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The Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Programmes

State-of-play report

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Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative

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Credits

ABBREVIATIONS

ACA	Academic Cooperation Association
BIP	Blended Intensive Programme
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
EACEA	European Education and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
DG EAC	European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
EM	Erasmus Mundus
EMA	Erasmus Mundus Association
EMDM	Erasmus Mundus Design Measure
EMJM	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master
EMJMD	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree
EMSI	Erasmus Mundus Support Initiative
ENP	Erasmus Networks Platform
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EU	European Union
GIS	Erasmus Mundus Graduate Impact Survey
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICM	International Credit Mobility
UN	United Nations

ERASMUS MUNDUS PROGRAMMES ACRONYMS

This section presents the acronyms of all the programmes analysed in the various case studies. These acronyms are used throughout the report to facilitate comparative analysis and enable easier identification of the programmes discussed.

ALGANT	Algebra, Geometry, and Number Theory Master Programme
BIM A+	European Master in Building Information Modelling
DC Lead	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Digital Communication Leadership
DHJM	Master in Digital Humanities
EMAI	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master in Artificial Intelligence
EMCC	European Master in Classical Cultures
EIMAS	European Interdisciplinary Master African Studies
IDEAS	Master in Innovative Design of Themed Entertainment and Attractions for Sustainability
LCT	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master in Language and Communication Technologies
MER	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Marine Environment
STEPS JMD	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Sustainable Transportation and Electrical Power Systems
English and American Studies	European joint Master's Programme in English and American Studies
Sustainable Development	Joint International Master in Sustainable Development

Although the last two comparative non-EM programmes listed in the table above do not have official acronyms, they are referred to by shortened forms throughout the report to ensure clarity and consistency in the analysis.

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GLOSSARY

Mobility Type

Choice-Based Convergent Mobility Model: An hourglass-shaped mobility model in which students start at various partner universities, converge at a common institution for a shared semester or year, and then disperse to different destinations for the remainder of their studies or thesis.

Choice-Based Sequential Mobility Model: A forked or tree-like mobility path where students begin together and then select different partner universities at each stage of their academic progression.

Convergent Cohort Mobility Model: A Y-shaped mobility structure where students begin their studies at different partner universities and later merge into a unified cohort that continues along a shared academic path.

Fixed Path Mobility with Thesis Flexibility: A linear mobility model where students undertake coursework at the same institutions in the same order but have the flexibility to choose their thesis location from among the partner universities.

Open Choice Mobility Model: A web-like mobility structure offering maximum flexibility, allowing students to choose any partner university at each stage with minimal restrictions, resulting in highly individualised mobility patterns.

One-Semester Mobility Model: Designed for non-Erasmus Mundus programmes, this mobility model involves students being primarily enrolled at their home institution, with mobility limited to a single semester abroad.

Financial terms

EM Funding: Financial support provided by the EM Action for universities to run EMJM programmes for a duration of six years, covering at least four editions of the programme.

EM Scholarship: A portion of EM Funding specifically designated to financially support beneficiary students. This support covers travel, visa, installation, and subsistence costs for scholarship holders throughout the entire duration of the Master's programme. Scholarship holders do not need to pay tuition fees.

Erasmus+ Mobility Grant: Financial support from the EU specifically dedicated to funding short-term student and staff mobility for study or training abroad, applied for through the home institution of students.

Fee reduction: A partial decrease in the tuition or participation fees that a self-funded student would normally be required to pay for a specific programme or course of study. It may be awarded based on criteria such as academic merit, financial need, or institutional and policy objectives.

Tuition fee waiver: A full exemption from paying the tuition or participation fees that a self-funded student would normally be required to pay for a specific programme or course of study. It may be awarded based on criteria such as academic merit, financial need, or institutional and policy objectives.

Self-funded student: A student who does not benefit from an EM scholarship and is responsible for covering tuition and participation fees, as well as associated costs such as travel and living expenses through personal resources or alternative financial aid sources.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(1) This *State of Play Report* examines the sustainability of Erasmus Mundus (EM) Master's programmes, drawing on desk research, 13 case studies, and survey responses from 118 individuals representing 107 programmes (50% of those listed in the 2025 EM Catalogue). It identifies the principal factors influencing sustainability across three key dimensions: financial, institutional, and academic excellence and attractiveness.

(2) The report frames the concept of sustainability in the context of EM Master's programmes and provides insights through concrete examples in the form of case study "fiches". It then goes on to examine in detail the main factors in each of the three dimensions, highlighting key takeaways and good practices to inspire EM consortia in their drive towards greater self-sufficiency.

(3) The three principle factors influencing **financial sustainability** were identified as:

- **(a)** **Tuition fee income remains the most stable and preferred funding source** (81% of surveyed programmes). The availability of at least some financial aid for some students increases the overall attractiveness of the master's.
- **(b)** **Diversification of income sources**, including tuition, institutional co-funding, national or regional subsidies, and targeted partnerships. Such diversification is vital for resilience in the face of changing political and institutional priorities.
- **(c)** **Institutional in-kind and regulatory support** such as administrative staff or shared facilities. While these represent indirect sources of funding, they can help minimise or optimise operational costs.

(4) Concerning **institutional sustainability**, the two most influential factors were found to be:

- **(a)** **Institutional commitment and recognition of the programme**. This entails strategic alignment of the programme with the universities' overarching goals and values, at both governance and faculty level.
- **(b)** **Personal commitment and motivation of the staff involved**. The dedication of individuals is often the binding element that sustains cooperation over time. However, institutional recognition must consistently accompany this commitment to safeguard the programme in the event of staff turnover or shifting institutional priorities.

(5) In the area of **academic excellence and attractiveness**, several factors were identified as influencing sustainability: relevance of the field of study, employability prospects, industrial and research partnerships, academic prestige, limited competition, communication and outreach and the mobility opportunities. Furthermore, the international nature of the programmes, combined with the availability of scholarships, helps ensure a steady flow of talented students. The positive effects they bring (in terms of positive reputation, employment, research outputs etc.) in turn contribute to the attractiveness of the programme.

