaching on the programme. Most administrative staff worked either within the faculty delivering the programme(s) or in the corresponding international relations office.

All data collected through these activities were then integrated and analysed to incorporate the findings into the topics under research.

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<sup>7</sup> Note that respondents involved in more than one EM Master's programme (23%) were not asked to specify the programmes they were involved in or their institution's role in them.

## 2.2. The value of jointness

The information gathered from the various sources for this report highlights the high value placed on jointness in EM Master's programmes, considering it as an essential aspect **to be integrated at every stage of the programme's** design and delivery<sup>8</sup>. According to the interviewed and surveyed practitioners, striving for jointness should remain one of the primary goals within consortia to achieve efficient partnerships and successful EM joint projects. In this context, this section evaluates this feedback by summarising the benefits of jointness in EM Master's programmes at both the programme and institutional levels.

At the **programme level**, the benefits of achieving jointness can be classified into four distinct areas. Firstly, jointness can **increase the quality of the programme** from various perspectives:

- A jointly designed and implemented EM programme allows partner universities to exchange their expertise and create a truly internationalised curriculum<sup>9</sup>. This cooperative approach may provide the programme with **innovative teaching methods and a balanced curriculum** based on complementary expertise in the topics covered<sup>10</sup>, thereby making the programme more competitive<sup>11</sup>.
- Jointness ensures **coherence and consistency among partners in delivering** the programme. Joint approaches facilitate the integration of the various partners' diverse cultures and organisational contexts into a unified curriculum, significantly enhancing students' experience. As highlighted in one interview: *"Without jointness, the programme risks becoming disorganised, incoherent, and inconsistent. When programmes lack jointness, students often have a less positive experience. They feel the fragmentation, with no unified academic path or consistent learning objectives."*
- EM Master's programmes are highly attractive and competitive schemes that appeal to top international students. Jointness can help select the best candidates from this pool, ultimately **increasing the quality and excellence of admitted applicants**. With consortia assessing all candidates through joint selection processes based on common criteria, the quality of students enrolled in the programmes seems to be higher, as argued by one survey respondent: *"The quality of EM students is clearly above the quality of students in regular programmes."*
- A consistent joint quality assurance can ensure **higher quality standards and continuous improvement** across all components in the long term. This overall increase in the programme's quality can attract the interest of renowned universities globally, offering graduates opportunities to enter prestigious doctoral programmes and further extending their career prospects.

Moreover, jointness might contribute to **fostering a sense of community identity** among all those involved in EM projects, including partner universities and students. Findings from the interviews and survey indicated that jointness allows the programme to be perceived as a cohesive whole, rather than merely a collection of distinct courses from various universities. As a result, the student experience is enhanced, as one interviewee explains: *"Jointness fosters unity and cohesion within the programme, creating a common student identity and significantly impacting the quality of the programme. An inefficient partnership can indeed result in a less satisfactory student experience."* In addition, jointness facilitates a collaborative and enthusiastic environment, making academic and administrative staff feel part of something larger. As one interviewee noted: *"Participation in these programmes nurtures a community of practitioners and cultivates lasting friendships, despite challenges. Maintaining enthusiasm and teamwork is demanding but highly*

<sup>8</sup> EACEA, Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus master courses – Best practice guide based on survey results and analysis, Op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Becker, R., Joint Programmes from A to Z: A reference guide for practitioners (FaBoTo+ project, 2020), p.19: <https://impea.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Joint-Programmes-from-A-to-Z-Report-2020.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Blakemore, M., Burquel, N., Handbook of Excellence – Transnational Joint Master Programmes (EMQA project, 2012), p. 37: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/2.1.1421.1369>.

<sup>11</sup> EACEA, 20 years of Erasmus Mundus – Beyond borders and boundaries, Op. cit., p. 35.



*rewarding, fostering a strong sense of ownership and pride among participants.”* This sense of belonging can have a significant intercultural dimension, promoting interaction between students and staff from diverse backgrounds in many different contexts.

In addition, a high level of jointness contributes to **enhancing efficient collaboration between partner universities**. Encouraging consortia to establish common procedures can simplify the administrative management of the programmes by bringing together their local departments, understanding the strengths and limitations of each institution and streamlining processes for greater efficiency<sup>12</sup>. As one interviewee aptly stated: *“Carrying out all tasks jointly means they only need to be done once.”* As such, the greater the level of jointness in the components, the smoother the programme’s implementation will be, serving as a powerful driver for administrative improvement in joint programme management across all phases – from agreement negotiation to student management, up to graduation and degree-awarding.

Finally, the joint efforts and combined resources of partner universities in consortia can **enhance the programme’s visibility and attractiveness worldwide**. This is especially true when it comes to promotion, awareness-raising, and employability strategies. By implementing joint marketing strategies and leveraging global networks, consortia can generate interest across relevant industries, mobilise significant resources, and attract potential students from various countries.

At the **institutional level**, the advantages of striving for jointness may be observed in two key areas. Firstly, a high degree of jointness can lead to a **strengthened level of collaboration between institutions in the long term**. Close cooperation can foster greater commitment and trust among institutions, ensuring not only the sustainability of the programme<sup>13</sup> itself but also promoting future collaboration on new research and related projects<sup>14</sup>. This idea was echoed in the survey: *“Jointness in an EM Master’s programme creates opportunities for developing research projects with partner institutions, such as doctoral networks and other initiatives, facilitated by the interconnectedness of research and laboratories.”*

Secondly, jointness appears to **promote a continuous learning mindset** within institutions. Survey participants noted that the exchange of good practices and insights into how other institutions operate can positively influence local staff, motivating them to update and innovate not only in EM Master’s programmes but also in local ones: *“The jointness of the programme impacts staff at the local level. We observe, for instance, that academics are more willing to update their course content and teaching methods due to the exchange of practices among programme partners.”* This learning loop also encompasses gaining insights into the political, educational, and socio-cultural environments surrounding partner universities, enabling institutions to better understand their own context and learn how others address similar challenges.

## 2.3. Factors impacting jointness

The level of jointness varies across EM Master’s programmes and their components. This diversity can be attributed to various influencing factors. While some of them may enhance the degree of jointness achieved, others may act as detractors. This section aims to identify the factors that might positively or negatively affect jointness in EM Master’s programmes.

Information retrieved from interviews revealed **13 factors that can influence the level of jointness** in EM Master’s programme. However, not all of these are considered to have the same level of impact. In the survey, participants were asked to select up to five factors they considered most important in influencing

<sup>12</sup> EACEA, 20 years of Erasmus Mundus – Beyond borders and boundaries, Op. cit., p.10.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>14</sup> EACEA, Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus master courses – Best practice guide based on survey results and analysis, Op. cit., p. 27.

jointness. Figure 1 presents the frequency with which each factor was selected, illustrating their perceived overall influence on jointness.

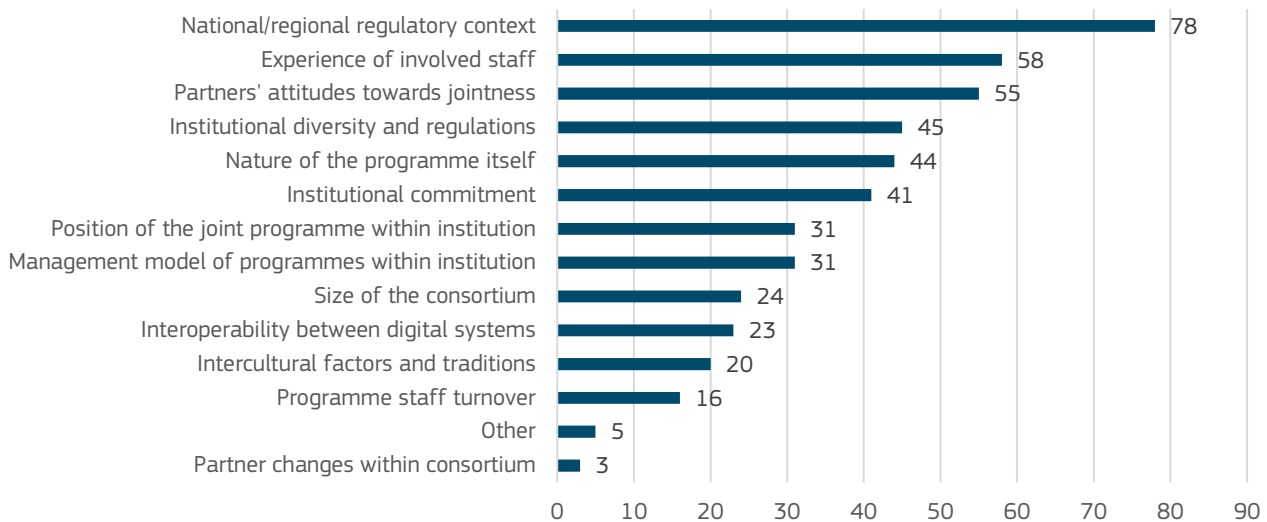


Figure 1. Factors impacting jointness (n=102)<sup>15</sup>  
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Erasmus Mundus Seminar on the notion of Jointness' (2024)

According to the presented data, 76% of respondents selected the **national or regional regulatory context of the partner universities** as one of the five most influential factors, making it the most selected among all 13 identified factors. This suggests that it might have the greatest influence on the jointness of EM Master's programmes. This is because legislative differences among countries create diversity within consortia when creating and implementing EM projects. Regulatory contexts may play a crucial role in shaping joint approaches to accreditation and quality assurance procedures (e.g. participation in the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes), financial management (e.g. policies on tuition fees), examination mechanisms (e.g. evaluation and grading systems), and degree awarding systems (e.g. specific national requirements for awarding joint degrees), among other aspects.

In total, 57% of respondents indicated the **experience of involved academics and administrative staff** in running EM Master's programmes as one of the five most influential factors, making it the second most selected factor. Institutions hosting a large number of EM programmes, along with staff who have participated in EM projects over multiple funding periods, have extensive experience in implementing joint approaches across various components. As a result, the academic and administrative staff at these institutions often promote a high level of integration in new programmes from the very beginning. However, the opposite can also occur, consortia with a longstanding history of operating with low levels of jointness may continue their established practices, with no incentive or willingness to change.

Similarly, the third-highest rated factor, selected by 54% of respondents, relates to the differing **mindsets and attitudes towards jointness among partner universities**. While some institutions may be eager to pursue a high level of jointness, others may prefer to maintain institutional autonomy with a lower level of integration, managing their EM Master's programmes more locally. As a result, reaching agreements on the desired level of jointness can prove challenging. This issue is closely linked to the level of experience staff have with EM projects. The process of familiarising local staff with the joint nature of the programmes

<sup>15</sup> The total number in this and all other figures is 102 instead of 104 because the 2 associated partners participating in the survey were not directed to these questions.

may require time and effort, gradually shifting their initial scepticism to a more collaborative and supportive attitude towards jointness.

In addition to these three most selected factors, several others have also been considered to have a significant impact on the level of jointness achieved within EM Master's programmes, such as **institutional diversity and internal regulations**. Differing institutional regulations and administrative procedures, such as formal decision-making processes at institutional level<sup>16</sup>, may not always facilitate the joint nature and efficient operation of the programmes.

The specific **nature of the programme itself** (i.e. mobility path, programme structure, multidisciplinary subject) can, to a similar extent as the previous factor, impact the joint approaches implemented across its components. One of the interviewed practitioners suggested that achieving jointness might be easier when consortia avoid overcomplicating the mobility path and programme structure. Additionally, reusing similar local courses and the multidisciplinary nature of the programmes can also affect the level of integration of the curriculum. Specifically, jointness may be more achievable with multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary subjects, as these allow for the better integration of diverse topics and teaching methodologies into a coherent joint curriculum. This approach might enable partner institutions to contribute their expertise while focusing on specific aspects of the joint Master's programme.

Jointness can also be significantly affected by the level of **institutional commitment and ownership** within each partner institution. The degree of commitment—whether it rests solely with the dedicated administrative and academic staff involved in the programme or is supported by a strong institutional belief—may influence the level of jointness throughout the programme's development. This degree of commitment might, however, depend on the size of the institution's EM portfolio; the larger the portfolio, the more institutionalising EM projects might be needed. A sense of ownership among local staff across various institutional levels may enhance commitment and foster proactive engagement between partner institutions, leading to a greater level of integration among them.

Another relevant factor concerns the **position of the joint Master's programme within an institution**, specifically whether it is part of a larger programme or a stand-alone offering in the academic catalogue. Some institutions view an EM Master's programme as an independent offering due to its inherently joint nature, and manage it separately from other local courses. In contrast, other institutions integrate EM programmes with similar local courses, incorporating them into existing national programmes. In the latter situation, the implementation of joint approaches can be hindered by established operating procedures.

Moreover, the **institutional model of managing joint programmes** was also selected by 30% of survey respondents as one of the top five most influential factors. Varying levels of jointness are observed depending on which model universities use to manage staff involved in EM Master's programmes and facilitate communication between them. While some universities have dedicated administrative staff working in a central office to support all international programmes, others are more decentralised, with administrative staff allocated to each individual EM project. Some universities, however, lack dedicated international staff. This can be problematic given that local administrative staff may lack the capacity to support international students and processes (e.g., insufficient English language skills, increased workload, etc.), hampering the adoption of international approaches and hindering jointness within consortia.

