

## **European and National Programmes: Competition, Complementarity, Coordination**

Dr. Christian Bode, Secretary General, DAAD

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Thank you very much for the opportunity to share with you some thoughts on European and national programmes. Their coexistence and sometimes competition is a daily experience for us since we are the National Agency for Erasmus and other EU programmes and at the same time sponsor 50.000 academics under national programmes with a budget of 220 million EUR per year.

### I.

“The World is flat” (Friedman). Globalisation is no longer merely the title of a book. It has become part of our everyday reality. Business and science are the drivers in the process, while the omnipresence of television, the Internet and new media and a new dimension of logistical mobility are contributing their share.

Policy, especially at the national levels is increasingly losing its influence. Like it or not, it is being forced ever more to seek coordination with other states. This is the case in areas ranging from crime-fighting all the way to education and research. The Bologna process is no coincidence.

“Internationalisation” has in the meantime become a buzzword – if not the actual engine of Higher Education development and policy. Internationalism means (not only, but predominantly), mobility of students and researchers across borders, both incoming as well as outgoing.

The goal is to train one’s own future leaders internationally to better prepare them for global competition. But increasingly the task is also to recruit bright brains from all over the world for one’s own research and business. And that means that the Universities have to be made more internationally attractive and up to the task.

Promoting mobility has thus become a standard desideratum of university policy. University policy is primarily the domain of the member states in the EU . The ministers who signed the Bologna Declaration and who are repeatedly appealing to foster mobility- these ministers are first of all addressing themselves .

## II.

Indeed, some countries like Germany have a traditionally strong national promotional system for academic mobility. Some countries have just recently undertaken significant efforts in this direction. Still other countries have shown little ambition so far.

By comparison, the mobility programmes of the European Union have seen an almost furious development. These began on a small scale twenty years ago with the Joint Study Programmes. These were then institutionalised in the ERASMUS programme, which registered strong annual growth rates and saw the development of new types of programmes. Beginning on 1<sup>st</sup> January of next year, the newly drafted mobility programme will be moving forward into a new quantitative and qualitative dimension as integral part of a lifelong learning concept.

The geographic framework of the programme has at the same time expanded constantly during these twenty years. With 31 countries, it even extends beyond EU territory today. The programme is thus preparing the ground for the later political enlargement of the Union – and rightly so.

Parallel to these educational programmes, programme-related scholarships and grants have been developed for junior researchers in the context of the European Framework Programme , which is now referred to as the Marie Curie Programme. Even more funds from Brussels are available for promotion of this mobility than for the Erasmus programme.

There is an increasing number of EU Programmes for Third Countries outside Europe. After the fall of the iron curtain, the central and eastern European countries and Russia stood at the forefront here. These countries were then followed by Asia, Latin America, the Mediterranean countries, Africa, and even the U.S. – for different motives and with different proponents. Now there are not very many white spots on the world map of the EU-Programmes.

Responsibility for these programmes is spread out in the Commission, however: just like at the national level as well, on top of education and research ministries, the ministry of foreign affairs and economic development are also involved. As a consequence the objectives of the programmes vary as do their content and the administrative cultures. This does not make things any easier for external customers and partners.

Finally, most of the EU Programmes do not address the individual student directly but are directed towards the Institutions instead which then, under certain conditions, can get support for their own mobility and cooperation programmes. I would like to refer to this type of programmes in the rest of my speech as “institutional programmes” – in contrast to individual programmes – because these focus on the institutions and guide their activities .

One can thus say at present that the European programmes offer almost blanket coverage both geographically and in terms of subject areas, that they encompass both individual and institutional promotion and that their financial volumes have increased significantly. And there are actually plenty of indications that this process will continue.

But this also once again broaches the question of the relationship between national and EU mobility programmes which is today’s conference topic.

I would like to forward the following related questions and then comment on them briefly:

1. Do the growing EU programmes make national programmes obsolete in whole or at least in part (let’s refer to this as the “minister-of-finance question”)
2. Are there specific areas in which EU programmes and national programmes should differ? What specifically is the European Added Value?
3. What does the coexistence of EU and national programmes mean for the administration of these programmes at the European and national levels?

## III.

Regarding the first question, the answer would at first glance seem to be apparent:

EU programmes, as the principle of subsidiarity would have it, should complement national programmes wherever possible, but by no way replace or eliminate them. That implies of course a corresponding responsibility on the part of the member states. The existence of EU-Programmes is no excuse for those Bologna signatories who do not translate their appeals into action.