(6) In conclusion, financial, institutional, and academic sustainability are **mutually reinforcing**. Long-term viability depends on a balanced strategy combining diversified funding, institutional support, and academic excellence. Integrating these elements from the outset can help EM Master's programmes sustain core activities and societal impact beyond EM funding. Further efforts could include fostering synergies with other relevant programmes and EU initiatives for knowledge-sharing and support.

1. INTRODUCTION

EM Master's programmes are powerful drivers of international collaboration and academic excellence. By bringing together multiple higher education institutions across countries, these programmes not only **enrich the learning experience for students**, but also **elevate the global profile of participating universities**. For students, joint programmes provide a unique opportunity to study in diverse cultural settings, develop new language skills, build global networks, and access wider career opportunities. For institutions, they open the doors to improved academic quality, innovative teaching, expanded research partnerships, and a stronger presence across faculties[1].

Despite these benefits, delivering and sustaining joint Master's programmes is far from straightforward. It requires significant **investments of time, resources, and coordination** among partner institutions. Management costs, for instance, are estimated to be three times higher than those of programmes run by a single institution[2]. Moreover, research shows that around half of the universities offering joint programmes have had to discontinue at least one programme due to sustainability issues[3]. Consequently, **sustainability** emerges as a key component of effective management and the most pressing challenge[4].

In addressing these issues, the European Commission (EC) has placed **strong emphasis on ensuring the long-term viability of EM Master's programmes**. The Erasmus+ Programme Guide requires consortia applying for EM funding to submit a sustainability plan during project implementation[5]. Nonetheless, many established programmes continue to receive EM support due to their demonstrated excellence and compliance with award criteria.

In this context, the present state-of-play report consolidates the **main factors influencing the overall sustainability** of EM joint master's programmes. The aim is to provide background knowledge and support expert-level discussions among participants during the annual conference **'The Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Programmes'** held in Brussels (Belgium) on November 20th and 21st, 2025[6]. Specifically, the report explores how relevant actors define a sustainable EM Master's programme; identifies key financial, institutional and academic models; analyses the factors influencing long-term sustainability; and highlights good practices to ensure the sustainability of their programmes.

[1] Verspeeten, A. and Varano, M., Pathways to practice: Designing and delivering sustainable joint master's programmes (European Association for International Education, 2019), p. 3-4: https://www.eaie.org/resource/pathways-to-practice--designing-and-delivering-sustainable-joint-master-s-programmes.html.
[2] EC's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), Erasmus Mundus joint master degrees – The story so far (Publications Office of the EU, 2016), p. 55: https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/530999.
[3] Verspeeten, A. and Varano, M., Op. cit., p. 4.
[4] 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 EU, 2017): https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/019359.
[5] EC, Erasmus+ Programme Guide (Erasmus+, 2025), p. 279: https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/erasmus-programme-guide-2025-version-2?pk_source=website&pk_medium=link&pk_campaign=pg&pk_content=pg-landing-download.
[6] EC, Erasmus Mundus Annual Conference (Erasmus Mundus Community Platform, last accessed August 2025): https://erasmus-networks.ec.europa.eu/emc/emannualconference2025.

2. METHODOLOGY

This section includes the methodological approach adopted for the elaboration of the present document.

Approach

The first step in preparing this state-of-play report involved conducting **desk research** to collect background information on the notion of sustainability and challenges in securing it within EM projects, as well as in comparable joint master's programmes more broadly. In this process, particular attention was given to two main sources: *Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus master courses* (2017)[7] and *20 years of Erasmus Mundus: Beyond Borders and Boundaries* (2024)[8].

Desk research also facilitated the identification of relevant EM and similar non-EM Master's programmes for subsequent interviews. Non-EM programmes are not subject to the same regulatory requirements as EM programmes and therefore differ in nature, particularly in terms of mobility schemes and the degree of jointness. Nevertheless, they share several features characteristic of joint Master's programmes, which render them suitable for comparative analysis and allow for the identification of good practices that may help enhance the sustainability of EM Master's programmes.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of **13 EM programmes**, which were categorised into five groups: two former EM Master's programmes sustainably continued that no longer receive EM funding but have successfully maintained operations; two concluded former EM programmes that could not or chose not to continue after funding ended; four current EM programmes operating under hybrid funding models; two Erasmus Mundus Design Measure (EMDM) programmes to explore sustainability considerations at the inception stage; and three comparable non-EM programmes to assess alternative approaches to sustaining programmes without EM support.

Selection criteria for these programmes included the proportion of self-funded students, duration of operations, level of collaboration with labour market partners, and the size of the institution's EM portfolio, ensuring a balanced representation. The interviews aimed to gather firsthand insights from coordinators regarding their experiences, key sustainability factors, and lessons learned, ultimately to share good practices for securing long-term programme viability beyond the EM funding period.

Findings from desk research and interviews were consolidated into a **survey** targeting individuals closely involved in the coordination or management of current EM Master's programme. The survey aimed to assess the current state of sustainability within these programmes by evaluating their sustainability levels, examining the implementation of sustainability plans, identifying key factors influencing long-term viability, and gathering good practices to support their ongoing success.

The survey remained open for seven weeks, yielding a total of 119 responses. After cleaning the data, **118 responses** were retained for analysis. These represented **107 current EM Master's programmes**, accounting for **50% of the 214 running EM Master's programmes** listed in the 2025 catalogue[9]. Additionally, participants came from 92 higher education institutions across 21 countries, out of which 81% were EU Member States, 10% third countries not associated to the programme, and 10% third countries associated to the programme. The three most represented countries were (1) France, with 31 responses; (2) Spain, with 13; and (3) Germany, with 11. All data collected through these activities were then integrated and analysed to incorporate the findings into the topics under research.