Lastly, over 20% of respondents indicated that the **size of the consortium** and the existing **interoperability between the institutions' administrative digital systems** can also have relevant implications for the jointness achieved in EM Master's programmes. The larger the number of partners in a consortium, the more challenging it can be to coordinate collaboration, increasing the need for formal

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<sup>16</sup> Blakemore and Burquel, Op. cit., p. 64.

organisational structures<sup>17</sup> to foster jointness within larger consortia. However, not everyone concurs with this perspective; one interviewee noted that their programme operates very collaboratively despite managing a partnership of 12 institutions. Regarding administrative digital systems, varying levels of digitalisation and investment in each institution's systems can affect interoperability, thus hindering the implementation of joint approaches to managing student data, for instance.

Surprisingly, from the full list of 13 factors, **intercultural factors and traditions**, **academic and administrative staff turnover**, and **changes over time in partner universities from the consortium** were the least selected factors. Intercultural factors and traditions, including good personal connections between all staff members, may impact collaboration among partner universities, especially when dealing with institutions from outside the EHEA, which often have different educational structures and standards. Concerning staff turnover, while some interviewees highlighted its potential impact on jointness when a key individual dedicated to the programme is replaced, they also noted that strong institutional commitment can help mitigate these effects. Similarly, interviewees concurred that changes in partnerships over time can have minimal influence on the jointness of EM Master's programmes if proper integration of new members is ensured.

## 2.4. Jointness across components

This section explores the level of jointness achieved by EM consortia across various components of joint Master's programmes. It also presents different approaches followed to implement these components jointly, highlighting challenges and good practices. These components have been aligned with the thematic seminar's programme topics from the parallel sessions.

As part of the survey, participants were asked to rate the perceived level of jointness across various components of their EM Master's programme, using a scale ranging from 'very low', 'low', 'neither low nor high', to 'high', and 'very high'. As illustrated in *Figure 2* below, most respondents indicated a high or very high level of jointness across all components, with **student admission and selection** being perceived as the most joint aspect of the programmes. Specifically, 89% rated it as either very highly (75%) or highly (14%) joint. Similarly, **curriculum design** was rated as very highly (52%) and highly (36%) joint by 88% of respondents, though with slightly lower 'very high' ratings.

**Course coherence and delivery** (77%), **quality assurance** (74%), **administrative and financial management** (72%), and **promotion and awareness-raising strategies** (70%) were also reported as being highly or very highly jointly implemented. However, it is important to note that 21% to 26% of participants rated these components as 'neither low nor high' in terms of jointness, while 2% to 5% indicated a low level of jointness.

**Student services** (61%), **joint degree awards** (59%), **exams and assessments** (54%), and **industry and employment** (50%), were perceived as the components with the lowest levels of jointness in EM programmes, with 7% to 11% of participants rating them as 'low'. The joint degree award, in particular, received the most varied responses: 39% rated it as 'very high', 20% as 'high', 22% as 'neither low nor high', 11% as 'low', and 9% as 'very low' – the highest percentage of 'very low' ratings among all components.

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<sup>17</sup> Becker, Op. cit., p. 16.

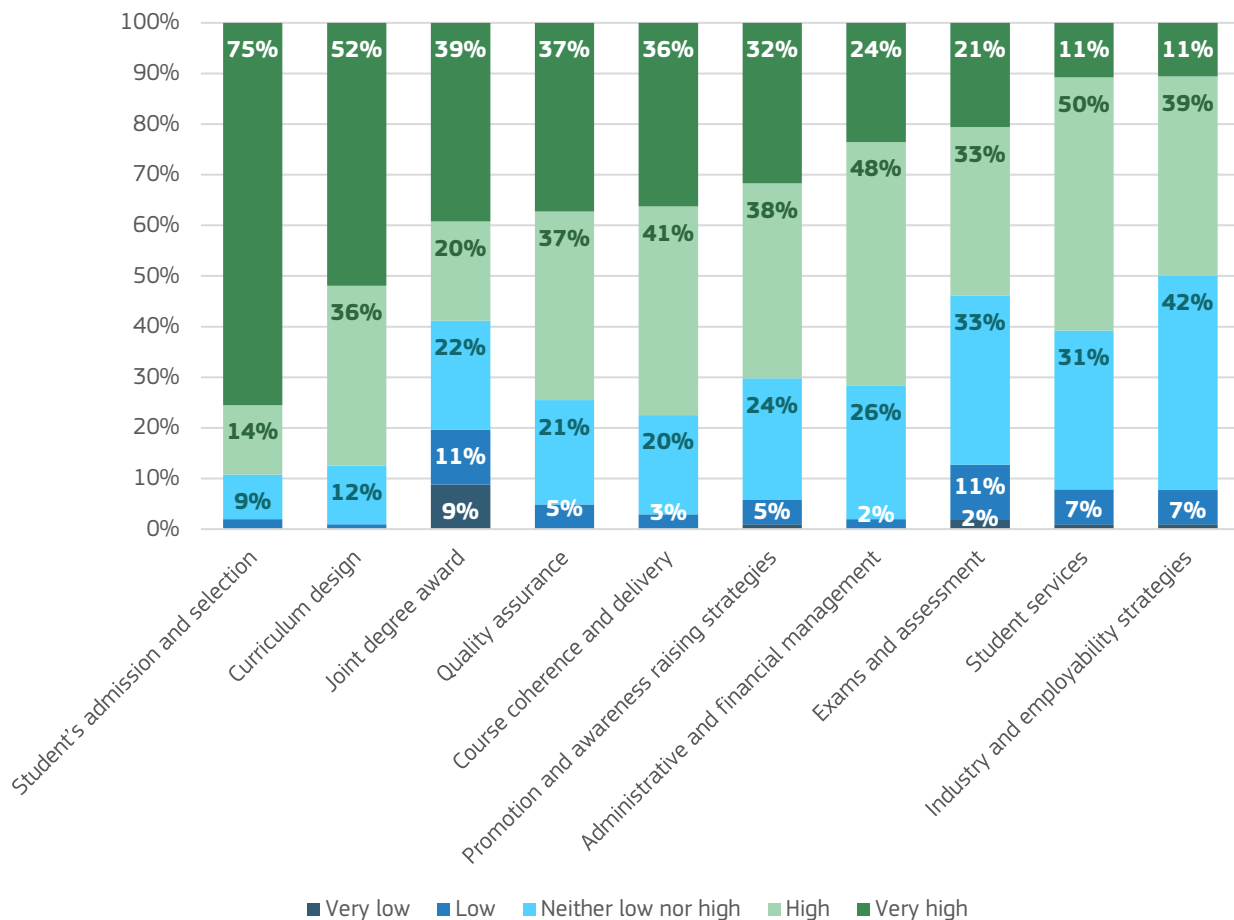


Figure 2. Perceived level of jointness achieved within the different components (n=102)  
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Erasmus Mundus Seminar on the notion of Jointness' (2024)

The next session dives deeper into the following components, regrouped and/or rephrased to align them to the programme's parallel sessions: 2.4.1. Joint admission and selection; 2.4.2. Quality assurance, mutual recognition, and joint accreditation; 2.4.3. Joint learning and teaching; 2.4.4. Student services and mobility; and 2.4.5. Cooperation with industry and programme sustainability. Additionally, 2.4.6. Jointness with non-European partners will be explored in this section.

## 2.4.1. Joint admission and selection

With each new edition, some EM consortia face an overwhelming number of applications from interested students, requiring them to filter through numerous candidates, which presents a significant workload for both administrative and academic staff. This is, however, not the case for all consortia, as others typically receive fewer applications, requiring them less processing time, which in turn affects their choice of joint approaches implemented within this component. Additionally, partner institutions must align on their respective quality standards, without compromising their own, to select the best candidates. All while avoiding biases and ensuring fairness in the selection process. There is therefore a need for efficient joint procedures that foster mutual trust among partners.

According to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide<sup>18</sup>, EM consortia developing a project are expected to implement joint student admission requirements and selection procedures. Although the guide provides limited details on these processes, ‘admission and selection’ has consistently emerged in the survey as the component with the highest level of jointness in EM programmes. As such, many participants have shared their joint strategies for admitting and selecting a diverse and high-quality student body in a coordinated manner across partner institutions. These include establishing common eligibility criteria, creating a joint interoperable platform that streamlines the process from application to selection, and implementing a multileveled evaluation process in which tasks are either evenly distributed among partners or conducted jointly. A joint selection board or meeting involving all partners finalises decisions, all governed by shared guidelines to ensure trust and consistency.

The first step in admitting and selecting students begins with the **clear establishment of common eligibility criteria** across partner institutions. Many survey respondents mention having “*joint admission and selection criteria*”, with some developing joint guidelines for evaluating applications to ensure consistent standards among all consortium partners. One interviewee explained that consortia typically follow the highest admission standards from all participating institutions. For instance, if one partner has stricter language requirements for English-taught programmes, the consortium adopts this higher standard as the overall language admission criterion. Other consortia may adopt the admission criteria of the university with the most stringent requirements<sup>19</sup>. In either case, these criteria are agreed upon collectively and often formalised in the Consortium Agreement. Another interviewee emphasised the importance of jointly refining these criteria over time to adapt to field developments and societal changes.

After jointly defining criteria, consortia commonly communicate them to potential applicants. Some use their **programme’s website for applications**, while others have adopted a **joint application platform** that integrates the evaluation and selection processes. One survey participant, for instance, explained that students upload their application documents and complete a questionnaire on the consortium’s website, which features a system that allows all partner institutions to review and evaluate the candidates online or download documents, thus streamlining the process. Another respondent noted that student applications are submitted through a custom online application system based on an open-source software.

Once applications have been received, consortia undertake a **multileveled evaluation process** to filter through the large volumes of applications, which typically includes (i) a pre-screening of candidates, (ii) a selection ranking, (iii) joint online interviews, and (iv) a joint decision over the final rankings<sup>20</sup>. This process is conducted jointly but varies depending on the consortium. Some consortia adopt a **centralised approach**, where the Coordinator manages the procedure by initially receiving the applications and conducting the first eligibility check. However, it is important to note that all consortium partners are involved in the subsequent evaluation and final selection phases. As one survey respondent describes: “*As the coordinator, we conduct the initial check on student applications for completeness and eligibility. All partners are then actively involved in the selection process, with student applications being jointly discussed during a Consortium meeting.*” Similarly, another respondent notes: “*The coordinating institution performs an initial selection of candidates who meet the criteria. The remaining candidates are then ranked by the Admission Committee, which consists of local coordinators and representatives from the three involved institutions.*”

Other consortia, on the other hand, **involve all degree-awarding institutions in every step of the process**, sharing responsibilities equally. As one survey respondent states: “*The Secretariat, Coordinator, and Local Directors jointly support and manage the selection process. After an initial eligibility check, Local*

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme Guide, Op. cit., p. 289.

<sup>19</sup> EC, EACEA, EMSI, Munich Study Visit of the Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative - 11-12 March 2024. Event Proceedings (Erasmus Mundus Community Platform, 2024), p. 16: <https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/emc/study-visit-munich>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 16.



*Directors score applications based on agreed criteria, with at least three Local Coordinators from different institutions evaluating each application.”* In this particular case, non-EU partners assist in the selection of applicants from their specific region. Similarly, another respondent explains that the number of applications is evenly distributed among partner universities, with two partners evaluating each application.

Moreover, **interviews** are typically either distributed among partners to make the task more manageable or carried out jointly by several partners. As one survey respondent explains: *“All partner universities interview applicants together, making sure there are always at least two institutions present at each interview”*. Another participant describes how the consortium jointly decided to maximise the number of student interviews (around 250) to minimise potential errors during pre-selection: the work was divided into three interview teams, with local coordinators from the first-year institutions staying with the same team throughout the two days of interviews. This approach allowed them to compare students applying for the same pathways. Meanwhile, professors from one of the partner institutions rotated between teams every two hours to ensure consistency in grading across all groups. The final ranking, based on the scores from all three teams, was collaboratively determined at the end of the meeting. *“This process not only ensured a truly joint selection but also encouraged exchanges on evaluation practices, contributing to team building and fostering jointness in areas beyond just student selection”* the participant affirms.

The **use of joint application systems** seem to facilitate a more collaborative approach. One survey respondent reveals their consortium employs a spreadsheet to consolidate the analysis of all applications by local coordinators, using a rating system from 1 to 5 across various criteria, including: (i) Recognition by the institution and career path; (ii) Motivation and project; (iii) Professional experience, community involvement, and study abroad; (iv) Quality of recommendations; and (v) Language skills. Another consortium created a responsibility matrix to assign dedicated staff to the different stages of the process, such as administrative, language, and academic validity checks, as well as interviews.

Lastly, many consortia have established a *“Joint Selection Committee”, “Joint Graduate Committee”, “Admission Committee”, or “Academic Board”* to discuss and validate the final rankings, agree on the admitted students, and nominate scholarship recipients. At a minimum, they hold a **joint meeting with members from all involved institutions** to make these final decisions on selected applicants.

In conclusion, given the responses received, it seems safe to state that this component is generally managed in a highly collaborative manner by EM consortia. Jointness in student admission and selection enables partner institutions to align and assess each candidate using common criteria, ensuring a **consistent level of quality** among selected applicants and fostering mutual trust in each other’s decisions. Moreover, while establishing a joint evaluation process may be burdensome at first, it can help **distribute the workload** more evenly among staff, making the selection process smoother and fairer, and potentially increasing the number of applications that can be processed. In the words of one survey participant:

*The joint student admission and selection procedure is perhaps the most crucial to be carefully designed and implemented jointly to ensure the programme attracts and selects the best students. We have handled an increasing number of applications each year, and with a graduation rate exceeding 95%, I believe it has been well-executed.*

## 2.4.2. Quality assurance, mutual recognition, and joint accreditation

Although Quality Assurance (QA) was not reported as the component with the highest level of jointness by survey participants, it was generally noted to have a relatively high level of jointness. This was particularly evident in **internal QA procedures**, where many respondents reported joint practices, including the development of a common questionnaire, the establishment of shared communication channels with

student representatives, the appointment of a QA director at the consortium level, the creation of a QA joint board or meeting involving all partners, alumni and industry representatives, and the facilitation of document sharing among partners. However, EM consortia encountered greater challenges in implementing a joint approach for **external QA and accreditation**.