There are indeed enough good reasons for national programmes.

First of all, the EU funding is although of considerable volume by far too small to reach the ambitious Lisbon goal to make Europe the most dynamic knowledge based and highly attractive society in the world. Even the huge Erasmus programme will by far not meet the mark of 10% outgoing mobility set as a goal unless it is complemented by national funding.

A second reason for additional national programmes is and will continue to be that a member state pursues specific bilateral or regional aims in academic exchanges such as the Nordplus programme of the Nordic countries, or the CEEPUS programme in the region of the previous Danube monarchy.

As for bilateral programmes I might add that the Federal Republic of Germany alone has adopted more than 40 Cultural Agreements with other countries and most of them include a chapter on Higher Education Exchange.

A third reason for national programs might be that a member state sets a more ambitious aim for its own outgoing student mobility or for the intake of international students. An example for the first case is the most recent campaign in Germany, which, sporting the slogan "go out", aims at sending one in every two students, which is to say 50%, abroad until 2010. An example for the latter case is Tony Blair's recent campaign to recruit 75.000 more international students to British Universities which are already ranking second as international host institutions behind the US universities.

And that is not the end of the story. There are still a number of national efforts which can be made without risking duplication of EU programmes for the simple reason that similar EU programmes do not exist. That applies for instance for national marketing or promotion activities which we at times carry on with other ACA members. This situation, as you know, might change with the launch of the so-called Global Promotion Programme for which a number of ACA member institutions have applied for.

Definitely no parallel EU programme exists so far for the export of Higher Education abroad, so called off-shore activities. The DAAD has started such a programme, with which we promote study programmes and even branch campuses of German universities in foreign countries.

And there is no relevant EU programme if it comes to promoting national languages abroad. We, for instance, send more than 400 lecturers of German language to foreign universities and some other countries have similar programmes.

In this entire area of foreign languages, whose importance to the future of Europe cannot be overemphasised, we unfortunately have not heard much from Brussels aside from emphatic speeches or papers. Understandably to some extent, Brussels apparently does believe that support of national languages really is up to the various countries. In principle this is just as correct as it is wrong in terms of its real effect: with the exception of English and Catalan, foreign-language learning in Europe is in steep decline, worst of all in the mother country of the *lingua franca*.

It would be a good idea for the EU at the very least to attach more value to preparatory language training in its exchange programmes and rewarded efforts made in this direction.

Regarding question 1, then, we can summarize that: EU programmes supplement national programmes, but do not replace them. For this reason they cannot serve as an excuse for not doing more at the national level. There is still enough open space and urgent need for national efforts.

## IV.

What does this mean for the individual member states of the EU?

This question is unfortunately not easy to answer because, amazingly enough, we do not have any central database on national programmes. This is a deplorable state of affairs – both from the perspective of the Commission as well as that of the individual member states.

It is due to this situation that I would like to call for such an overview to be achieved as soon as possible and updated at regular intervals. An overview of this type could also stimulate competition between countries, which would help improve the situation.

The EU should therefore commission a project along these lines as soon as possible. From my perspective it would appear that nobody is better suited to perform this task than ACA, as nobody knows more about the national programmes than the members of the ACA.

Until we have overviews like these, you the ACA members can best answer this question each for yourself, but of course only for your country. The central overview we have at present at any rate allows us to say that:

A majority of states have grant and scholarship programmes aimed at attracting and supporting foreign students, but often only for certain regions or for developing countries. Only few countries support the foreign mobility of their own students. Nevertheless, the “portability” of national aid for studies abroad, often only to other European countries, is increasingly the standard. But not everyone receives study grants; often this is only available to needy persons. The situation even falls short of this with respect to the support of scholars.

For many countries and in the view of many universities, the promotion of mobility is thus largely synonymous with EU programmes. This should not remain the case. We should take national ministers by their word. We should urge that this issue be brought into the Bologna monitoring process.

## V.

It is even more difficult to answer question 2, which concerns the **“division of labour” between national and EU programmes**. Once again, systematic ignorance of national programmes is having a negative impact here. I will for this reason cite German experience as an example in this regard.

Some years ago, we could still make the following distinction :

1. EU programmes (which for the most part meant ERASMUS) fostered mass mobility with small grants, while DAAD programmes on the other hand promoted a smaller group of highly qualified persons who were selected in an intensive national selection procedure with full scholarships. In a nutshell: class instead of mass.
2. DAAD programmes were purely individual programmes while Erasmus applied to the institutions and their networks. In short: individual programmes versus institutional programmes.
3. European programmes were for the most part concentrated on Europe, while DAAD programmes were open to the entire world. This applied equally to outgoing as well as incoming students. In short: EU and non-EU

This distinction can no longer be preserved in this form today. It is not only EU programmes which have been expanded and become more differentiated. We also have made some significant changes in our programmes.