[7] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit.
[8] European Commission, EACEA, Ferencz, I., Kupriyanova, V. 20 years of Erasmus Mundus: Beyond Borders and Boundaries (Publications Office of the European Union, 2024): https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fa2067a3-18cb-11ef-a251-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
[9] EACEA, Erasmus Mundus Catalogue, (EACEA, last accessed August 2025): https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/scholarships/erasmus-mundus-catalogue_en.

This report is structured into **six sections and two annexes**. Following the introduction and methodology, the third section offers a brief overview of how key stakeholders define a sustainable EM Master's programme, along with the current state of sustainability in running EM programmes, based on survey responses. Section 4 presents the programmes interviewed and the categories they have been classified into. The fifth section offers a comparative analysis of these case studies, focusing on financial, institutional, and academic factors that influence programme sustainability. The sixth and final section outlines the main conclusions drawn from the report's findings. Lastly, Annex I compiles good practices implemented by consortia to enhance long-term sustainability – as identified through interviews and the survey – and Annex II provides the reader with visual "fiches" that capture key insights on sustainability practices of each case study[10].

Scope and limitations of the study

It should be noted that the scope of this report is limited to the information gathered through the methodological approach described above, providing insights into sustainability based on those findings. With the exception of a few targeted interviews conducted with representatives of former EM Master's programmes – both those that have been sustainably continued and those that have been discontinued – as well as comparable non-EM programmes, the findings primarily reflect programmes currently operating within EM funding cycles. Specific information from each programme is referenced throughout the report where relevant.

In particular, the survey responses come from active EM Master's programmes, meaning those currently operating within the 6-year EM funding cycle under an ongoing grant agreement with the EC. As a result, the sustainability landscape presented in the following section reflects only the context relevant to this specific group of programmes. Further research, beyond the scope of the current State of Play report, is advised in order to draw broader conclusions. This might include continued monitoring of programmes operating independently of EM funding, both within the EU and beyond, together with comparative studies across different geographical regions.

[10] The information presented in each fiche focuses on unique or distinguishing aspects of the programme. Additional practices that are common to the majority of programmes have not been detailed.

3. CONTEXT

This section lays the groundwork for understanding sustainability in the context of EM Master's programmes and establishes the foundations for a comprehensive reading of this report. It begins by examining how sustainability is defined by key stakeholders, drawing on information gathered through desk research and in-depth interviews, and continues with an overview of the current landscape of EM programmes' sustainability, based on EM coordinators' survey responses.

Defining sustainability in Erasmus Mundus

Sustainability is defined by EACEA as **the ability of a programme to maintain its activities and deliver quality outcomes** to its beneficiaries and other constituencies for an extended period **after the Commission's financial assistance has been terminated**[11]. More pragmatically, Verspeeten, A. and Varano, M. refer to "*a set of measures that ensure the programme's overall relevance in the mid to long term*"[12]. These framings have been strongly supported by the programme coordinators interviewed, who consistently linked sustainability to viability beyond EU funding periods[13].

In the report of a sustainability conference published by EACEA in 2017, participants concluded that sustainability should not be equated with rigidly preserving the structure established during the EM-funded period. Rather, changes and new solutions are considered integral to a programme's evolution, so long as they ensure continued added value for both institutions and students[14].

Within this broader perspective, sustainability is understood as a **holistic concept encompassing several dimensions of a programme**. Specifically, different sources agree that there are three main dimensions impacting the overall sustainability of a joint Master's degree**: financial, institutional, and academic**[15],[16],[17]. Responses from interviewees are consistent with this approach. For instance, IDEAS coordinator defined a sustainable EM Master's programme as "*one that would be financially viable in the long term (…), supported by a strong institutional backing (…) [and] capable of attracting students (…)*"[18]. Similarly, EMAI coordinator stated that, to achieve sustainability, "*the consortium must focus on three key areas: strengthening institutional collaboration and commitment; diversifying funding sources (…); [and] effective promotion of the programme*"[19].

Among these dimensions, **financial sustainability** stands out as the most consistently acknowledged driver of the long-term viability of EM Master's programmes. EACEA considers a programme to be financially sustainable when it has sufficient financial resources to switch to a self-funded model. This requires sound knowledge of the cost of each programme, devoting time to the development of a financial plan, and the identification of viable alternative sources of income[20]. Nevertheless, participants agreed that even though "*sustainability is often narrowly interpreted as referring solely to financial aspects, (…) the administrative and academic management of the programme is equally vital*"[21], as pointed out by the MER coordinator and in *20 years of Erasmus Mundus: Beyond Borders and Boundaries* (2024).

[11] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 6.
[12] Verspeeten, A. and Varano, M., Op. cit., p. 8.
[13] ALGANT, DCLead, EIMAS, EMAI and IDEAS, and LCT Interviews (2025, June-July). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes. (NTT Data, Interviewer).
[14] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Loc. cit.
[15] Verspeeten, A. and Varano, M., Op. cit., p. 7.
[16] Pruvot, E.B., Claeys-kulik, A., Estermann, T. Designing strategies for efficient funding of universities in Europe, (European University Association, 2015), p.13: https://www.eua.eu/images/designing_strategies_for_efficient_funding_of_universities_in_europe_define.pdf
[17] European Commission, EACEA, Ferencz, I., Kupriyanova, V., Op. cit., p. 51.
[18] IDEAS Interview, Op. cit.
[19] EMAI Interview, Op. cit.
[20] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p.14.
[21] ALGANT, EIMAS, EMAI, IDEAS, LCT, MER and STEPS JMD's interviews. (2025, June-July). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes. (NTT Data, Interviewer).

Institutional sustainability is the second dimension impacting the overall sustainability of an EM Master's programme. Drawing on interview responses, it may be defined as the extent to which the programme is consistently embedded within its hosting universities, along with the stability of relationships among consortium members, that enables the smooth implementation of all core functions of the EM Master's programme[22]. This encompasses decision-making, administrative management, programme visibility and promotion, curriculum development and delivery, and the efficient allocation of resources, thereby enabling the optimal functioning of the programme[23].