More specifically, regarding internal QA procedures, Becker (2020) describes two main joint approaches employed. On the one hand, EM consortia can mutually recognise the internal QA schemes of participating institutions, incorporating this mutual recognition into the Consortium Agreement. On the other hand – and perhaps considered as a more joint approach – consortia can develop joint internal QA mechanisms together from scratch<sup>21</sup>. Based on both interview and survey results, the latter approach appears to be more prevalent.

These internal QA procedures involve establishing **common feedback mechanisms** to gather input from students, graduates, and faculty. This is often done through annual questionnaires and open communication channels with student representatives. The collected feedback is then reviewed and discussed in a **joint board** (e.g., “Quality Assurance Board”, “Joint Board of Studies”, “Joint Programme Board”) or during specific periodic meetings (e.g., “a QA meeting takes place every year,” “we organise yearly quality meetings”), where decisions are made to enhance the programme based on the feedback. These Joint Boards and QA meetings usually involve all full partners, students and Alumni representatives, and associate partners. As one respondent explains:

*QA is arranged within a Board, which includes participants from all full partners, some associate partners, and student and alumni cohorts. The Chair of the Quality Board is not from the coordinating university, which ensures that the reporting and quality processes are more distributed and not solely led by the coordinating institution.*

This participant also notes that all **QA-related documents are shared on a secure platform** within the consortium to facilitate a joint approach to internal QA. The following quote from a survey respondent perfectly illustrates a joint approach to internal QA:

*We have a well-defined internal feedback cycle in place, which collects input from students and graduates at various points throughout the year. The QA director, in collaboration with the student service director, analyses and compiles this feedback, which is then reported to the Programme Board during their bi-annual meetings. Based on the findings, an action plan is promptly developed and implemented. Students elect representatives who maintain direct contact with management and local coordinators. The entire process—from setup and decision-making to execution and follow-up—is carried out collaboratively by all partners.*

Moreover, given that joint programmes involve multiple higher education institutions, they require either separate **external QA and accreditation processes** in each participating countries or the recognition of one agency’s results across all relevant higher education systems. The latter approach is arguably the most joint and has been facilitated by the development of the **European Approach for Quality Assurance** (EA), which introduced a unified joint accreditation process that, in principle, is recognised across all EHEA countries involved. This approach was designed to replace separate national programme accreditations in the countries represented in a joint programme consortium<sup>22</sup>.

Many EM consortia have already used this QA instrument for their respective programmes, as revealed by the interviews and the survey results: “Our programme has achieved European Accreditation according to the EA and is therefore officially accredited and approved, including by the national accreditation agency.”; or as reported by the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) on their knowledge base which lists joint

<sup>21</sup> Becker, Op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 66.



programmes that have used the EA<sup>23</sup>. However, implementing it remains challenging, as **not all European countries have recognised this instrument** and/or adjusted their national legislation and regulations to implement the EA since its adoption in 2015<sup>24</sup>. According to EQAR, the EA is currently available to all higher education institutions in 17 European countries, available only to certain institutions or under specific conditions in 13 countries, and not implemented at all in 17 countries<sup>25</sup>.

These disparities are becoming increasingly problematic for institutions in countries where the EA is not yet recognised or implemented, especially as more countries and universities aim to align with this standard. One of the universities interviewed – an Italian institution – highlighted that Italian universities face the challenge of **dual accreditation**: they prepare all the necessary materials to comply with the EA, but since the EA holds no value in Italy, they must also undergo a separate, country-specific accreditation process, thereby doubling the administrative staff's workload. Additionally, the interviewee described the coordination challenges arising from the lack of a joint approach to external QA within their consortium of three European partners. In Italy, accreditation occurs annually, while in Portugal, it takes place every six years, and in France, every five years. Accreditation criteria also vary across national authorities. They explain:

*Coordinating the accreditation timelines across countries and institutions to ensure continuous accreditation of the master's degree is a significant endeavour. It demands specialised knowledge from professors, and all programme coordinators have had to become well-versed in this process. Administrative staff also play a crucial role in this coordination effort.*

Closely tied to accreditation and facing similar regulatory challenges is the awarding of joint degrees, which, as highlighted in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide<sup>26</sup>, are encouraged by the European Commission to the extent permitted by national legislation. As introduced in this sub-section, the awarding of joint degrees represents one of the most challenging components of an EM Master's programme in terms of jointness. While 59% of survey respondents rated joint degrees as a highly joint component—which suggests they issue a joint degree—this area also had the highest percentage of 'low' and 'very low' ratings at 20%. As explored in-depth in the state of play report prepared to inform discussions at the conference “Boosting the Potential of Joint Degrees in Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Programmes”<sup>27</sup>, this disparity largely stems from the legislative differences among countries, which create diversity within consortia. One survey respondent encapsulates the challenge: “The most difficult aspect of jointness is the diploma. Navigating the national obstacles in each partner country to issue a joint diploma is a significant challenge, and it remains an objective for many consortia.”

However, the barriers are not solely national; **institutional regulations can vary widely** among partner universities, leaving local staff uncertain about the concept of joint degrees. As one interviewee observed:

*Local administrative staff often need to familiarise themselves with the concept of joint degrees. When legal frameworks changed to permit these, some universities were initially unaware or sceptical. It required time and effort to demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of implementing joint degrees and to guide them through the development process. Ultimately, these efforts were successful, though it is important to note that legal officials at different universities often prioritise their own regulations over national ones.*

<sup>23</sup> EQAR, Joint programmes that used the European Approach (EQAR, last accessed September 2024): <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/european-approach-cases/>.

<sup>24</sup> Becker, Op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>25</sup> EQAR, National implementation of the European Approach (EQAR, last accessed September 2024): <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/national-implementation/>.

<sup>26</sup> European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme Guide, Op. cit., p. 289.

<sup>27</sup> EC, EACEA, EMSI, Zalunardo, V., & Fernández-Figares, I., Awarding Joint Degrees. State of play report for the 2023 Erasmus Mundus Annual Conference 'Boosting the potential of Joint Degrees in Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Programmes' (Erasmus Mundus Community Platform, 2023): <https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/stateofplayjointdegreesem>.

This latter point was also highlighted by a survey participant who emphasised the importance of distinguishing between ‘hard rules’ and ‘mere customs’ in institutional regulations.

Implementing a joint degree requires such significant effort that consortia offering them are viewed as representing a more integrated and advanced level of cooperation among higher education institutions. Consequently, delivering a joint degree is often seen as one of the **clearest indicators of jointness** within an EM joint Master’s programme<sup>28</sup>. For more detailed information on the current legal landscape and implementation of joint degrees within the EHEA, as well as potential solutions to address the challenges associated with their implementation, readers are encouraged to consult the materials and proceedings of the aforementioned conference, along with the state of play report prepared for the event<sup>29</sup>.

Given the complex stakeholder ecosystem involved in the accreditation and recognition processes of EM Master’s programmes – including local coordinators, administrative offices, QA units, legal experts and national authorities – it seems essential to **coordinate communication and dialogue** among them as early as possible. This coordination should occur **among partner institutions**; one interviewee stressed the importance of involving legal experts from all partner universities at the outset to ensure alignment with both institutional and national regulations, and to have them review and verify the programme’s Agreement for compliance.

Additionally, the coordination should also be established **within each institution**. To achieve jointness within a consortium, each partner institution must establish joint approaches to managing EM projects among staff across different offices and/or departments. In this context, institutional commitment is crucial and can be achieved by **integrating joint study programmes into the broader institutional framework and strategy** – particularly one that prioritises internationalisation and the development of such programmes. One of the interviewed practitioners proudly shared that their institution fully supports these efforts, as their new strategy for the period 2023–2027 has prioritised the development of joint degrees and programmes, even appointing a rector specifically for this purpose.

Moreover, the same interviewee emphasised the need to have a **close relationship with the national authorities** in charge of accreditation in order to effectively lobby for legislative change. They noted: *“The personnel involved in these agencies are highly proactive, and there is optimism about ongoing improvements.”*

Lastly, one of the interviewed practitioners highlighted that the absence of proper national legislation and institutional regulations often requires a high degree of innovation when implementing joint programmes. This underscores the importance of **sharing good practices, exchanging experiences, and learning from fellow EM peers** to inspire creativity and develop original solutions. Studying successful programmes and their implemented models can be particularly beneficial. Similarly, another interviewee noted that at their institution, which hosts over 15 EM Master’s programmes, all joint programme coordinators regularly come together to exchange experiences and foster collaboration.

## 2.4.3. Learning and teaching

As outlined in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, consortia developing a project are expected to jointly design a fully integrated curriculum, including joint teaching activities and examination procedures<sup>30</sup>. In this context,

<sup>28</sup> EACEA, Awarding Joint Degrees. State of play report for the 2023 Erasmus Mundus Annual Conference ‘Boosting the potential of Joint Degrees in Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Programmes’, Op. cit., pp. 13–14.

<sup>29</sup> EC, 1st Annual Conference: Boosting the potential of joint degrees: The Erasmus Mundus experience (Erasmus Mundus Community, last accessed on October 2024): <https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/emc/first-annual-conference>.

<sup>30</sup> European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme Guide, Op. cit., pp. 288–289.

survey participants indicated high levels of jointness in both ‘curriculum design’ and, to a lesser extent, ‘course coherence and delivery’. The joint approaches reported include organising co-creation workshops with all partners to design joint learning outcomes and the programme’s curriculum, developing joint syllabi, establishing joint teaching practices involving mobility and co-teaching methods, using shared tools to provide seamless student access to course content regardless of location, implementing joint monitoring practices to track programme delivery, and conducting joint research and seminars to keep the curriculum up to date.

More specifically, the first step in developing a fully integrated curriculum, or even initiating a partnership among higher education institutions, should be the **joint design of the programme’s learning outcomes**. This initial exercise requires partners to assess their individual contributions to the curriculum in order to “*deliver something innovative that exceeds the sum of the individual parts*”, an interviewee notes. They further explained: “*It helps determine whether integration is feasible, leading to increased synergy throughout the overall design and implementation of the joint programme.*” Similarly, a survey participant emphasised that joint programmes are intended to deliver content and learning outcomes that no single partner university could achieve alone.

Building on these learning outcomes, consortia integrate the course offering of each partner university into a **comprehensive and cohesive joint course curriculum**. One survey respondent mentioned that their programme’s curriculum was designed to fit the expertise of each partner university and to follow a logical sequence of knowledge, with each semester building on the previous one. Another respondent echoed this, stating that “*each course builds the learning outcomes of the previous course, with partner universities complementing each other by delivering the next stage in the learning path*”.

A challenge arises at this stage of the process when institutions reuse courses and modules from similar local programmes, which are often incorporated into the joint programme. While this approach can streamline efforts, it may hinder true integration across the joint programme’s curriculum. As a result, students may experience fragmentation as they navigate the distinct approaches of each institution.

To address this, co-creation among all partner institutions should be emphasised at this stage of the process. The REDEEM2 initiative<sup>31</sup>, for instance, highlights the value of **bringing together all involved academics in a workshop** to develop a deeper understanding about the complementarities of the curricula. Such meetings help clarify the motivations and vision of the joint programme and provide a platform to discuss innovative teaching methods<sup>32</sup>. Some survey respondents seem to have adopted similar practices, with one in particular explaining: “*The joint design of the four possible tracks involved two of the four partner institutions with several in-person workshops to shape the curriculum*”. Once jointly designed, the curriculum can be consolidated into joint syllabi: “*All the courses follow a syllabus that has been discussed and decided jointly by all partner institutions*”, a survey respondent affirms.

Moreover, to ensure jointness and course coherence during programme delivery, the implementation of **joint teaching practices** is crucial. For instance, one survey respondent explained that each course is co-taught by at least two instructors from different consortium universities, who share responsibility for content, teaching methods, assignments, and student evaluations. Instructors’ hours are counted in a workload at each partner institution and are equally divided between the two teaching the same subject. This collaborative approach brings diverse perspectives while maintaining curriculum consistency. **Teachers’ mobility**, in particular, deepens collaboration alignment and customisation of courses, as noted by another respondent.

<sup>31</sup> The CLUSTER Network, Reforming Dual Degree Programmes for Employability and Enhanced Academic Cooperation (REDEEM2, 2015-2017): <https://www.redeemproject.eu/>.

<sup>32</sup> The CLUSTER Network, Guidelines for reforming and creating joint programmes to enhance student employability and academic cooperation (REDEEM2, 2021), p. 12: [https://www.redeemproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2018/04/REDEEM-Guidelines-Manual\\_final.pdf](https://www.redeemproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2018/04/REDEEM-Guidelines-Manual_final.pdf).