Thus for example we only award partial grants for students before they receive their first degree and we also offer a large number of short programmes such as language courses in Eastern Europe which cannot be subsumed under elite promotion.

In the meantime we have also launched a number of **institutional programmes** which support institutions in their internationalisation programmes.

**One** difference which has remained and will remain, however, is that our most important customer still is the individual young scholar, who is carefully selected and given generous grants.

These scholars can decide independently of all existing university partnerships where they want to go and what they want to do there – these elite free-movers –if I see it correctly- have so far not received similar attention in EU programme.

On the other hand the “finance minister’s question” is not purely academic. I cannot assess the extent to which national programmes have been cut back or modified in order to avoid overlapping. But I can report from our own experiences, that we no longer offer our traditional programme for integrated study abroad within the EU because it is too similar to the Erasmus programme.

In addition, our Ministry for Education has insisted that individual grants no longer be awarded within the EU for undergraduate students. We have then used the funds for exchanges with non-European countries.

As this example shows, there is a certain risk that EU programmes of a similar nature will spur funding ministries to ask critical questions.

So the question remains as to whether European programmes have special characteristics and whether these should also serve as preconditions in order to protect national programmes against cut-throat competition.

It is first of all clear that the European programmes are not equal to what is left over after subtracting the national programmes. This would not make sense if only because the situation is so different in the individual countries. Moreover, we want the EU to profit from the experience of national organisations, to adopt examples of best practice and make these into a standard for Europe as a whole. So there should not be any rule against copying approaches in either direction.

On the other hand, a demand that EU programmes should offer an “added value” is reasonable and legitimate. European programmes should create benefits which national programmes cannot offer, even in their sum total.

Such benefits are without a doubt provided when a programme is multilateral from the outset, as is the case with respect to the ERASMUS programme. This programme was at any rate based

on mutual exchange networks. The possibility of financing in several countries at the same time is an indispensable element here. It would be extremely difficult to create something like this only with bilateral and multilateral agreements between member states.

Apart from this there are two additional aspects which make the Erasmus programme truly European:

First of all the motivation is clearly embedded in European cohesion policy, which cannot be expected from national programmes in this form: namely making young leaders of tomorrow aware of European reality and training them in intercultural contexts for tolerance and solidarity across borders. How desperately Europe needs this philosophical base has been demonstrated by the failed referenda in two founding member states of the EU. It of course does not hurt that the ERASMUS programme has in the meantime expanded this objective into the direction of educational policy, like the policies laid down in the Bologna declaration.

The second European aspect is the sheer magnitude of the programmes, which is illustrated by the goal of promoting 3 million people by 2010. Something like this is only possible through coordinated activities with lots of money and considerable political support. The member states could not really afford this no matter how willing they are to cooperate.

By reverse reasoning, however, one can also conclude that the programmes of the EU which fall short of a certain critical threshold do not meet the requirement of an added value for Europe. In my opinion, this is the case with respect to the EU-U.S exchange programme, which is woefully under-funded. Measured in terms of the bilateral exchange which the individual member states carry on and which is promoted from the U.S. through the Fulbright Programme, this is merely peanuts. It may suffice as a pilot and demonstration project, but it is not viable over the long haul.

There is also an added European value with all those programmes which especially revolve around (qualitative) international competition. This is in particular the case with respect to the promotion of research, which is why the Marie Curie Programme is of an eminently European nature and not

only supplements national research council programmes with “more of the same”. Here competition is not only a tool, but more or less the goal, and discrimination against national interests is the preferred method. Of course –as we in ‘Germany have learnt- Federal systems can only handle this to a certain extent.

Finally, European programmes will be accepted and welcomed in Europe when they expressly support a political mission on the part of the EU (such as cooperation with third countries, transformation aid in Eastern Europe or development aid). Also in these cases, though, a reasonable size of the programme and the participation of several member states should be made a precondition.

If European programmes at any rate adopt this orientation in principle – and most of them do – and when the national programme authors take this into account, then I do not believe that there will be any problems preventing coexistence between the two cultures, and in the best case they may even be able to support each other in a meaningful manner.

## VI.

Thirdly and last of all, I posed the question as to the coexistence of national and European programme administration.