Academic sustainability constitutes the third dimension. This relates to the ability of programmes to maintain academic excellence, ensure the continued relevance of their curricula, and preserve their attractiveness to students and partner institutions worldwide[24]. As highlighted by the EIMAS coordinator, ensuring a steady flow of applicants and establishing a solid reputation within both the higher education sector and the job market are essential for sustainability[25].

Taken together, these three dimensions are **closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing.** Financial sustainability ensures the long-term viability of the programme and strengthens its institutional standing and attractiveness by enabling investment in critical areas such as dedicated staff for efficient administrative management, targeted promotion, and robust quality assurance mechanisms. Institutional sustainability, in turn, provides the necessary institutional support and commitment to run operations effectively, both financially and academically while promoting resource optimisation through shared infrastructures and staff expertise.

Meanwhile, academic excellence enhances visibility and reputation, securing a stable student intake, attracting new associated partners, and improving employability outcomes – ultimately reinforcing financial viability and strategic recognition within partner universities. This interdependence underscores that sustainability cannot be achieved through isolated efforts within a single dimension; it requires an **integrated, coordinated strategy** that balances and connects all three.

Finally, programme coordinators consistently stressed the importance of **commitment, vision, collaboration, and a shared sense of purpose** among those involved in the programme. These human factors serve as crucial enablers of strong performance[26] and contribute across all sustainability dimensions. This shared sense of purpose – together with diverse factors influencing the different sustainability dimensions – will be analysed more thoroughly in Section 5 - FACTORS AFFECTING SUSTAINABILITY, where the specific factors influencing each sustainability dimension are explored.

Overall, the sustainability of EM Master's programmes **is more complex than it first appears**. Beyond financial stability, it involves maintaining academic excellence and relevance, balancing national and institutional regulations, ensuring accessibility, and preserving the programmes international and interdisciplinary nature. Sustainability is a multidimensional - academic, administrative, financial, and strategic - challenge, that demands close coordination among partners and a shared long-term vision aligned with evolving higher education policies and global challenges.

[22] European Commission, EACEA, Ferencz, I., Kupriyanova, V., Op. cit., p. 51
[23] Interviews (2025, June-July). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes. (NTT Data, Interviewer).
[24] European Commission, EACEA, Ferencz, I., Kupriyanova, V., Op. cit., p. 51
[25] EIMAS Interview (2025, June). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes. (NTT Data, Interviewer).
[26] English and American Studies, and Sustainable Development Interviews (2025, June). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes (NTT Data, Interviewer).

Sustainability landscape in Erasmus Mundus programmes

While sustainability has long been recognised as a matter of critical importance, the present political context highlights an increasing concern for this issue. In light of the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (2028-2034), the Commission aims to enhance the efficient use of resources[27]. In this sense, encouraging EM Master's programmes to identify, exchange, and implement good practices can help them ensure their continuity beyond EM funding periods, enabling the redirection of funds towards new joint programmes and initiatives.

To fully understand the extent to which sustainability is pursued and achieved, and to provide a solid foundation for subsequent analysis, the survey began with questions designed to capture a comprehensive picture of the **current state of sustainability in EM Master's programmes**. Results are presented in this section[28].**The survey responses cover 107 (50%) of the 214 active EM programmes listed in the EM 2025 Catalogue**[29], which is a sample that adequately represents the target audience of this analysis. It is important to note that nearly all of these programmes have an ongoing grant agreement. As indicated in the glossary, EM funding is granted for a duration of six academic years, covering at least four editions of the programme. Programmes that have been granted an additional three years under the EM Action without funding are also included in the target audience.

Out of the 107 programmes, 23% have been running for between 0 and 2 years; 25% for between 3 and 5 years; 21% for between 6 and 10; and 31% for more than 10 years. This distribution is relatively even, indicating that the survey provides a balanced representation of programmes, with no age group significantly over- or under-represented.

To further contextualise the responses, the survey asked participants whether their programmes had been able to operate without EM funding at any given moment or whether, on the contrary, they had always been funded by EM. Overall, 49% of the participating programmes reported to have operated without EM funding during at least one edition, while the other 51% indicated to have always been funded by the EM initiative.

Looking at the programmes that have been able to operate without EM funding, the findings reveal that a significant majority (71%) did so between EM funding phases, while 17% operated independently prior to receiving EM funding, and 12% of surveyed programmes reported continuing to operate without it after having run at least one edition without EM funding (see *Figure 1*). Among these programmes, those operating independently between EM funding phases tend to be long-standing programmes, whereas no clear patterns emerge for the other categories.

[27] EC, The 2028-2034 EU budget for a stronger Europe (EC, last accessed October 2025): https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/eu-budget-2028-2034_en
[28] Please note that percentages provided for this purpose hereinafter have been rounded to the nearest whole number for readability.
[29] EACEA, (2025). Erasmus Mundus Catalogue: https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/scholarships/erasmus-mundus-catalogue_en

