

**ProDeJIP – 1st Annual Conference
Rome, 25/06/2015**

**PARALLEL SESSION 1:
MAINTAINING A JOINT INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME IN A MOVING INSTITUTIONAL
CONTEXT**

Moderator/Chair: Boas Erez
With testimonies from Barbara Rega (AgroParisTech),
José María Peiró (University of Valencia)
and Karin Knutsson (KTH, Stockholm)

Introduction

This session was attended by approximately 25 people during the first round, and then a further 10 for the second round.

Each of the three aforementioned contributors gave a testimony detailing problems encountered in managing an Erasmus Mundus Master course at their institution, either due to changes at an internal institutional level or at an 'external', national level, with the latter type of changes having broad repercussions at the institutional level, changing the context in which the programme is managed.

Barbara Rega, AgroParisTech

AgroParisTech is an HEI which specialises in engineering. In 2015, it took part in a merger process along with 18 other HEIs in the Paris area to form the University of Paris-Saclay. A community of HEIs. The reason for such a large merger is to lend greater international visibility to the institutions involved, with the goal of creating a major hub of innovation at the European level. This project clearly presents a very big opportunity to all involved; however it is just as clear that it involves a significant transitional phase.

In addition, although the previous institutions are practically all well-known and well-placed in international rankings this does not mean that the new institution will automatically have a top-level reputation; the reputation of Paris-Saclay needs to be (re)built. Further to this internal trust must be fostered and developed among the merged institutions, and the new institution must be careful to ensure that 'external' trust is maintained, i.e. the trust of the previous institution's partner which it has inherited.

Specifically, the direct effect on the FIPDes EM Master is that while AgroParisTech will continue to manage the course, Paris-Saclay will now deliver the diploma. The legal consequences of this mean that an agreement must be established between these operating and degree-awarding institutions. It is to be noted that AgroParisTech is not the only partner to FIPDes which participates in a merger. The Irish partner in the consortium also does.

Despite the changes, it should also be noted that continuity of the Master programme is still ensured at an academic and administrative level, given the fact that the same staff continue to work on the programme, with the same partners and using the same methods.

The point on trust among Consortium partners and the stability brought by such 'bottom-up' initiatives is reinforced by Boas Erez, who describes the experience of the University of Bordeaux as coordinator of the ALGANT EM Master. This Master had been run by Bordeaux 1 University for several years but Bordeaux 1 was involved in a merger in 2014 to create the new University of Bordeaux. The transition itself was smooth insofar as a simple legal agreement was put in place whereby the University of Bordeaux took over all activity

previously administered by Bordeaux 1. However because of the changes brought by the merger, the decision was taken to transfer the coordination of the Master to another Consortium partner, the University of Leiden.

José María Peiró, University of Valencia

José María Peiró spoke about the distinction between change that is provoked and change that must be adapted to. As coordinator of the WOP-P EM Master, Valencia carried out a strategic analysis of their programme with its sustainability in mind. Following this, ~~there~~ they decided upon a reorganisation of their study tracks in order to acquire a more diverse intake. Indeed, between 60 and 70% of their students were coming from Latin America, which was (most probably) due to the fact that the majority of the classes were in Spanish. So a study track was created where classes were exclusively in English for the duration of the Master. The result was that within two years the student demographic had changed significantly.

This also led to a realisation that teaching methods had to be changed, and that internships outwith Spain had to be found, and generally opened up the possibility of new partnerships in other areas of the world, for example in North America.

This can be considered as an example of provoking change. Adapting to change has already been covered to an extent in the previous section, but Valencia encountered a different type of problem from AgroParisTech. Rather than at the level of the HEIs, change forcing them to adapt, came about at the national/ministerial level in Spain.

Specifically a ministerial decree on the use of the Erasmus Mundus label. The decree basically stated that having the label entitled courses to certain rights in Spain, e.g. exemption from national level evaluation and to have the course appear in a national level catalogue of Master courses. However the uncertainty surrounding the future of the EM label, followed by WOP-P being denied participation in the QR process meant that the course faced the possibility of losing its rights in Spain.

In the end they were forced to contact the Ministry (of Higher Education) directly and explain the difficulty of their situation, which led to a solution being put in place, whereby the course was allowed to temporarily keep its right at national level.

Karin Knutsson, KTH Royal Institute of Technology

Karin Knutsson spoke about the relatively well-known case of tuition fees being raised on a pan-national level in Sweden. This obviously made the levels of fees provided by the European Commission for EM scholarship holding students in their Master a lot less interesting for KTH, in turn potentially putting their future participation in the Consortium and the programme's sustainability in doubt.

What came out of this case was the importance of having consortium/partnership agreement which are flexible and, once again, of knowing and having trust in your consortium partners. This better enables problems to be dealt with in advance, for example by being able to talk frankly about rumours, and to give a consortium time to come up with a 'plan B'.