Additionally, the **use of shared tools**, such as a common digital platform, is vital to ensure jointness among partners and consistency for students throughout the programme. For example, a survey respondent reported that all teachers and students in their programme use a platform for teaching, communication, and information storage. This unified system allows for consistent interaction and ensures that all participants have access to the same materials and updates, regardless of their location. Similarly, Blakemore & Burquel (2012) highlight in their Handbook of Excellence a programme that provides students with an integrated research and training platform that operates seamlessly across all partner sites, allowing students to access teaching materials in a unified manner, no matter where they are. When such integrated systems are unavailable, Blakemore & Burquel (2012) stress the importance of preparing students before mobility, ensuring they are familiar with the various platforms used at partner institutions. By maintaining consistent access to resources across all universities, students can fully engage with the programme and experience a cohesive academic journey<sup>33</sup>.

Once the programme is up and running, consortia must establish **joint monitoring mechanisms** to ensure its smooth delivery. In addition to the various internal QA practices mentioned in sub-section 2.4.2. 'Quality assurance, mutual recognition, and joint accreditation', several survey respondents reported holding regular meetings (e.g., monthly) throughout the academic year to address any necessary adjustments. As one respondent noted: *"Frequent meetings and initiatives are held by the consortium to ensure the consistency of the curriculum."* These are typically held online to facilitate quick decision-making: *"Joint deliberations are undertaken via videoconferences between consortium partners to unify decisions, especially in case of problems."*, explained another respondent.

Beyond monitoring programme delivery, EM consortia must **periodically update their curriculum** to *"constantly reflect on developments in society"*, as one respondent emphasised. Joint research and specialised seminars are some of the methods highlighted in the survey: *"Shared research on the EM Master's programme topic is conducted to provide content-related support for the programme"*; and *"The curriculum is updated every year by thematic groups."* It is interesting to note the impact of time and experience on jointness in curriculum design, as one interviewee remarked: *"Our programme has been collaboratively designed over time, resulting today in a fully integrated curriculum with a high level of jointness and joint syllabi."*

Furthermore, some survey respondents reported implementing activities that further strengthened jointness within their partnerships. For instance, some highlighted the value of participating in academic events hosted by partner institutions, such as roundtable discussions, conferences, and seminars, which facilitate the exchange of ideas and foster research innovation. Similarly, organising summer schools, where students, faculty from consortium institutions, and external guest speakers come together for workshops, presentations, lectures, and field trips, can reinforce the programme's jointness by **promoting academic collaboration and enhancing research outcomes**.

But while 'curriculum design' and 'course coherence and delivery' were generally rated as highly joint components, **'exams and assessments'** was seen as significantly less integrated across partners. Some respondents briefly mentioned joint efforts such as organising joint exams across partners, establishing a joint Exam Board, defining common grading systems and standards, involving external examiners, and jointly supervising and evaluating master's theses.

This lower level of jointness may be due to the **differing regulations between countries and/or institutions**, as one survey participant explained:

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<sup>33</sup> Blakemore and Burquel, Op. cit., p. 53.

*The examination and assessment rules for assignments and courses are typically defined by each partner university as part of their internal regulations. We cannot influence this at the programme level. Regarding exams, the evaluation and grading systems vary greatly between different EU countries.*

This challenge is particularly evident in EM joint Master's programmes built on existing local ones, as another respondent noted: *"The consortium cannot really affect how the local courses are implemented if those courses are also part of other programmes. As a result, students take local exams, and no joint elements are planned."*

In addition to differing regulations, **academic practices and traditions in grading** can vary considerably among institutions themselves, with some adopting more 'generous' approaches than others. In this context, when asked about the importance of implementing jointness in components they rated low, one participant emphasised the need to respect the academic independence of teachers and institutions in order to maintain high quality standards.

As a result of these differences, **approaches to exams and assessments were found to be quite diverse**. Some survey participants reported organising joint exams and establishing an Examination Board at the consortium level, while others implemented *"comparable"* exams across partner institutions. Some consortia involve all partner universities in the grading process to prevent grade inflation or create a common grading scale for lecturers, supplemented by a conversion table for each national grading system. Others mentioned involving external examiners to provide an independent overview of assessments.

Regarding theses, many respondents reported **joint supervision and evaluation**: *"Academic representatives from each partner university are involved in this task by reading and grading written reports, as well as evaluating oral presentations at an annual symposium."* However, some others noted that thesis evaluation is the least integrated part of their programmes due to national regulations. One respondent explained: *"I believe having common guidelines for thesis supervision are essential. Based on my experience, this is often the least joint aspect of joint programmes, yet it is a crucial step in the students' academic journey. Joint regulations can help minimise the impact of differing academic cultures across the institutions involved."*

In this context, it is crucial to **analyse and understand the exam regulations and grading practices or traditions** of each university and country during the design stages of the programme, as pointed out by a survey respondent. Once these are clear, **joint policies/guidelines for exams and the Master's thesis** should be developed to ensure consistency across all partner universities. Given the sensitivity this component might have at the institutional level, a good practice shared by one interviewee could be applied:

*During the preparation of the EM proposal, our institution's International Office participates in meetings with academic coordinators and peers from partner universities to identify the administrative individuals responsible for approving or supporting the programme's development at the institutional or faculty level. Once identified, we work to understand the procedures necessary to secure this approval.*

As for QA and joint degree awards, ensuring that all stakeholders within the institution are aligned on the exams and assessment procedures is key to securing commitment. This was echoed by another interviewed practitioner who stressed the importance of having legal experts from all universities review and approve the programme's agreement, teaching, and assessment criteria.

To conclude this sub-section, it is worth noting that the more organically the collaboration between higher education institutions develops, the more likely they are to achieve jointness in learning and teaching. As one interviewee recommended:

*When developing an EM Master's programme, prioritise the programme's jointness rather than simply pursuing funding. Both my colleague's and my own programmes were conceived and developed before*



*the formal establishment of EM in 2004. Their joint approach evolved naturally, beginning with collaborations in research and exchange programmes with other universities, which later led to the development of their respective joint programmes and subsequent funding.*

## 2.4.4. Student services and mobility

As discussed in section 2.2. ‘The value of jointness’, a high level of jointness within EM consortia significantly enhances the student experience. This may be particularly relevant to the ‘student services and mobility’ component, as students rely heavily on the support and coordination provided by EM staff while navigating the various institutions and countries. Student services and mobility include a range of support activities, such as welcoming students and providing essential information prior to their arrival, assisting with housing and accommodation, supporting visa and residence permit processes, matching students with buddies or academic tutors, offering career guidance, language support, and insurance.<sup>34</sup> A lack of integration and coordination of these support services across partner institutions can lead to a more fragmented and less satisfactory experience for EM students.

While the Erasmus+ Programme Guide highlights the importance of offering common services to students, it provides little specific guidance beyond recommending language courses and visa support<sup>35</sup>. Notably, student services emerged as one of the least joint components within EM consortia. Jointness in this area appears to be mostly limited to setting common standards for delivering support services at each institution and consolidating these into a comprehensive joint student handbook. Some survey respondents also mentioned administrative staff mobility and job shadowing opportunities as additional efforts toward integration.

This low level of jointness might be explained by the fact that this area is typically **managed at the institutional level** rather than at the programme level. As one survey participant explained: *“Student services are almost entirely handled by the individual consortium institutions, where our EM Master’s programme is just one of many degree programmes offered. Consequently, the types of services available and how to access them vary between institutions.”* This means that fostering jointness in this area may be limited to establishing contacts between administrative staff at the different institutions. The same respondent added: *“Typically, our EM staff can connect students with university employees who can help them access the services they need, but achieving a higher level of jointness is challenging due to the small size of our programme compared to the larger student bodies and the differing services available in each country.”*

Managing EM students at the institutional level can present challenges for EM consortia, particularly if some of the institutions involved are not highly internationalised. In such cases, universities might be less accustomed to the **specific needs of international students** and may focus more on supporting their domestic students<sup>36</sup>. One survey participant echoed this sentiment, noting that procedures are often more complicated and bureaucratic for international students compared to their national counterparts. This underscores the importance of having **dedicated administrative staff focused on supporting international students**. One practitioner highlighted this need, stating:

*Programmes with the highest degree of jointness have administrative staff dedicated to international programmes, bridging the gap between national and international levels – something professors cannot do alone. National administrative staff typically operate within a closed framework, limiting their ability*

<sup>34</sup> Becker, Op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>35</sup> European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme Guide, Op. cit., p. 289.

<sup>36</sup> EC, EACEA, EMSI, Lanzuela, M., Fernández-Figares, I., Euro-Asian/Pacific Cooperation in Erasmus Mundus. State of play report (Erasmus Mundus Community Platform, 2024), p. 31: <https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/stateofplayjointdegreesem>.

*to adopt international approaches. Unfortunately, it is uncommon for our national universities to have their own International Office.*

**Universities vary in their organisational structures** and not all institutions have the benefit of dedicated international administrative staff. Some programmes are managed independently at the programme level, others at the faculty or department level, and some centrally. In certain cases, management is a mix of both centralised and decentralised approaches. As one interviewee noted: *“Our Projects & Mobility Office oversees the implementation of EM Master’s programmes at our institution. While these programmes are managed in a highly decentralised manner, certain components, such as student services, are handled centrally.”* This makes it crucial for partners, when first designing the programme, to clearly define roles and responsibilities, **establishing how to navigate their own administrative offices** and **coordinating effectively with their partners’ administrative teams**. The REDEEM initiative recommends that each local academic coordinator maintain close and continuous communication with a designated coordinator in the university administration. Additionally, the guidelines advise formalising the division of responsibilities between the two coordinators in a work plan to ensure continuity and a smooth handover in the event of personnel changes<sup>37</sup>.

Here, **institutional commitment** seems to be a key ingredient in cultivating jointness within student services and mobility. One interviewed practitioner observed that achieving jointness in components typically managed at the institutional level, such as student services, may be easier in the context of European Universities alliances. They argued that the higher level of institutional cooperation in these alliances makes it easier to establish collaboration between central services.

Once the roles and responsibilities for supporting EM students at each institution have been established and coordination among partners’ administrative staff is in place, consortia are encouraged to **set standards for delivering support services**. This need was emphasised by one of the interviewed practitioners, who added: *“If partners decide to reserve accommodation for all Master’s programme students, it should be standardised in terms of type, quality, pricing, and other factors, while also considering the differences among countries.”* Several survey participants reported providing the same services across all partner institutions, stating: *“All the universities offer the same quality of student support under the coordination of the programme’s project manager”,* or *“the same student services are provided by each partner, with coordination addressing specific needs. The consortium then collectively determines which partner is best suited to provide the necessary service.”*

Once standardised, it is good practice to consolidate these support services offered at each institution into a **comprehensive joint student handbook** for the overall study cycle from application to graduation. Ideally, this handbook would include all aspects related to visa applications, housing search, insurance procurement, scholarship fund management, programme course preparation, scheduling, etc. and should be updated on an annual basis<sup>38</sup>. This is a practice that seems to be already well implemented among EM consortia with one survey respondent reporting that *“Every full partner university has their own services, but all are combined in a Practical Guide – a document shared with all students so they have one place to turn to for all information”*. Another participant highlighted this as a best practice, explaining that it not only helps students become aware of the various services available, but also compels institutions to **conduct a thorough analysis of the existing services** across all participating institutions, facilitating comparison and systematisation.

Study visits involving the **mobility of professors and administrative staff** among partner institutions provide valuable **job shadowing opportunities** and can greatly assist in the analysis and design stages of the student support services. As one interviewee explained, spending time at other institutions enables

<sup>37</sup> The Cluster Network, Op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> EACEA, Munich Study Visit of the Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative – 11-12 March 2024. Event Proceedings, Op. cit., p. 11.

academic and administrative staff to observe and better understand different operational practices while also developing essential soft skills. This mobility can continue during the implementation stages, as another practitioner noted: *“Institutions in the programme invite colleagues from student services at other universities to visit partner institutions and explain to students the specific administrative details they need to know about their next university.”* A survey participant also highlighted the importance of community building through mobility, stating: *“In our programme, faculty and staff mobility is intrinsic; all partner universities come together to greet new cohort students during the kick-off day and at other events, representing the consortium as a ‘family’ rather than just individual study locations.”*

Lastly, although no participants mentioned it, the **Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association** (EMA) plays a vital role in supporting students where universities lack capacity or resources. The association organises pre-departure orientations and gatherings for incoming students, with country representatives providing local support to students preparing for their EM journey. Programme representatives also serve as points of contact for specific course-related queries. Once a student is officially accepted into an EM Master’s programme, they can join the EMA community and access the extensive support it offers<sup>39</sup>. While these services are not meant to replace those offered by universities, EMA helps enhance the overall student experience and make their EM journey feel more cohesive.

Overall, jointness helps provide effective support to international students, and is achieved through **hands-on administrative staff** and **institutional commitment** to ensure that resources and structures are in place to support students throughout their EM journey.

However, some survey respondents emphasised the importance of **institutional autonomy** in managing this aspect of EM Master’s programmes. One participant argued that treating EM students as regular master’s students and managing student services at the institutional level helps them receive better services and become more integrated into the university. Similarly, another respondent pointed out that, given the logistical challenges of achieving high jointness in areas like student services, consortia resources are better spent ensuring jointness in more feasible areas, such as curriculum design, admissions selection, QA, and degree awarding. Lastly, an interviewee also noted that while jointness is important, maintaining European and cultural diversity within the programme is essential, as it forms a key part of the student experience. According to them, students should be prepared to embrace this diversity, explore different academic environments, and **not expect uniform services throughout the programme**. *“The goal of these programmes is to train students to become global, flexible, and open-minded citizens”,* they affirmed. *“Achieving this requires, nevertheless, a strong foundation of jointness at the core of the programme.”*

## 2.4.5. Industry and programme sustainability

Reported as the component with the lowest level of jointness in EM Master’s programmes, ‘Industry and employment’ plays a crucial role in enhancing graduates’ employability and ensuring the programme’s sustainability. Although joint programmes are evaluated based on their impact on individuals, particularly with regard to employability, the Erasmus+ Programme Guide makes no reference to the need for implementing joint approaches to this component<sup>40</sup>. The few joint strategies reported by survey participants included providing shared career guidance services, implementing common feedback questionnaires for graduates as a career tracking mechanism, organising joint networking events to connect industry, alumni

<sup>39</sup> EMA, About EMA (Erasmus Mundus Association, last accessed September 2024): <https://www.em-a.eu/erasmus-mundus>.