The EU treaties are silent on this, and make the question of administration solely the responsibility of the Commission. The Council and the Parliament have a consultative function, but no decision-making power with respect to this question. The Commission can decide for a more centralised or a more decentralised administration. In a similar manner it can decide between the options of “doing it ourselves” (the internal solution), outsourcing to an autonomous executive agency or awarding the contract to a more or less non-public third-party. Almost everything has been tried over the course of time when one includes all programmes of different directorates.

In the area of educational programmes, the Commission has now established a subordinate executive agency of its own. This at least reaffirms the principle that ministries should actually steer and monitor – in short, they should govern and not administrate. Furthermore, the agency is not only made up of civil servants. It also has outside experts, thus providing an element of co-

administration by society. But this does not change the fact that the agency is purely a state institution and it must carry out orders from above. The agency is not an independent actor – it is a technical assistance office.

This model is thus still far removed from participatory solutions like those which have been implemented in some member states in part. Although the DAAD, to take one example, executes national mobility programmes on behalf of the ministries, it does so in its own name. Of course it has to respect all the regulations of budget laws as well as contractual agreements on programmes. But it has its own latitude in making individual decisions, however, which it tackles by using independent academic commissions. State funding agencies can only very exceptionally intervene in the practical implementation of programmes. Of course, the state funding institutions have a powerful lever – they can eliminate or cut back funding for the next year or tie their future funding to additional requirements.

A construction like this, which indeed implies a considerable devolvement of power by the Parliament and public bureaucracy in favour of academic self-administration, appears to be pretty incompatible with ways of thinking and administration in Brussels at present. Someday Brussels may realise, however, that this model not only works in an absolutely professional manner, with low costs and a high level of efficiency – but that it also mobilises the know-how and ambition of the academic community and makes a serious effort to get close to the grass roots – something which is so urgently needed in our common Europe.

This will only work, however, if this task is not assigned to commercial enterprises which win a tender. It needs to be deliberately placed, rather, in the hands of professional, more semi-governmental organisations which are closely associated with education and research. The view which one occasionally hears in Brussels to the effect that this approach must be avoided because of a potential conflict of interests, is ultimately absurd, as in the end those agencies which are least acquainted with the task at hand appear to be the most reliable and best qualified because they have no interest in the task and lack the competence to deal with it.

The second most important question concerning administration is whether and to what extent European authorities make use of

national structures in implementing their programmes. This may involve in some cases the use of existing structures, in other cases their modification and, ultimately, even the creation of completely new national structures for these tasks.

This question arises in all federal states or communities of states with a federal structure. The principle which applies in Germany is that the Federal Authorities issue laws and also control funding, while the administration lies in the domain of the states, the *Länder* (of course there are exceptions – the area of defence, for instance).

This is also the case in many areas of EU competency. With regard to European promotional programmes, however, which we are talking about here, decentralisation along these lines is generally not the rule. One reason for this might be that the respective administrative task cannot be decentralised – for example central decisions on European-wide competition. Sometimes one gets the impression, however, that possible areas of decentralisation are not perceived.

One reason for this might be the concern that a national administration is not sufficiently efficient or is prone to corruption; a second possible reason for this may be that the “real Europeans” in Brussels fear a re-nationalisation of their programmes and as a result a danger to the added value for Europe.

I think this opinion is flawed – both for general administrative-sociological reasons as well as in terms of European policy. A Europe made up of its citizens cannot come about if the heads of states do not trust their societies. Instead they should usher them along the difficult path leading beyond their own borders.

European programmes should therefore be administered in a decentralised way wherever a programme structure allows this. Of course one must then accept that the European Authorities set clear requirements regarding transparency, professionalism and correctness of the national administration.

It is in this sense that I warmly welcome the increased decentralisation which is now provided for in the ERASMUS programme. I think that I can also say this on behalf of many ACA members which perform this function in addition to their national

tasks. Insofar we can state with satisfaction that things are moving in the right direction.

But that holds not yet true as far as the central administration in Brussels is concerned which presently is provided either by the commission itself or by the commission with the technical assistance of an state-run Executive Agency. Guided by our national experiences I still have the dream which many years ago has led some of us to found ACA: the dream that one day the central programme administration will be made by an institution like ACA which is itself based on the membership of professional national agencies- closely related but sufficiently independent to both state and academic society. I know that is still a dream. But we have also propagated for years an independent European Research Council- now it will start working at the beginning of next year. Or, as Victor Hugo has put it: "Nothing is stronger than an idea whose time has come...".