



**Joint Programmes – a challenge for the HEIs:  
the most frequently identified problems and obstacles at university and national level**

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**INTERUV training Seminar for EM NS and NTOs/HEREs - Warsaw, 9 May 2013**



## Introduction – Structure of the presentation

### National level

- Legal framework and policies for internationalisation
- Accreditation and quality assurance of Joint Programmes
- Visa and immigration issues

### Institutional level

- Internationalisation policies of HEIs
- Management of Joint Programmes
- Registration of students

### Final comments



## Legal framework and policies for internationalisation

### Estonia

Joint programmes included into the national higher education strategy as well as into the national strategy on internationalization in higher education and also into the University Act

\* National higher education strategy – legal acts should be prepared to enable the issuing of joint degrees and diplomas

\* National strategy on internationalization in HE – importance of JPs for internationalisation recognised; strategic developments formulated

\* Universities Act – regulates awarding and issuing of joint diplomas; requirements for joint curriculum/JPs; accreditation and evaluation



## National legal framework and policies for internationalisation

### Italy

- Very favourable legal Framework (legislation on JPs in force since 1999 and renovated in 2004 for both double and joint degrees)
- HE Internationalisation policies have been supported with targeted funds in recent years
- Internationalisation is a relevant issue in the National Higher Education Development Plan 2013 -2015, and JPs are a key point (top priority to JPs as an internationalisation tool)
- But, no targeted funds are provided at the moment



## Accreditation and quality assurance of Joint Programmes

### Estonia

Institutional accreditation and assessment of the quality of study programme groups (including JPs) regulated through Universities Act

\* Institutional accreditation (for max. 7 years)

\* Assessment of the quality of study programme groups. All study programmes, including JPs, belong to a study group. So, positive evaluation of one study programme depends on the positive evaluation of another programme from the same group

\* No changes of the current system are foreseen for the near future



## Accreditation and quality assurance of Joint Programmes

### Italy

- National accreditation of JPs sometime problematic due existing procedures, focused on “national” programmes run by a single institution
- JPs and internationally - oriented programmes are looked at as exceptions or tricks to avoid national rules rather than resources for international development
- Limitations to JPs have been removed and new friendly rules are in force after lobbying together with CRUI, National BFUG and the National Bologna experts
- From ex-ante accreditation (minimal requirements) to ex-ante accreditation + ex-post performance assessment (quality assurance); specific rules are provided for JPs and programmes taught in international languages (art. 4 - par. 12)



## VISA and immigration issues

### Estonia

- \* Estonian HEIs involved in JPs do not highlight that as a big problem, but...
- \* ... disregarding this Estonian Ministry of Education and Research is planning to initialize a simplification of a Visa procedure for students and scholars coming to Estonia in frames of Erasmus Mundus / Marie Curie programmes (Estonian Ministry of the Interior)



## VISA and immigration issues

### Italy

- Best practice: since 2004 agreement among Ministries for Universities, Foreign Affairs and Interiors (+ Rectors' Conference and EMNS) to ease VISA procedure for EM scholarship holders;
- The “Erasmus Mundus procedure” have been built into the general rules for admission of foreign students
- Excellent feedback, the procedure works very well
- Job permission: no problems are reported for Master students (limited work engagement for students allowed); PhD students are employed as young researchers (European Charter for researchers); cooperation with Euraxess Unit
- Best practice: “skilled” universities tutoring the “newcomers”





## Internationalisation policies in HE institutions and Management of JPs

### Estonia

JPs as a strategic tool for their internationalisation strategy / policy

\* Usually HEIs highly appreciate JPs and their impact on the whole institution, BUT if they already have them!!!

\* Otherwise the bureaucratic burden at national level is too high – so just few JPs at the moment (only in large universities)

\* Support of the JPs at the institutional level (from the administration of the HEIs) is normally provided, but still very individual-related



## Internationalisation policies in HE institutions and Management of JPs

### Italy

- Most Italian HEIs have an official policy statement on international cooperation and internationalisation, only a limited number quote JPs as a strategic tool
- About 600 JPs (awarding joint/double/multiple degree) are reported in the CIMEA ProJoint DB (many institutions, all levels, most study groups)
- Management of JPs: coordination between academia and administration, and among administrative offices is reported as insufficient in many cases;
- Best practice: institutions with strong coordination, dedicated units and well operating offices are top actors in Erasmus Mundus as well as other programmes



## Registration of students

### Estonia

Estonian Education Information System

\* Registration of students (including JPs students)

\* Registration of issued diploma

Problem: as soon as students leave the country in order to conduct their studies at the partner HEIs, they will be exmatriculated and considered as not finished the studies. That distorts the statistics, showing the lower number of the graduates; evokes different confusions.

No solution at the moment: HEIs cannot change the system, as it is used by all HEIs. But the Ministry is aware of the problems and working on the solutions.



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## Registration of students

### Italy

- No relevant problems are presently reported



## Final comments

- **Estonia 1:** A lot has been done in order to improve the situation with the JPs during the last years, but there are problems (partially) unsolved - such as legal framework, accreditation and quality assurance, VISA and immigration issues, etc. They are obstacles on HEIs path towards more active participation in JPs.
- **Estonia 2:** The work at the national level should continue in order to overcome the obstacles related to legal issues, as well as the HEIs should adapt their internationalisation strategies to new developments and growing popularity of the JPs, change their attitude towards the JPs.
- **Italy 1:** knowledge of JPs and interest is growing (HEIs, academics, students) and best practice are emerging; the “level 0” phase appears to be overcome
- **Italy 2:** main challenges: embedding JPs in institutional strategies/policies; recognition of JDs in the market; sustainability (funding, quality assurance)



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This is a selection of topics from our subjective point of view  
and looking to our national situations.

Are they more general issues, according to your experience?  
Any further issue from your national points of view?  
Let's open discussion!

Thank you for attention!

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