



European University Association

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PRESS RELEASE

Joint Degrees: Institutions working together in Europe Results of the 5th EUA Conference Cluj Babes-Bolyai University, Romania

Eric Froment, President of the European University Association (EUA), encouraged EUA member institutions attending the fifth EUA Conference at the University of Babes-Bolyai on 24-25 October in Cluj, Romania to continue pursuing efforts to work together towards a common European space for higher education and research:

“This conference has shown us that universities are extremely keen to work together, and that they are taking many initiatives. We have seen that people are looking for practical ways to develop programmes together in Europe and to consolidate institutional strengths and experience to create a European knowledge society.”

The Conference, attended by over 200 participants, was based upon the findings of EUA's pilot project on developing Joint Masters degrees in Europe, and provided for the first time a forum for EUA's members to discuss this much-touted but poorly understood phenomenon. Over the past year the project, which has been supported by the European Commission Socrates programme, has examined 11 established joint masters programmes to look both for examples of good practice and for challenges in the European environment that need to be overcome to facilitate the development of joint degrees. The lessons learned from the project will be presented in a report for EUA members, which will be finalised in the coming weeks.

One main conclusion of the conference was that combining institutional strengths through activities such as joint programmes provides added value to European higher education. Indeed, for the participating institutions, joint programmes offer an opportunity to work and learn together in developing challenging curricula, and in ensuring a quality experience for the students and professors involved. Such programmes offer a unique European experience for students coming from both inside and outside Europe, enabling them to study in different academic, social, and linguistic environments with a common cultural heritage.

The interest in joint degrees has certainly been heightened by the EC's proposed Erasmus Mundus programme, which intends to offer funding to develop European Masters programmes and to enable excellent overseas students to study in Europe. The results of the EUA project and the conference proceedings will feed into recommendations made by EUA to this initiative.

The conference also drew attention to the fact that until now, joint programmes have been developed mainly by Western European universities and affect only a minority of students. Keynote speaker Professor Berchem, President of the German Academic Exchange Programme (DAAD) stressed that while few students are currently affected, the effect of institutional cooperation in joint programmes is itself a positive learning experience. The challenge remains to mainstream institutional cooperation so that additional benefits are maximised throughout institutions.

For a wider impact to be made, it is also essential that particular support is given to institutions and students in Central and Eastern Europe. In the words of Eric Froment:

“We need to consolidate and sustain existing successful programmes, and to encourage the development of new programmes where there are needs at European level. Universities are our major strength in developing a European knowledge society, and joint programmes are one way for institutions across the entire continent to engage in a concrete learning process about the European

dimension. EUA will continue to encourage universities to put this European dimension at the centre of their institutional policy and practice.”

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For further information on the EUA conference in Cluj, please contact:

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