<sup>40</sup> European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme Guide, Op. cit., p. 289.



and current cohorts, and involving industry partners and alumni in the programme's QA boards and meetings.

The limited guidance around this component may explain why some EM consortia struggle to implement integrated industry and employability strategies. One survey respondent explains that the coordinator of their programme is the main driving force behind this component, with alumni contacts, for instance, being managed at the individual partner level. They, nevertheless, express a desire for this process to become more of a joint effort across the project. In fact, other participants recognised the advantages of implementing joint strategies in this component, noting that **combining the resources and networks** of all partners leads to **attracting more students and employers**. As one participant aptly expressed: *"Promotion and employability strategies should be jointly designed and implemented, as the effort involved can be immense and cannot be managed by one partner alone, particularly given the objective of reaching as many prospective students and employers as possible"*.

In this context, industry and employability strategies include **joint career tracking activities** to measure graduate employability, thereby assessing the programme's impact on individuals. These seem to typically involve **establishing common feedback mechanisms** to gather input from graduates, often through periodic questionnaires and open communication channels. Periodic updates to the contacts list were also mentioned by several participants. There was, however, little information on other joint graduate tracking activities currently implemented by EM consortia. One survey participant simply mentioned the use of *"ad-hoc, tailor-made joint graduate career tracking systems"* in some EM projects their institution is involved in, describing these as a central activity for ensuring the programme's impact, quality and sustainability.

Industry and employability strategies also involve **managing alumni** to engage them in the programme, improve its quality, and secure internship and work placement opportunities for students. Joint alumni management activities aimed at building and supporting a dynamic community appear to be well-developed within EM consortia. According to survey results, these include **jointly organising gatherings and events** that connect current and past student cohorts to create a joint network: *"We enable graduate networking through a biennial alumni conference"* or *"Current cohorts and alumni jointly participate in events, such as our programme's Summer School at the end of the second semester. These enhance the sense of belonging to a common 'family' and facilitates the exchange of opportunities."*

It is worth noting that the terms 'family' and 'community' frequently appeared in the survey findings when discussing alumni. In addition, as mentioned in sub-section 2.4.2. 'Quality assurance, mutual recognition, and joint accreditation', alumni are often **involved in joint QA/Advisory boards and meetings** to provide advice and better align the programme with industry needs in terms of knowledge, skills, and field developments: *"Employability strategies are discussed during Management Board meetings, involving all partners and alumni."*

In addition to joint tracking activities and alumni engagement strategies, some EM consortia offer **joint career orientation services** as part of their support for students. However, little information was found on these, with one survey participant noting the preparation and publication of a **joint catalogue of jobs and internships**. Another respondent reported that partners send information on open positions or opportunities to the programme's coordinator, who then disseminates them to students. No mention was made of joint approaches to preparing students to navigate the labour market.

Moreover, at the consortium level, the development of **sustainable partnerships between the consortium and external stakeholders**, such as companies and local authorities, is also key to facilitate the transition of students to the labour market. Similar to alumni engagement, EM consortia appear to be

fostering industry-related partnerships through **jointly organised events** and industry participation in **joint QA/Advisory boards**. As one survey respondent explained: *“Industry partners have been brought together in the programme’s group of contributors, which was a joint effort by all partner universities. Once a year, we organise a full day dedicated to the programme, which includes hosting an Industry Advisory Board.”* Additionally, another participant mentioned the involvement of ‘industry tutors’ in the teaching programme, as part of their strategy. In any case, as suggested in the guidelines developed by the REDEEM initiative, consortia would ideally conduct an initial joint exercise when designing the programme to **identify all potential industry-related organisations** to partner with, define their roles in the project, and gather contact information for relevant individuals<sup>41</sup>.

A survey participant suggested that this component is new to many universities, especially in cases where no project manager is appointed, and the majority of the work is undertaken by professors. Consequently, developing marketing and employability strategies is challenging without the support of an expert: *“As such, only a few EM Master’s programmes have solid marketing and employability strategies,”* they affirmed. In this regard, it may be beneficial for EM consortia to consider appointing **dedicated marketing staff across partners** responsible for tasks such as identifying and engaging with strategic partnerships, improving communication and promotion of the programme to highlight its added value to the labour market, and maintaining active relations with alumni networks. These efforts would contribute to the programme’s visibility, reputation, and, ultimately, its sustainability<sup>42</sup>.

Once again, although not mentioned by survey respondents or interviewees, the **role of EMA** is crucial in this component, as they offer professional development activities, career advancement opportunities, and facilitate the traceability of graduates as well as the programme’s impact on their professional growth through their regular Graduate Impact Surveys<sup>43</sup>. As for student services, EMA helps enhance EM graduates’ employability and make their EM journey feel more cohesive.

## 2.4.6. Jointness with non-European partners

Given the cultural, organisational and regulatory differences within and outside EU borders, coordination and collaboration with non-EU partners may require greater effort from the various partner universities. These integration challenges are evident in the limited participation of non-EU institutions as full partners in most consortia, which often leads to their remaining only partially integrated. Typically, they engage as associated partners, contributing to specific areas such as quality assurance, industry strategies, and, in some cases, curriculum design. In this context, this sub-section examines the extent to which involving non-EU partners impacts the level of jointness achieved within international consortia.

As part of the survey, participants were asked to rate the perceived impact of non-EU partners on jointness within consortia, using a scale ranging from ‘no impact’ to ‘low impact’, ‘significant impact’, and ‘high impact’, with an additional ‘I don’t know’ option for those who were uncertain. *Figure 3* reveals **widespread uncertainty about this impact**, with 48% of respondents selecting the ‘I do not know’ option.

<sup>41</sup> The Cluster Network, Op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> EACEA, Euro-Asian/Pacific Cooperation in Erasmus Mundus. State of play report, Op. cit., pp. 45-46.

<sup>43</sup> EMA, Graduate Impact Survey 2020/21 (Erasmus Mundus Association, last accessed October 2024): <https://www.em-a.eu/post/graduate-impact-survey-2020-21-results>.

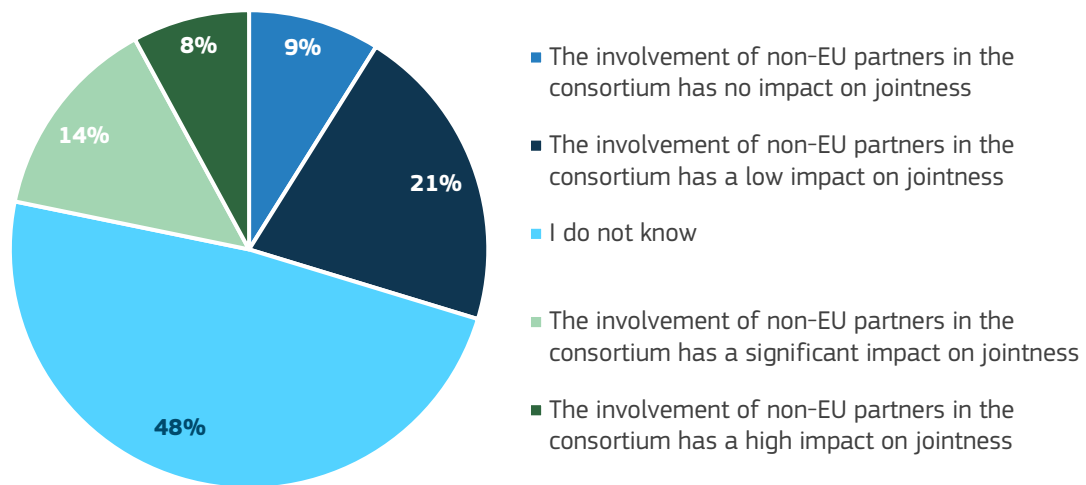


Figure 3. Impact of non-EU partnerships on jointness (n=102)  
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Erasmus Mundus Seminar on the notion of Jointness' (2024)

Only 21% of respondents believe the involvement of non-EU partners has a low impact on jointness, while 14% report a significant impact, 9% indicate no impact, and 8% perceive a high impact.

Those who indicated that the involvement of non-EU partners within consortia significantly or highly influences the implementation of integrated approaches among EM partners did so due to the existing **differences in higher education systems** between EU and non-EU countries. As one survey respondent explains: *"The lack of Bologna structures and European standards among third-country partners, coupled with differing administrative and cultural traditions within and outside the EHEA, can hinder achieving jointness."*

Similarly, some survey participants emphasised that **national and institutional regulatory differences** can play a key role in defining certain components of Master's programmes (including tuition fees, QA, joint diploma awarding): *"Non-EU partners do not have the same or similar regulations as the EU"*, or *"The regulations that apply to them in fundamental aspects such as tuition fees and QA are very different in terms of timing, methodologies, and requirements."* As such, the absence of common structures, standards and similar regulations may require partner universities to invest additional time and resources in familiarising themselves with the diverse administrative, academic, and regulatory systems of non-EU partners in order to develop joint approaches that accommodate these differences.

Moreover, collaborating with non-EU partners may require a thorough understanding of their teaching methods used, as well as of their students' needs in order to integrate them into a **coherent and integrated curriculum**. This process can demand additional time and effort, as stated by one survey respondent: *"The involvement of non-EU partners may entail considerable teaching gaps and teaching methods, which then requires further efforts when shaping the curriculum."*

Finally, **mobility management** can also present significant barriers to the level of jointness achieved within international consortia, particularly in relation to visa application support. This affects not only EM students but also staff involved in the management of the programme. One respondent expressed their frustration: *"Even I struggled to obtain a Schengen visa to visit partner countries, despite my role as project manager"*. One interviewee also mentioned that many students had left their host country without securing their visa

on time. This fragmented process drains considerable energy and causes frustration for both staff and students.

Survey participants also emphasised the significant benefits they bring to EM Master's programmes, ultimately strengthening jointness within consortia. Firstly, partnerships involving universities from non-EU countries can provide specific knowledge fields that may be less developed at EU universities, contributing to **a more comprehensive and cohesive curriculum**. As one survey participant noted, *"The involvement of a third country broadens the scientific scope of the teachings"*.

Additionally, survey responses highlighted the **extensive experience some non-EU institutions have in collaborating with EU universities** to successfully manage other EM projects. As one respondent argued:

*The involvement of non-EU partners has a significant impact because they may possess expertise in other developed fields and, importantly, the knowledge to successfully implement a joint programme. This leads to strategic and effective partnerships between higher education institutions. Every good uncharted practice matters.*

Such collaboration can therefore provide valuable insights for designing and delivering successful joint programmes.

Achieving jointness with non-European partners can also **enhance the quality of students enrolled** in the EM Master's programme. Cooperation with non-EU partners may increase research and job opportunities for students, helping to attract a larger pool of qualified candidates. This broader application pool enables programme coordinators to jointly select students with a wider range of skills while setting higher common selection criteria. One survey participant highlighted the improved quality of students in these programmes: *"If one of the goals of the programme is to attract the best students to study in Europe, the involvement of a third country allows this strategy to be expanded"*.

Lastly, given the challenges that arise from including non-EU partners in the consortium and the additional effort required to integrate them into the programme, these global collaborations can **represent a more advanced level of cooperation** among higher education institutions. However, this may only be achieved if the decision is made jointly among partners. As one survey participant stated:

*If the consortium jointly decides to include a non-EU partner for the right reasons, tackling the challenges together will significantly enhance jointness. However, if the decision lacks unanimous support, communication, administration, legal contract arrangements, and cross-cultural differences may become too difficult, leaving some partners behind.*

## 2.5. Supporting jointness at European and national levels

Taking action at both the European and national levels can help institutions overcome some of the challenges that hinder achieving jointness in EM Master's programmes. Notably, the selection of the national and regional regulatory context of partner universities as one of the top five factors influencing jointness, as outlined in section 2.3., underscores the necessity of implementing measures at both EU and national levels to promote jointness.

The desk research and interviews identified five main measures that EU and national authorities could implement to remove current obstacles and promote jointness across EM Master's programmes and consortia. In some cases, these higher-level actions could be considered as a necessary preliminary step to enable consortia to foster jointness autonomously.

As part of the survey, participants were asked to rate the perceived level of impact each identified measure may have on jointness, using a scale ranging from 'high' to 'low', with the option to select 'neither low nor

high' if they were uncertain. Respondents were also encouraged to share any additional measure to support jointness at European and national levels. As illustrated in *Figure 4*, results show a **strong agreement on the high impact these measures could have**, with significantly more respondents selecting 'high' than 'low'. However, a notable percentage of respondents replied 'neither low nor high' for some suggested measures, reflecting **some uncertainty about their impact** on jointness.