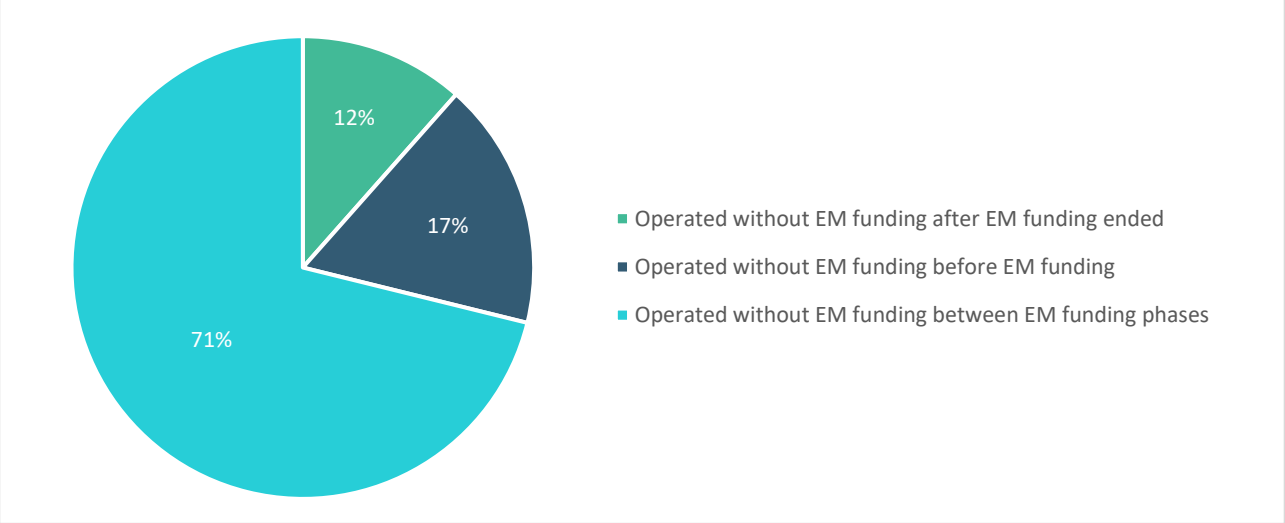

Figure 1. Periods in which programmes have operated without EM funding.
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes'

Regarding the duration of non-funded operations among surveyed programmes, most of those that reported operating independently between EM funding phases did so for a relatively short period – typically between 1 and 3 years. However, a smaller share sustained operations for 4 to 6 years, indicating a good level of self-sufficiency and resilience in maintaining their activities without continuous EM support. Finally, among programmes that reported operating independently after EM funding ended, the duration of self-sufficiency does not exceed 2 years in any case. While some of these programmes may transition into self-funded models in the coming years, they are still running EM programmes with non-funded editions but with cohorts including EM scholarship holders and with an ongoing grant agreement with EACEA. Interestingly, the longest periods of self-sufficiency – 7 and 14 years – are observed in programmes that operated independently before receiving EM funding.

In general, the survey results indicate **self-sustained operations are feasible and have been a reality for a great proportion of programmes.** However, these periods have generally been brief, as most programmes have been awarded another round of EM funding, placing them in the category of programmes that have operated independently *between* EM funding phases.

Given its importance, sustainability was introduced as part of the EM award criteria as of 2009[30]. Various sources, including EACEA, stress the importance of programmes developing a sustainability plan[31],[32], which explains why it has been included as one of the *main expected deliverables during project implementation* for EM-funded programmes in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide[33]. In this regard, the survey aimed to explore the extent to which sustainability plans have been developed and implemented during the six-year project funded periods of active EM Master's programmes.

Surprisingly, **the majority of programmes still lack a sustainability plan (52%)**, compared to 42% that have one, while 6% were unsure. Among those without plan, 64% have always relied on EM funding, whereas 67% of those that do have a sustainability plan in place have been able to operate independently. Regarding implementation levels, only 16% of the programmes with a sustainability plan reported to have implemented it fully during their funding periods, while the majority (64%) reported to have implemented it partially and 20% have not yet implemented it.

[30] EC, Erasmus+ Programme Guide. Op. cit., p. 279.
[31] Verspeeten, A. and Varano, M., Op. cit., p. 7.
[32] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 9.
[33] EC, Erasmus+ Programme Guide. Loc. cit.

Additionally, the data suggests that older programmes are more aware of sustainability issues and the need for forward planning. This points to a **correlation between programme longevity and stronger attention to long-term sustainability,** which may contribute to reducing reliance on EM funding over time. However, other factors – explored in the following sections – also play a crucial role in ensuring sustainability.

Lastly, survey respondents were asked to indicate the approximate number of years they would need until being ready to operate independently. *Figure 2* illustrates the results.

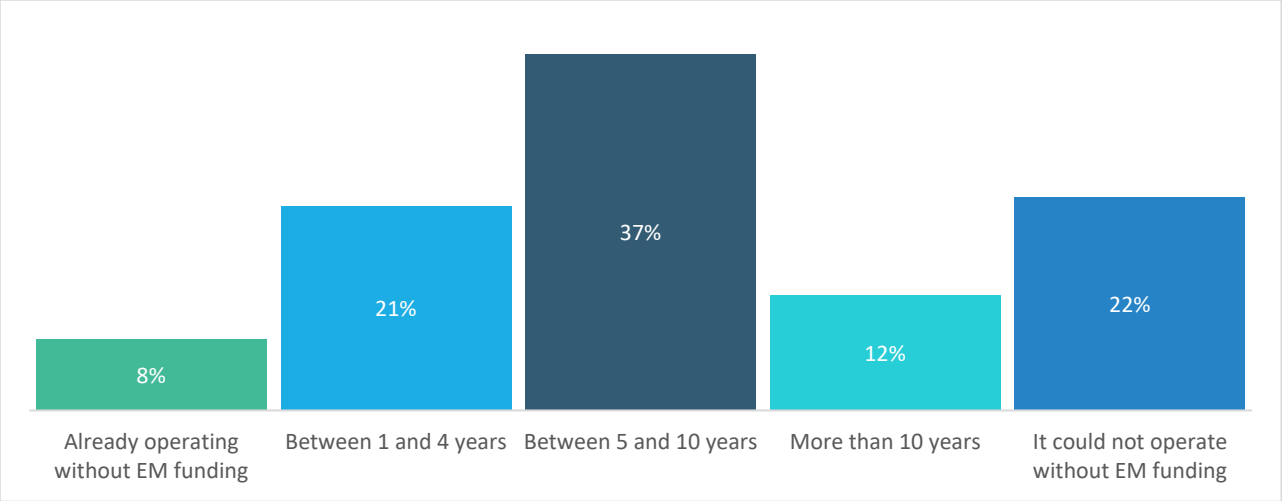

Figure 2. Years needed for self-sufficiency, sorted in ascending order of years.
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes'

The findings on the number of years needed to achieve self-sufficiency suggest that, while sustainability is currently envisioned as a medium- to long-term goal for almost half of the surveyed programmes, there is a significant percentage that foresees being prepared for self-sustained operations in the upcoming years. Encouragingly, all active EM programmes that reported being able to operate independently *after* some editions without EM funding indicated that they could achieve self-sufficiency in the short term.