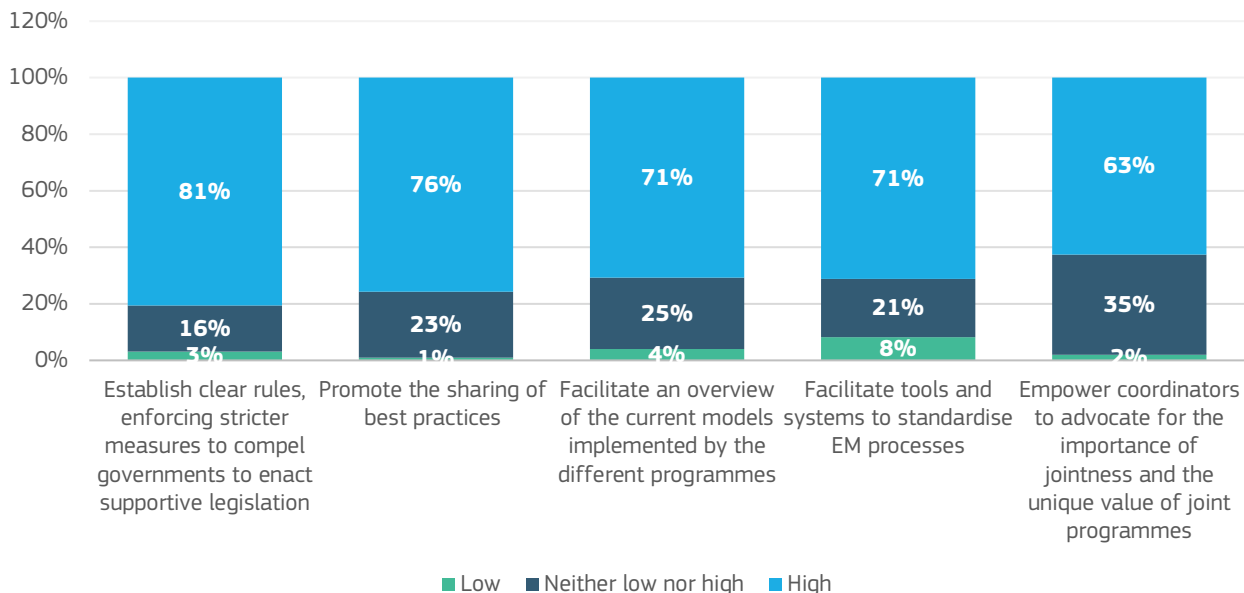


Figure 4. Impact assessment of key European and national measures (n=102)<sup>44</sup>  
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Erasmus Mundus Seminar on the notion of Jointness' (2024)

More specifically, 81% of respondents agreed on the high impact of **establishing clear rules, regulations, and expectations** at EU level. This measure refers to aligning expectations and being stricter in compelling governments to enact supportive legislation that could remove current barriers for jointness in the national, regional or local regulatory context of participating institutions.

This is particularly relevant for addressing challenges related to the awarding of joint degrees and the use of the European Approach, which currently require adjustments in some national regulations to better accommodate such joint procedures (e.g., the requirement to attend courses at a specific institution for a minimum duration, or the obligation to follow national QA processes). Encouragement and support at the EU level in this regard may be necessary not only to increase jointness within the EM community but also to enhance it across the EHEA.

While this was the view expressed by survey respondents, it should be noted that the majority of such rules and regulations are national competences. Furthermore, an increasing number of European universities are seeking collaborations and strengthening their international strategies, as emphasised during one of the interviews conducted: *"The Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC)'s policy instruments in this area should be aligned to integrate jointness into other ongoing initiatives such as the European degree."*

Additionally, with 76% of respondents indicating high impact, **promoting the sharing of best practices among practitioners from the EM Community** is ranked as the second most influential measure at EU level to enhance jointness. Regularly exchanging emerging challenges and implemented solutions can not

<sup>44</sup> Please note that this question was not mandatory, and therefore, not all respondents ranked all measures.

only foster a common understanding of joint programmes but also strengthen the sense of a community within EM practitioners, clearly differentiating these programmes from other less integrated ones. In this context, EACEA and DG EAC have already taken steps by implementing the Erasmus Mundus Community Platform<sup>45</sup> and organising events to create both online and in-person opportunities for the community to network and share knowledge.

Similarly, given the current lack of awareness of what other consortia are doing, **facilitating an overview of the current models** implemented by different programmes would be beneficial in this respect.

Moreover, **facilitating tools and systems to standardise EM processes** was rated as highly impactful by 71% of survey respondents. These refer to the creation of common systems, standardised guidelines, and/or templates for these programmes, thereby simplifying and streamlining administrative processes, and enhancing jointness. A more EU-coordinated approach for facilitating tools such as templates for essential documents like joint diplomas and diploma supplements, could help alleviate ongoing recognition issues and enhance jointness across EM consortia<sup>46</sup>. It is, however, noteworthy that this measure has received the highest percentage of respondents indicating its low impact (8%), compared to all other suggested measures.

Finally, 63% of respondents selected the high impact of **empowering coordinators to advocate for the importance of jointness at both national and European levels**. Clearly emphasising the excellence of EM Master's programmes and disseminating the benefits of these programmes to other institutions but also national authorities can potentially enhance administrative and regulatory facilitation. As one interviewee stated: *"Given the complex regulatory landscape, the ability to effectively lobby at both national and European levels is crucial for universities to achieve jointness"*. However, this proposed measure received the highest percentage of respondents (35%) indicating a 'neither low or high' answer, reflecting a significant uncertainty about its impact on jointness.

## 2.6. Key takeaways

In summary, achieving jointness across all components of the joint Master's programmes can **yield substantial benefits**. At the **programme level**, a high degree of jointness may (i) improve the quality of the programme from pedagogical, innovative and sustainable perspectives; (ii) foster a sense of community identity among partner universities and students, creating a cohesive learning environment; (iii) enhance efficient collaboration between partner universities by streamlining and simplifying administrative processes; and (iv) increase the programme's visibility and attractiveness globally by leveraging the resources of partner institutions. At the **institutional level**, jointness can strengthen long-term collaboration and encourage continuous improvement within institutions.

However, several **factors can influence the level of jointness** that an EM partnership can achieve during the design and implementation phases. The most prominent ones appear to be (i) the national or institutional regulatory context governing each partner institution; (ii) the level of experience of academic and administrative staff involved in running EM Master's programmes; and (iii) the mindsets and attitudes of the various institutions towards jointness and its relevance.

The impact of these factors on the implementation of joint approaches **varies across the different components** of a programme. Partner universities are more likely to achieve jointness in student admission and selection processes, curriculum design and delivery, and internal QA mechanisms. In contrast, EM

<sup>45</sup> Accessible at <https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/organization/erasmus-mundus-community>.

<sup>46</sup> EC, DG EAC, Erasmus Mundus joint master degrees – The story so far (Publications Office of the European Union, 2016), p. 40: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/530999>.



consortia face greater challenges in implementing joint approaches for components such as external QA and accreditation, joint degree awards, exams and assessments, student services, and industry and employment strategies. These become particularly pronounced when involving non-EU partners in the programme, which might explain why they are often incorporated as associated partners rather than full partners, limiting their integration in the programme.

Finally, **national and European authorities play a role** in addressing the challenges hindering jointness by (i) establishing clear regulations and enforcing stricter measures at EU level to compel national governments to enact supportive legislation, (ii) promoting the sharing of good practices among practitioners at European level, (iii) raising awareness of currently implemented models beyond national borders, (iv) facilitating tools and systems for standardisation across the EU, and (v) empowering coordinators to advocate for the importance of jointness at both national and European levels. While the first measure is considered the most impactful by the EM community, all are regarded as highly influential in fostering jointness.

## 3. PART 2: PROCEEDINGS OF THE THEMATIC SEMINAR ON JOINTNESS IN ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTER'S PROGRAMMES

The Thematic Seminar on “Planning and Delivering Jointness in Erasmus Mundus Master’s Programmes” took place on 7-8 November 2024 in Brussels, Belgium. Organised by the EMSI for EACEA, the event brought together over **70 experienced academics and administrative staff** from well-established EM Master’s programmes. Participants represented institutions across Europe and beyond, contributing their extensive expertise in the design and implementation of jointness within their respective programmes.

The 1.5-day event provided a platform for in-depth discussions on jointness, a cornerstone of EM Master’s programmes that fosters academic excellence and effective collaboration. Through expert-level exchanges and case studies, attendees **gained comparative perspectives, explored innovative practices, and identified ways to enhance jointness** in various programme dimensions such as student recruitment and admissions, joint accreditation and certification, joint learning and teaching, as well as student mobility and support services, among others. The event ultimately provided inspiration for advancing joint practices across the Erasmus Mundus Community.

This second part of the publication provides a concise summary of the seminar discussions and key takeaways for the future. The event programme and presentations can be accessed on the Erasmus Mundus Community Platform<sup>47</sup>.

### 3.1. Main outcomes

#### 3.1.1. The concept of jointness

The seminar opened with two keynote speeches delivered by Mirko Varano, International Expert in Internationalisation of Higher Education in Europe and in Erasmus Mundus, and Vice Rector for Internationalisation at Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico; and Raquel Galeano, Director of Talent Management Unit at the EMA Board. The two speakers framed the concept of jointness in Erasmus Mundus from the institutional and student/alumni perspectives.

Mirko Varano presented the **key parameters of jointness**, including its building blocks (academic issues, management and operations) and key actors involved, as well as main enabling factors, advantages and missing pieces, building on the information provided in the state of play report (see Part 1). He described jointness as a **dynamic strategic framework** that encompasses collaboration in programme design, delivery, and outcomes, ensuring academic coherence and enhanced student experiences, while balancing institutional autonomy with the collective goals of fostering excellence and innovation across borders.

Mr. Varano highlighted that jointness can significantly enhance the quality of local programmes and pedagogies, and support economies of scale and **sustainability** of joint programmes. While it depends on various factors such as national and regional regulatory frameworks, staff experience and institutional attitudes, as well as the programme size and mobility arrangements, jointness can be **fostered** through:

- (a) **Collaborative curriculum development** and harmonised pedagogical approaches involving shared teaching responsibilities, staff mobility, and use of digital technology for academic, training or cultural purposes;

<sup>47</sup> Accessible at <https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/organization/erasmus-mundus-community>.



- (b) **Student-centred support services** (e.g., mentoring and career guidance, joint intercultural training), and
- (c) **Deeper collaboration with non-European partners** to expand the global reach and attractiveness of EM programmes.

**Raquel Galeano** approached the topic of jointness from a holistic **student experience** perspective, and with alumni awareness, stressing the need to synchronise various elements of an EM programme, from admissions to degree issuance and support services.

According to Ms. Galeano, while students recognise the importance of joint certification, **cohesive student services and support networks** require special attention of EM partners. Logistical challenges persist in areas such as visa coordination, residence permits, and accommodation, requiring enhanced collaboration between host universities. The way partner institutions practically tackle these issues often varies, and being exposed to these differences in the same study programmes without any prior awareness can be challenging for students. Additionally, she highlighted the need for a new type of services supporting the mental health of students and staff, as well as the specific needs of students with special needs and those self-funding their studies.

**Employability** emerged as another critical issue from the students' viewpoint, requiring (more) coordinated approaches to digital and soft skills training and career guidance tailored to diverse career paths, including academia and industry. Successful alumni initiatives, like the Sport Ethics Examiner<sup>48</sup> project, demonstrated how employability strategies can enhance both graduate success in entering and progressing on the labour market, as well as programme visibility.

## 3.1.2. Comprehensive institutional approaches

Following the conceptual reflections, a series of comprehensive **case studies** illustrated three different institutional/programme **approaches** to jointness in Erasmus Mundus.

Speakers from École Centrale de Nantes, France (Cecilia Provost), the University of Groningen, the Netherlands (Robert Wagenaar), and the University of Lisbon, Portugal (José Borges) shared the experience of their respective Erasmus Mundus consortia: the Japan-Europe Master on Advanced Robotics (JEMARO), the Master programme in Electric Vehicle Propulsion and Control (E-PiCo+), the European Politics, Culture, and Society in a Global Context (EURO CULTURE), and the Master Degree Mediterranean Forestry and Natural Resources Management (MEDFOR). Despite pronounced differences in subject fields and implementation approaches, the three cases demonstrated a shared commitment to fostering deep collaboration and showed several **common patterns**.

First, all three programmes emphasised the importance of **cohesive programme design** based on aligned learning outcomes, jointly developed course materials, and shared academic regulations. Furthermore, a high level of operational integration was key to ensure robust logistical coordination, from visa facilitation to harmonised schedules, offering support for mobility and **international exposure**. Relatedly, cooperation with non-EU partners was recognised as highly beneficial for both students and staff involved in the EM programmes.

Another shared pattern was a strong **focus on employability and industry collaboration**. All three programmes integrated career development initiatives, such as internships, industry partnerships, and

<sup>48</sup> Accessible at <https://www.thesportethicsexaminer.com/>.

alumni networks. This connection to the job market was reinforced by alumni success stories, which highlighted the programmes' ability to prepare graduates for diverse careers.

Finally, the programmes demonstrated **adaptability and sustainability** by leveraging long-standing partnerships and continuously refining jointness strategies. By addressing challenges like administrative hurdles and cultural differences through open communication and shared governance structures, these consortia built resilient frameworks for future collaboration.

### 3.1.3. Insights from different components

The discussions on comprehensive approaches to jointness paved the way to exploring each component of jointness in more detail through a series of **parallel sessions**, which offered new insights into the current practices and areas for improvement.

#### *Student recruitment and admissions*

The discussions on joint student recruitment and admissions focused on **coordinated strategies** for attracting and selecting a diverse and high-quality student body. They were moderated by Luana Da Costa Monteiro from Ghent University, Belgium and featured the inputs of three speakers: Christoph Brox (University of Münster, Germany), María-Elvira Prieto (Pompeu Fabra University, Spain), and Jenny Nygård, an alumna from Finland, graduated from the EM programme Master in Research and Innovation in Higher Education.

The discussions revealed the importance of leveraging partner strengths in marketing and recruitment, fostering clear communication on key topics such as selection criteria, and investing in collaborative, trust-based processes. In this respect, the Erasmus Mundus Master of Science in Geospatial Technologies (GeoTech) partners implemented a **targeted recruitment process** by dividing tasks linked to digital marketing, international education fairs, and alumni outreach based on their individual capacities and prior expertise.

The reported **challenges in admissions** included managing large application volumes and addressing administrative burdens, such as document verification and interviews, as well as the persistent logistical and structural barriers, particularly with visa processes. To tackle some of these issues, the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master in Artificial Intelligence (EMAI) consortia introduced **different application periods** for different types of applicants (candidates interested in EM scholarships, tuition fee waiver candidates, worldwide self-funded candidates, and EU self-funded candidates) leading to a more efficient selection process.

Joint admissions processes, while complex, were seen as integral to **ensuring fairness** and transparency. In this respect, both programmes relied on the use of the online application systems jointly maintained by partner institutions to facilitate pre-screening, evaluation based on agreed criteria, and joint decision-making.

From a student perspective shared by Ms. Nygård, joint recruitment and admissions must appear seamless and unified. She highlighted that students value transparency, timely communication, and **accessible support**, raising concerns about financial barriers, such as visa costs or self-funding requirements, which disproportionately affect students from marginalised backgrounds. To mitigate these challenges, the participants stressed the need for improved support frameworks and proactive engagement with national authorities, especially on the visa front.

## *Joint promotion and visibility*

Two institutional cases, offered by the Economic Policies for the Global Bifurcation (EPOG) programme (David Flacher, Université de Technologie de Compiègne, France), and the MEDfOR programme (José Borges, the University of Lisbon, Portugal), showcased good practice examples in **joint promotion** and visibility in Erasmus Mundus, leveraging communication, branding, partnerships, and alumni networks to build a global reputation and attract high-quality applicants.

The EPOG programme employed a **multi-layered strategy** to target specific groups and regions, focusing on outreach to underrepresented areas. Its approach included developing co-branded promotion materials to create a cohesive visual identity and active use of various communication channels, including social media platforms managed jointly by students and the consortium, and events in targeted regions. The MEDfOR programme integrated joint promotion into its internationalisation strategy, while involving associated partners from across the world and engaging both academic and non-academic partners in the promotion.

The two case studies underscored the need for consistent branding, strategic partnerships, and active involvement of associated partners and alumni to enhance joint promotion and visibility. Both programmes strived to sustain these networks through recurrent events, such as annual conferences, and dedicated platforms, while using digital tools and decentralised efforts for a cohesive and impactful communication strategy.

## *Joint learning and teaching*

Collaborative curriculum design and pedagogical innovation were among the key themes in the joint learning and teaching sessions. Moderated by Isabel Cavaco, leading the Erasmus Mundus Master of Science in Chemical Innovation and Regulation (ChIR) programme (University of the Algarve, Portugal), the discussions revealed the significant value of these topics alongside the logistical and cultural challenges that come with coordinating academic efforts across multiple institutions.

Good practice examples in co-teaching and pedagogical innovations came from two established EM programmes. The European Joint Master in Social Work with Children and Youth (ESWOCHY), represented by Raminta Bardauskienė from Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania, employed a **circular model** where the entire cohort, along with teachers, rotated between institutions to offer exposure to diverse teaching perspectives and foster jointness in learning. The Erasmus Mundus Master in Food Innovation and Product Design (FIPDes), introduced by Barbara Rega (AgroParisTech, France) implemented various **transversal projects** integrating academic and industrial partners while implementing modular learning approaches, joint scientific research and innovation, and co-assessment practices to enrich the educational experience.

Daniel Oliverio Hernandez Verdin, the student of the Erasmus Mundus Master's programme Functional Advanced Materials Engineering with Artificial Intelligence for Sustainability (FAME<sup>AIS</sup>), Mexico, spoke about the need to provide **feedback** to students in a more consistent way as cultural differences in academic expectations and assessment styles created adjustment difficulties for students transitioning from one partner institution to another.

Acknowledging the role that students play, together with alumni, in sustaining jointness in learning and teaching, the participants highlighted the role of **regular pedagogical team meetings** to align teaching methods, discuss challenges, and ensure clarity in expectations. They concluded that while joint teaching brings prestige, it requires substantial effort in planning and coordination, especially in programmes that rely on complementary teaching expertise rather than uniformity.

## *Mutual recognition and joint certification*

Mutual recognition of learning outcomes and the award of joint degrees were discussed as complex yet essential aspects of jointness. Two dedicated sessions, moderated by David Flacher, the EPOG programme coordinator from Université de Technologie de Compiègne, France, delved into strategies for overcoming legal and administrative hurdles, aligning academic standards, and enhancing the visibility and value of joint certifications.

Two institutional speakers – Martin Mejstrik, representing the European Politics and Society (EPS) programme (Charles University, Czechia) and Marta Arzarello, leading the International Erasmus Mundus Master in Quaternary and Prehistory (IMQP) (University of Ferrara, Italy) discussed the **main issues** in issuing joint degrees, originating from:

- (a) the fact that students study at selected institutions but receive diplomas signed by all partners, necessitating accreditation and equivalence recognition across the consortium;
- (b) the absence of a clear, standardised procedure for issuing joint degrees across institutions and countries; and
- (c) the lengthy and cumbersome process, often requiring students to rely on provisional certificates.

Successfully resolved by the featured programmes, these issues had multiple technical implications linked to the use of national languages, special parchment paper, or signature procedures. Given the administrative complexity which created a significant burden for consortia, several participants reported adopting **special measures** for EM programmes as an ad hoc solution at their institutions.

Another topic of discussion was the harmonisation of **grading scales**. Any adjustments or grading conversions required consensus and mutual understanding among the partners to ensure credibility and uniformity of awarded degrees. Similarly, flexibility in accrediting associated partners' contributions, such as internships, was noted as a good practice, with partners incorporating grading systems inspired by others to improve the process.

From a student perspective, presented by Reagan Paul Ambrose Chidhakwa, the alumnus of Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Leading International Vaccinology Education (LIVE) from Zimbabwe, jointness in certification was recognised as **transformative** in providing collaborative and innovative educational experiences. However, some of his peers expressed a preference for multiple degrees, which they perceived as being clearer and more recognisable to employers, pointing to the **lack of awareness** about the benefits of joint degrees.

The session concluded with reflections on the evolving landscape of joint accreditation and certification. Participants acknowledged the significant progress made with the adoption and implementation of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, and highlighted the importance of adapting to **technological innovations**, particularly digital credentials and centralised portals for academic records in the future.

## *Student services and mobility*

Moderated by Ilka Kureck, leading the European Master on Embedded Intelligence Nanosystems Engineering (EMINENT) (University of Siegen, Germany), the discussions examined innovative approaches to managing student mobility, including coordinated timetables, joint orientation sessions, and comprehensive support services. Challenges such as sufficient support for navigating complex visa regulations and uneven funding were also addressed, along with practical solutions tested by different programmes.

Featured programmes, such as the Joint Master in Cybersecurity (CYBERUS), EURO CULTURE, and the Master programme in Research and Innovation in Higher Education (MARIHE) applied **diverse mobility schemes**, ranging from circular models where students and faculty move between multiple institutions, to fork models where students study at one institution in the first year and transfer to another for subsequent semesters. While these models exposed students to diverse academic and cultural environments, they came with their own logistical challenges and required different approaches to student support. Some programmes opted to centralise student services (e.g., visa support, academic guidance) through, for example, a programme office, while others used separated, but coordinated systems at partner institutions.

One recurrent issue was linked to discrepancies in services and the **need to improve alignment** between partner institutions, although it was also highlighted that there is some educational value in exposing students to different support systems, provided they are well informed about these differences in advance, so that they can prepare accordingly.

As highlighted by Nino Popkhadze, the alumna of the MARIHE programme from Georgia, student satisfaction can be boosted by involving them in the improvement of support services through various feedback loops (e.g., regular check-in meetings addressing issues such as mental health, discrimination, or difficulties during internships). Additionally, providing clear guidance on available support services, as well as designated points of contact for sensitive issues, was emphasised as a way to build student trust and ensure they feel supported throughout the programme.

Career guidance and **post-graduation support** were also highlighted as critical components of joint services. The experience shared by the featured programmes showed that non-European students, in particular, benefitted from mentorship and alumni networks helping them navigate career pathways in Europe. Roundtables, alumni events, and centralised databases for internships were presented as effective tools for enhancing such career-oriented services.

## *Cooperation with industry and programme sustainability*

Moderated by Mirko Varano, Vice Rector for Internationalisation, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico, the discussions on collaboration with industry and societal actors revealed the importance of this dimension for both **student employability** and programme sustainability.

Two cases featuring the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters in Sustainable Mineral and Metal Processing Engineering (PROMISE) programme, presented by Maria Sinche Gonzalez (University of Oulu, Finland) and the Transition, Innovation, and Sustainability Environments (TISE) programme, presented by Kay Mühlmann (University for Continuing Education Krems, Austria) underscored the value of **student internships** as a bridge between academia and industry. It was highlighted that internships should offer students the flexibility to pursue projects aligned with their interests while navigating real-world challenges, such as intellectual property rights and mentorship limitations.

The PROMISE programme integrated **industry participation** at other levels, including curriculum design and thesis supervision, as well as through various workshops and summer schools, and access to specialised tools and infrastructure, such as advanced software and mineral beneficiation plants. These collaborations not only enhanced students' learning experiences but also prepared them for high-demand roles, with 90% of graduates employed in the field.

Similarly, the TISE programme engaged business partners as collaborators in teaching, marketing, and research initiatives, including **transdisciplinary field projects** that addressed real-world challenges such as digital transformation and healthcare equity. Sustaining such collaborations required building trust and establishing long-term partnerships.

Rajon Bhuiyan, the alumnus of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master programme in Management and Engineering of Environment and Energy (ME3+) from Bangladesh, emphasised **alumni engagement** as a way to build sustainability and partnerships with industry (e.g., organising alumni days, featuring alumni on a programme webpage). He also acknowledged the need for pro-active support in arranging internships for students, which had been done by the ME3+ programme by putting together and widely disseminating a detailed description of the study modules and student curriculum vitae to help students find a placement.

## *Collaboration with non-European partners*

The seminar also addressed strategies for **deepening collaboration** with non-European partners in the Erasmus Mundus context. Moderated by Ilva Putzier, leading the European Master in Law and Economics (EMLE) (Erasmus University of Rotterdam, the Netherlands), the discussions focused on ways to foster mutual understanding, manage regulatory and cultural differences, and establish sustainable partnerships that extend the global impact of EM programmes.

Two institutional speakers – Kenjiro Takemura, representing JEMARO (Keio University, Japan) and Samira Bonucci responsible for several EM projects at the University of Padua in Italy – discussed the **value** of collaboration between European and non-European partners within EM consortia, highlighting opportunities for mutual growth and enrichment. Non-European partners benefitted significantly from participating in EM programmes through staff mobility, capacity-building initiatives, and access to international networks. Staff visits between partner institutions were noted as a particularly valuable tool for fostering academic and administrative exchange, promoting mutual understanding, and building stronger institutional ties.

Anna Spiessens, the alumna of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Tropical Biodiversity and Ecosystems (TROPIMUNDO) from Belgium spoke about the importance of having trust in local (non-EU) higher education systems and the enriching experience for students.

The participants shared several good practice examples in engaging non-EU associate partners, such as offering support to travel to consortia meetings and events, or creating a common glossary of terms and clear communication channels to reduce misunderstandings and ensure that all partners operate under a common framework.

## **3.2. Looking into the future**

The seminar closed with a series of inspiring presentations and discussions looking at ways to build on the strengths of Erasmus Mundus and upscale its achievements in deepening transnational cooperation based on jointness for a broader higher education sector.

### **3.2.1. Paving the way to a European degree**

Vanessa Debais-Sainton, Head of Higher Education Unit at the European Commission's DG EAC, provided insights into the **European degree** and the Skills Portability Initiative, which aim to foster the global competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education, while encouraging more graduates to stay in Europe to acquire high-quality skills.

A European degree is a **new type of joint degree** embedded in national legislation. It is defined as a single diploma awarded by the higher education institutions offering a joint degree programme that meets agreed European criteria (to a large extent inspired by and tested on existing EM Master's programmes) without any additional national constraints. This initiative aims to establish a 'level playing field' by creating an additional, parallel pathway for institutions willing to pursue deeper collaboration. The European degree was



presented as the culmination point of a longer pathway that would begin with compliance with a European degree label, awarded based on the same criteria, the final certification being dependant on the willingness and openness of Member States to sign up to this initiative and remove remaining obstacles in national accreditation systems.

Ms. Debiais-Sainton highlighted that the upcoming final report<sup>49</sup> on the outcomes of the European degree pilot projects provides in-depth insights into the feasibility of this approach. She also informed the participants that the European Commission's policy lab will work on the practical frameworks to support these developments, ensuring that institutions can choose to align with the European degree model as an optional pathway.