When analysing this information alongside previous responses, the data shows that among programmes reporting to be already organising editions without EM scholarships or needing between 1 and 4 years for self-sufficiency, 59% have sustainability plans. Conversely, 50% of the programmes indicating they could not operate without EM funding do not have sustainability plans in place. This further supports previous findings suggesting that **forward planning can positively contribute to the readiness** of programmes to operate independently – although other factors may also shape this outcome.

Additionally, most programmes reporting to be already organising editions without EM scholarships or needing between 1 and 4 years to do so have been running for more than 6 years. These findings suggest that the experience accumulated over time contributes to the consolidation of more robust and sustainable structures and practices, while also strengthening the programme's reputation among students and applicants, ultimately enabling programmes to operate independently.

Taken together, the results provide a preliminary assessment of sustainability among active EM Master's programmes. The data confirms a potential association between programme longevity, experience with non-funded editions, and proactive planning for long-term sustainability. This supports the greater readiness of longstanding programmes to run independently – highlighting the **importance of accumulated experience in building sustainability**. Lastly, most programmes estimate that 5 to 10 years are needed to achieve self-sufficiency, underscoring that **sustainability is a medium- to long-term goal** for many.

Finally, additional analysis conducted by integrating complementary data provided by EACEA explored the relationship between the disciplinary area of the EM Master's programmes having responded to the study and their estimated time to become self-sufficient. The 107 programmes were grouped into two broad disciplinary families: Science & Engineering (66), and Social Sciences & Humanities (41). Of these, 21% of Science & Engineering programmes stated being unable to operate without EM funding compared to 32% within Social Sciences & Humanities. Among those reporting specific timeframes to reach self-sufficiency, **the estimated number of years required to operate independently was identical across the two disciplinary families** (see *Figure 3*). Taken together, these two findings suggest that while the Science & Engineering programmes surveyed are slightly more confident about their ability to operate without EM funding, the field of study of a given programme currently reliant on EM funding is not a factor which influences their view of how long it would require to become self-sustainable.

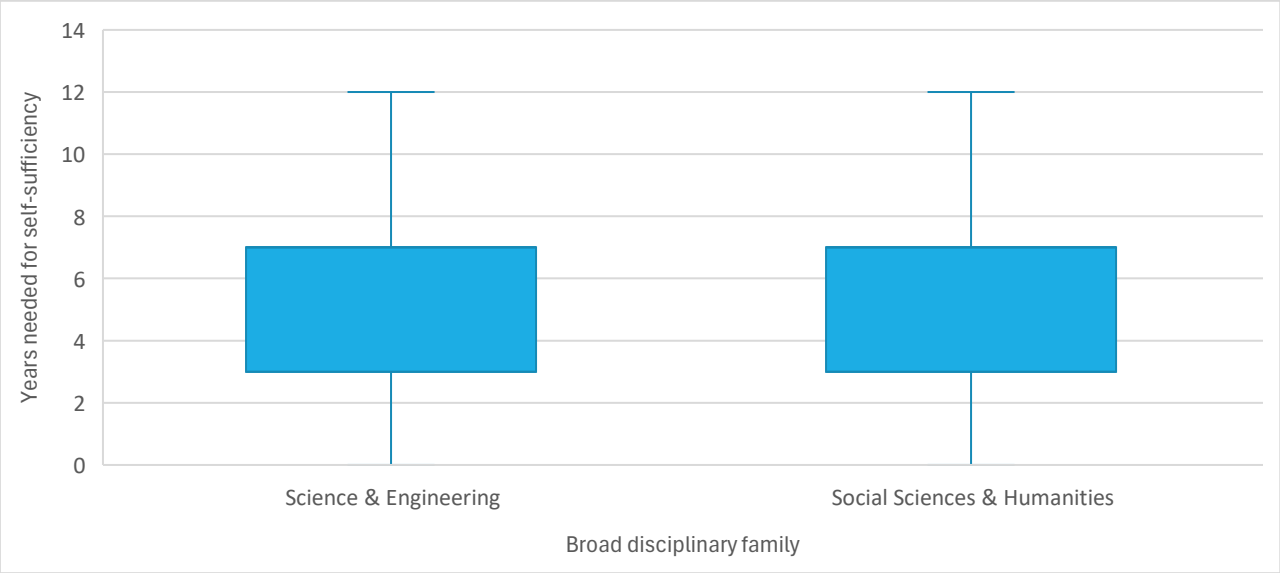

Figure 3. Years needed for self-sufficiency for the two disciplinary families.
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master' and EACEA's internal databases

4. CASE STUDIES

This section presents the programmes interviewed to gather insights for the subsequent comparative analysis of the main factors affecting sustainability. The programmes have been classified into five categories, allowing for a better understanding of their distinct nature and features. The categories are described below:

Former Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes sustainably continued: Programmes that were originally funded and supported by the EM Action but no longer receive this external funding. They are now fully self-funded and have no intention of reapplying for EM support in the near future. This category includes BIM A+, coordinated by the Universidade do Minho, and ALGANT, coordinated by the Université de Bordeaux.

Concluded former Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes: Programmes that have been unable or have chosen not to continue operating beyond the EM funding period. This category includes EIMAS, coordinated by the Universität Bayreuth, and DC Lead, coordinated by Unive Paris-Lodron-Universität Salzburg.

Current Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes: Programmes that are currently receiving EM funding and support, or that have recently applied for EM funding but have not (yet) been renewed. These programmes expect to continue operating and may consider reapplying in the next call. This category includes STEPS JMD, coordinated by the Universidad de Oviedo; MER, coordinated by the Universidad del País Vasco; EMAI, coordinated by the Universitat Pompeu Fabra; and LCT, coordinated by the Universität des Saarland.

Erasmus Mundus Design Measures: Projects that are currently in the design phase and have been awarded EM seed funding for the development of a potential future EMJM. This category includes IDEAS, coordinated by the Universitat Rovira i Virgili, and DHJM, coordinated by the Sveučilište u Zadru.