### 3.2.2. Pioneering a joint Bachelor programme

Drawing on the extensive institutional experience with EM programmes at Master's level, Bert Willems, Coordinator Student Accounting and Mobility at KU Leuven, Belgium, shared lessons learnt from the design and running of the European universities alliance, Una Europa's Bachelor of European Studies (BAES). The programme spans three years (180 ECTS) and involves four degree-awarding and five mobility partners, with the first cohort starting in 2022-23.

Adapting EM models to the BAES highlighted several **key differences**. The larger scale of a joint Bachelor programme amplifies challenges in admissions, enrolment, and data sharing, as well as mobility flows management, requiring efficient management structures. Legal and regulatory differences, particularly around tuition fees, admission processes, and student services, demand significant coordination and interoperability across partner institutions. Ensuring a balance between jointness in teaching and the comfort of localised systems remains a persistent issue, as does addressing variations in grading and evaluation practices.

The BAES programme relied on the active involvement of all actors at institutional, faculty, and programme levels, mobilised through the Una Europa alliance. The programme serves as a blueprint for future joint Bachelor initiatives, such as the planned Bachelor of Sustainability. By adapting and improving EM practices, including curriculum reforms and streamlined admission procedures, it sets a precedent for other programmes and continues to evolve as a pioneer, showcasing the inspirational value and impact of the EM programmes, beyond the Master's level, and without the same type of financial support.

### 3.2.3. Closing remarks

Closing the seminar, Filip Van Depoele, Head of International Cooperation Unit at DG EAC, European Commission, expressed deep gratitude to the participants for their pioneering efforts in Erasmus Mundus, supporting Europe's attractiveness and competitiveness on the global stage.

Looking ahead, Mr. Van Depoele highlighted the need for a 'quantum leap forward' in **scaling the achievements** of Erasmus Mundus through initiatives like the European degree flagship. This ambition seeks to expand the impact of the EM Action, fostering broader collaboration and further enhancing Europe's global leadership in education.

He urged participants to capitalise on the current political momentum and to reflect collectively on the most optimal use of resources within the new Erasmus+ programme 2028-2034. Engaging stakeholders and

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<sup>49</sup> DG EAC, Commission staff working document – Report on the final outcomes of the Erasmus+ policy experimentation projects: European degree (label) and institutionalised EU cooperation instruments (Register of Commission Documents, 2024): [https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=SWD\(2024\)291&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=SWD(2024)291&lang=en).

fostering dialogue will be critical in ensuring the sustainability and continued evolution of the transformative EM Master's programmes.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Over the past two decades, ongoing transnational collaboration between higher education institutions for the development of EM joint programmes has put **'jointness' in the spotlight**, as a key factor in ensuring their successful design and implementation. Drawing on insights from the report and seminar discussions, we identify **7 key ingredients** for cultivating jointness and building resilient and sustainable frameworks of collaboration. These include:

1. Actively **involving all actors** at national, institutional, faculty, and programme levels from the design phase of the programme
2. Establishing **mutual understanding** among partners based on agreed principles and standards
3. Creating **shared governance structures** within the consortium
4. Investing in **collaborative, trust-based processes** that are continuously refined over time
5. Ensuring continuous, **open communication** among partners and with students
6. Allowing **flexibility** to adopt special measures and ad hoc solutions to difficult challenges
7. Leveraging **technology** and digital tools to facilitate and optimise collaboration

However, achieving full jointness extends beyond the efforts of academic and administrative staff directly involved in the programme. It requires robust **support from institutions, national authorities, and the EU**, which play pivotal roles in addressing systemic obstacles, as demonstrated by initiatives like the European Universities alliances, which institutionalise collaboration both within and among universities.

Through this publication, we hope to inspire EM practitioners to strengthen joint approaches and enhance their visibility within their institutions and national frameworks. Additionally, we seek to support the EU in assessing jointness as a key criterion for funding decisions in EM Master's programmes.



## 5. ANNEX

### Annex I – Approaches towards jointness for each component of the programme

The table below summarises the identified joint approaches that consortia could implement to achieve a high level of jointness across the various components of EM Master's programmes.

| Programme's component   | Joint approach  |
|---|---|
| <b>Joint recruitment, admission, and selection</b>                    | Creating co-branded promotion materials to create a cohesive visual identity for the programme  |
|   | Establishing common social media platforms managed jointly by the consortium and its students   |
|   | Establishing common eligibility criteria for admission and selection  |
|   | Defining joint guidelines for evaluating applications to ensure consistent standards and trust among all consortium partners  |
|   | Creating a joint interoperable platform that streamlines the process from application to selection  |
|   | Implementing a multileveled evaluation process in which tasks are either evenly distributed among partners or conducted jointly   |
|   | Using joint application systems (e.g. spreadsheets) to facilitate a more collaborative approach to evaluating and rating candidates   |
|   | Holding a joint meeting or board with members from all involved institutions to make the final decisions on selected applicants   |
| <b>Quality assurance, mutual recognition, and joint accreditation</b> | Recognising the internal QA schemes of participating institutions, incorporating this mutual recognition into the Consortium Agreement or developing joint internal QA mechanisms together from scratch |
|   | Establishing common feedback mechanisms to gather input from students, graduates, and faculty, including surveys and open communication channels with student representatives                           |

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
|                              | Holding a joint QA meeting or board with members from all involved institutions, students and Alumni representatives, and associate partners to make decisions on programme improvements |
|                              | Assigning a dedicated QA director at consortium level responsible for the QA processes of the programme  |
|                              | Having all QA-related documents in a common platform within the consortium to facilitate QA  |
|                              | Using the European Approach for Quality Assurance to accredit the programme  |
|                              | Delivering a joint degree  |
|                              | Leveraging technological innovations such as digital credentials to expedite lengthy administrative processes  |
| <b>Learning and teaching</b> | Organising co-creation workshops with all partners to jointly design the programme's learning outcomes and curriculum  |
|                              | Developing joint syllabi and course materials  |
|                              | Establishing joint teaching practices involving mobility and co-teaching methods   |
|                              | Using shared interoperable digital tools to provide seamless student access to course content regardless of location   |
|                              | Implementing joint monitoring practices in the form of regular meetings to track programme delivery  |
|                              | Periodically updating the curriculum through joint research and seminars   |
|                              | Participating in or hosting academic events that bring together partner institutions to promote academic collaboration, enhance research outcomes, and drive innovation                  |
|                              | Organising joint exams and establishing an Examination Board at the consortium level   |
|                              | Creating a common grading scale to ensure consistent grading and trust among all consortium partners   |
|                              | Involving external examiners to provide an independent overview of assessments   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | Developing common policies/guidelines for the joint supervision and evaluation of theses and exams  |
|   | Establishing a centralised portal for the storage of academic records   |
| <b>Students services and mobility</b>           | Establishing contact and assigning roles and responsibilities within the academic and administrative offices of each institution. This includes appointing specific points of contact within the consortium to handle the more sensitive issues |
|   | Setting common standards for delivering support services at each institution  |
|   | Consolidating the support services offered at each institution into a comprehensive joint student handbook for the overall study cycle from application to graduation   |
|   | Encouraging administrative staff mobility and job shadowing opportunities   |
| <b>Industry and programme sustainability</b>    | Providing shared career guidance services including the development of a joint catalogue or database of available job positions and internships   |
|   | Implementing common feedback mechanisms to measure graduate employability   |
|   | Organising joint networking events to connect industry, alumni and current cohorts  |
|   | Involving industry partners and alumni in the programme's curriculum design, QA boards and meetings, thesis supervision, and programme's marketing strategies   |
|   | Appointing dedicated marketing staff at consortium level  |
| <b>Collaboration with non-European partners</b> | Offering support to non-EU partners to travel to consortia meetings and events  |
|   | Creating a common glossary of terms to reduce misunderstandings among institutional partners  |

## Annex II – Thematic Seminar’s Programme

The table below summarises the programme for the thematic seminar held on 7–8 November 2024 in Brussels, Belgium.

| Day 1: Thursday, 7 November 2024, full day |   |
|--|---|
| 08:30 – 09:30                              | Registrations and welcome coffee  |
| 09:30 – 09:45                              | Welcome and introduction:<br><b>Frédéric Fimeyer</b> (Head of Department EACEA)<br>Chair: <b>Luciano di Fonzo</b> (Acting Head of Unit EACEA)   |
| 09:45 – 10:15                              | Icebreaker activity, <b>Irina Ferencz</b> (ACA & EMSI consortium)   |
| 10:15 – 11:20                              | Framing jointness – an institutional and alumni perspective<br><b>Mirko Varano</b> (Tecnológico de Monterrey)<br><b>Raquel Galeano</b> (EMA)<br>Chair: <b>Luciano di Fonzo</b> (EACEA)  |
| 11:20 – 12:00                              | Networking break  |
| 12:00 – 13:20                              | Jointness in Erasmus Mundus Master Programmes – case examples<br><b>Cecilia Provost</b> (École Centrale de Nantes)<br><b>Robert Wagenaar</b> (University of Groningen)<br><b>José Borges</b> (Instituto Superior de Agronomia Universidade de Lisboa)<br>Chair: <b>Jacques Kemp</b> (EACEA)   |
| 13:20 – 14:30                              | Transition to lunch area and Networking lunch   |
| 14:30 – 15:45                              | Interlinked dimensions of jointness – parallel sessions<br><u>Session 1: Joint recruitment &amp; admissions</u><br><b>Christoph Brox</b> (University of Münster), <b>María-Elvira Prieto</b> (Pompeu Fabra University) and <b>Jenny Nygård</b> (alumna of MARIHE)<br>Moderator: <b>Luana Da Costa Monteiro</b> (Ghent University)<br><u>Session 2: Mutual recognition &amp; joint accreditation</u><br><b>Martin Mejsstrik</b> (Charles University), <b>Marta Arzarello</b> (Università di Ferrara) and <b>Reagan Paul Ambrose Chidhakwa</b> (alumnus of LIVE).<br>Moderator: <b>David Flacher</b> (Université de technologie de Compiègne)<br><u>Session 3: Joint learning &amp; teaching</u><br><b>Raminta Bardauskienė</b> (Mykolas Romeris University), <b>Barbara Rega</b> (AgroParisTech) and <b>Daniel Oliverio Hernandez Verdin</b> (student of FAME <sup>AI5</sup> ).<br>Moderator: <b>Isabel Cavaco</b> (Universidade do Algarve) |
| 15:45 – 16:15                              | Networking break  |
| 16:15 – 17:30                              | Interlinked dimensions of jointness – parallel sessions (repeated)  |
| 17:30 – 18:10                              | Transition to the plenary room and debriefing session by the 3 moderators<br>Chair: <b>Jacques Kemp</b> (EACEA)   |
| 18:10 – 18:15                              | Closing of Day 1 – <b>Jacques Kemp</b> (EACEA)  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>19:30 – 21:00</b>                            | <i>Networking dinner</i>  |
| <b>Day 2: Friday, 8 November 2024, half day</b> |   |
| <b>09:00 – 09:10</b>                            | <i>Welcome to Day 2 – <b>Philippe Ruffio</b> (EACEA)</i>  |
| <b>09:10 – 09:30</b>                            | <i>Policy update: Fostering jointness through a European degree</i><br><b>Vanessa Debiais-Sainton</b> (Head of Unit DG EAC)   |
| <b>09:30 – 10:20</b>                            | <i>Joint promotion &amp; visibility – case examples</i><br><b>David Flacher</b> (Université de technologie de Compiègne)<br><b>José Borges</b> (Instituto Superior de Agronomia Universidade de Lisboa)<br><u>Chair:</u> <b>Philippe Ruffio</b> (EACEA)   |
| <b>10:20 – 11:00</b>                            | <i>Networking break</i>   |
| <b>11:00 – 12:30</b>                            | <i>Interlinked dimensions of jointness – parallel sessions</i><br><u>Session 1: Student services &amp; mobility</u><br><b>Jean Peeters</b> (Université Bretagne Sud), <b>Robert Wagenaar</b> (University of Groningen) and <b>Nino Popkhadze</b> (alumna of MARIHE)<br><u>Moderator:</u> <b>Ilka Kureck</b> (University of Siegen)<br><u>Session 2: Cooperation with industry &amp; programme sustainability</u><br><b>Maria Sinche Gonzalez</b> (University of Oulu), <b>Kay Mühlmann</b> (University for Continuing Education Krems) and <b>Rajon Bhuiyan</b> (alumnus ME3+)<br><u>Moderator:</u> <b>Mirko Varano</b> (Tecnológico de Monterrey)<br><u>Session 3: Enhancing jointness with non-European partners</u><br><b>Samira Bonucci</b> (University of Padua), <b>Kenjiro Takemura</b> (Keio University) and <b>Anna Spiessens</b> (alumna of TROPIMUNDO)<br><u>Moderator:</u> <b>Ilva Putzier</b> (Erasmus University Rotterdam) |
| <b>12:30 – 13:00</b>                            | <i>Transition to the plenary room and debriefing by the moderators of the 3 sessions</i><br><u>Chair:</u> <b>Philippe Ruffio</b> (EACEA)  |
| <b>13:00 – 13:30</b>                            | <i>Closing of the seminar</i><br><i>Institutional spillover of jointness of Erasmus Mundus programmes at Master and Bachelor level.</i> <b>Bert Willems</b> (KU Leuven)<br><br><b>Filip Van Depoele</b> (Head of Unit DG EAC)<br><u>Chair:</u> <b>Luciano di Fonzo</b> (EACEA)  |
| <b>13:30 – 14:30</b>                            | <i>Networking lunch</i>   |

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