Comparable non-EM Master's programmes: Master's programmes involving an international consortium, mobility schemes, and a significant degree of jointness outside the Erasmus Mundus scheme. These programmes provide valuable insights beyond the EM community and contribute to enriching the subsequent comparative analysis. This category includes EMCC, coordinated by the Università di Palermo; as well as Sustainable Development and English and American Studies, both coordinated by the Universität Graz.

The main insights gathered from the interviews with the EM coordinators of the programmes studied are presented in **ANNEX II – Case studies fiches** as visual case study "fiches"[34].

[34] The information presented in each fiche focuses on unique or distinguishing aspects of the programme. Additional practices that are common to the majority of programmes have not been detailed.

5. FACTORS AFFECTING SUSTAINABILITY

In the context of continuous development in which EM programmes operate[35], this chapter explores the factors that affect their sustainability beyond the EM funding periods. For the purpose of this report – as previously defined – sustainability encompasses the financial and institutional dimensions of EM programmes, as well as their academic excellence and overall attractiveness.

This chapter examines the impact of various factors across the different dimensions of sustainability. It highlights the importance survey participants attribute to different factors that ensure the sustainability of their programmes and presents good practices identified that have potential to help strengthen sustainability in each area. References to the previously described programmes allow for comparisons across case studies, fostering contextualisation and knowledge sharing. For more detailed information of the programmes studied, please refer to the case study fiches in **ANNEX II – Case studies fiches**.

Financial sustainability

While EM Master's programmes promote academic excellence and the internationalisation of universities [36] within and beyond the EU, they also typically involve higher costs than national programmes for aspects such as joint curriculum development, mobility, assessments, and administration [37]. In this context, EM funding plays an essential role in launching joint Master's programmes [38], helping to overcome the limited financial resources available for their initial development[39]. However, as with other excellence schemes – and in line with the ambition of fostering self-sustainable programmes – EM funding should be considered as a time-limited initiative to drive change, rather than a permanent funding mechanism [40]. Consequently, programmes are eventually expected to secure sufficient funding to continue operating independently.

Information retrieved from interviews revealed **five main alternative funding sources to EM funding**, while some are seen as more suitable than others when pursuing sustainability. As part of the survey, respondents were asked to select up to three primary funding sources they believed could ensure the financial sustainability of their programmes in the absence of EM funding. *Figure 4* presents the percentage distribution of responses for each funding source, illustrating participants' preferences for achieving financial sustainability beyond the EM funding periods.

The majority of survey respondents (81%) selected stable and sufficient tuition fee income as the preferred alternative funding source for achieving sustainability, which also aligns with the most secured alternative financial source across the case studies. Industry partnerships and national government subsidies followed, each chosen by around 41-46% of participants. Institutional contributions from both home and partner universities were considered next, while other funding sources – such as academic partnerships and financial support from foundations and NGOs – were mentioned less frequently.

[35] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 5.
[36] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 20.
[37] Becker, R., Joint Programmes from A to Z: A reference guide for practitioners (FaBoTo+ project, 2020), p.57: https://impea.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Joint-Programmes-from-A-to-Z-Report-2020.pdf.
[38] BIM A+ Interview. (2025, June). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes. (NTT Data, Interviewer).
[39] DHJM Interview. (2025, July). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes. (NTT Data, Interviewer).
[40] E. B. Pruvot, Estermann, T., Claeys-kulik, A., Op. cit., p.15.

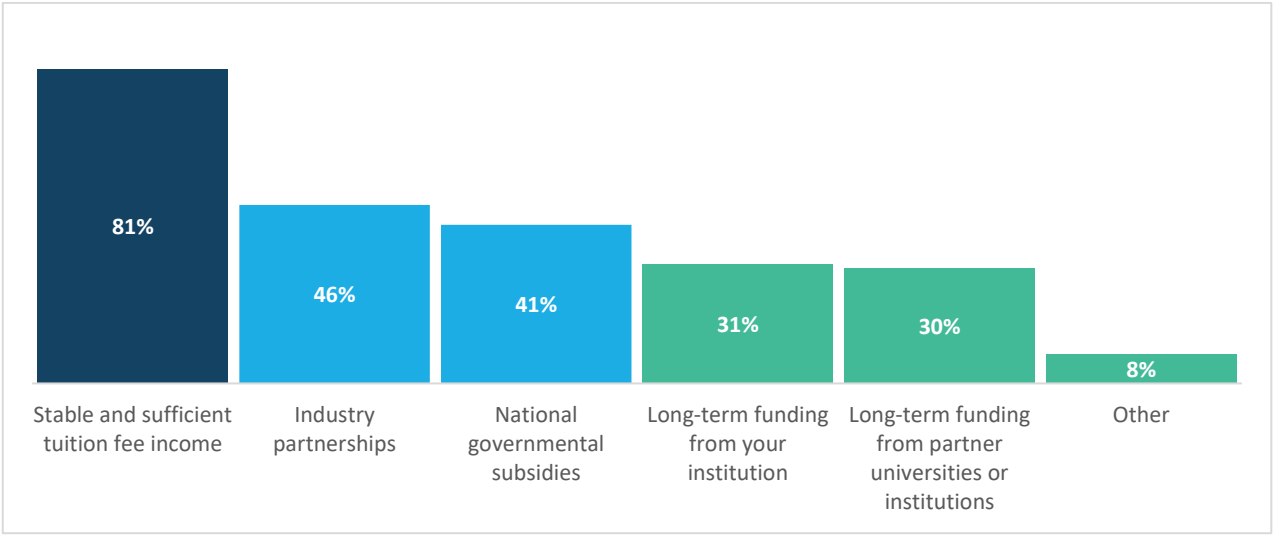

Figure 4. Primary funding sources in the pursuit of sustainability beyond EM funding periods.
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes'

However, while these results reflect the initial preferences for funding sources beyond EM funding, interviews also revealed that the implementation of an effective funding system – and the ability to secure the preferred financial sources – is influenced by various financial factors. **Six key financial factors affecting sustainability were identified through the interviews**. To assess the perceived impact of each on sustainability, survey participants were asked to select up to three financial factors they considered most influential for achieving sustainability in the absence of Erasmus+ funding. *Figure 5* shows the percentage of participants who selected each factor.

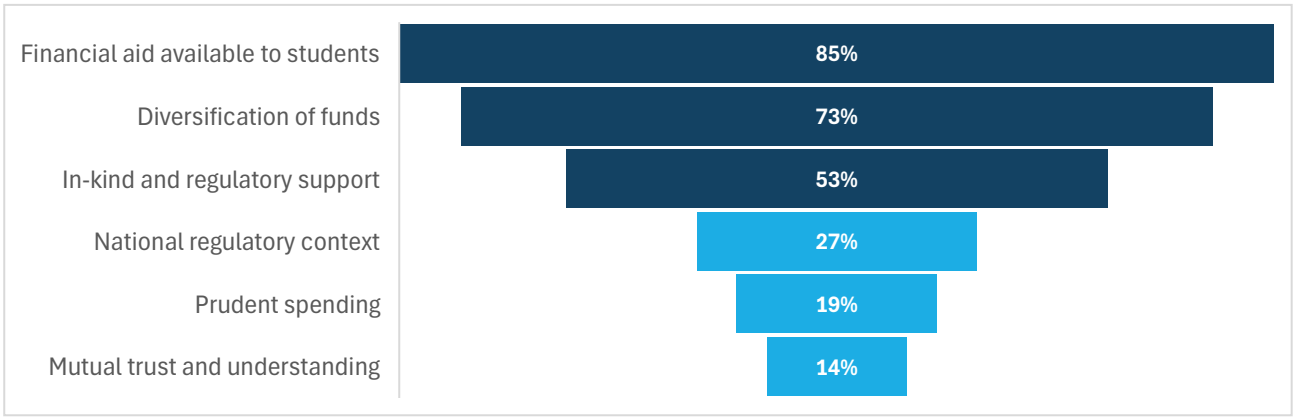

Figure 5. Financial factors affecting sustainability.
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes'

Financial aid available to students (85%), diversification of funds (73%), together with institutional in-kind and regulatory support (53%) were identified as the most influential financial factors for long-term sustainability. By contrast, national regulatory context (27%), prudent spending and minimisation of costs (19%), and mutual trust and understanding (14%) were the least selected financial factors, indicating a lower perceived impact on sustainability.

The following subsections present detailed findings for these factors, **grouped according to the level of influence indicated by survey participants**. Additionally, potential measures that EM Master's programmes could consider implementing to further develop financial sustainability are outlined.

Most influential financial factors

The three most influential factors considered when building a sustainable funding scheme are closely linked to **enhancing the programme's financial independence and identifying the most suitable funding model for the programme**. While providing sufficient non-EM financial aid to students increases the number of self-funded students willing and able to invest in the programme, diversifying funds reduces reliance on a single stream of financial support. Additionally, institutional in-kind and regulatory support help lower overall programme costs from the outset and facilitate some income streams. Together, these measures contribute to establishing a financially sustainable system that is less vulnerable to external fluctuations or uncertainties and capable of covering all operational expenses.

Financial aid available to students

Providing financial aid aims to make the programme financially accessible to students[41], ensuring a steady flow of students whose participation costs are covered, at least partially. All programmes included as case studies in this report provide some level of non-EM financial support in addition to EM scholarships for self-funded students, in an effort to secure the most preferred funding source: stable and sufficient tuition fee income.

Although alternative non-EM financial support might not be as substantial as EM scholarships, the 2024 impact study already showed that most EM programmes had explored other forms of securing additional resources for students[42]. Such support may take the form of tuition waivers, scholarships, mobility grants, or guidance in applying for national or institutional funding. However, **the availability and scale of this aid varies across the programmes studied.**

Interviewed former EM Master's programmes sustainably continued tend to offer a wide range of financial aid options, usually granted by the consortium on the basis of academic merit and programme capacity. Current EM programmes also provide additional non-EM financial support. For example, EMAI secured institutional backing during its early operational years to offer fee reductions, while more established programmes such as MER and LCT continue this practice through tuition fee waivers, scholarships, and mobility grants from national, institutional, and consortium sources. Interestingly, **mobility aid is especially considered by EMDM projects and non-EM programmes**, with Erasmus+ mobility grants as a key source of financial support in the latter.

The additional support provided to EU students in some programmes, such as BIM A+ and EMAI is also worth noting. This approach ensures that financial support fosters access not only to students from less financially capable countries but also extends it to local students, attracting a broader pool of prospective self-funded participants.

Lastly, programmes also explored opportunities to obtain **financial support from industries** and research institutions, which can provide additional scholarships or grants to cover tuition fees or mobility costs[43]. While support from foundations and research institutions often materialises in the form of scholarships or paid research theses – especially for research-oriented programmes such as EIMAS, ALGANT or EMCC – this is less commonly the case for industry. While industry partnerships were identified as the second most preferred funding source for achieving sustainability, **securing financial aid from industry was reported as challenging and typically dependant on other factors.**

Specifically, hurdles are that research-oriented topics lead students toward academic career paths (e.g., EIMAS, DCLead, ALGANT), the lack of a tradition of private sector contributing to education (e.g., Sustainable Development), or the maturity level of the programme requiring time to build strong partnerships (e.g., EMAI). While BIM A+ is the only programme studied that has secured industry-

[41] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 20.
[42] EACEA, Ferencz, I., Kupriyanova, V., Op. cit., p. 50.
[43] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Loc. cit.

sponsored scholarships, uptake is limited due to specific national language requirements as well as work commitments that students often decline.

Nevertheless, some programmes reported that **indirect industry support, such as paid internships (e.g., EMAI, STEPS JMD) or part-time jobs, proved easier to secure**. Some programmes emphasised its value in providing students with income while simultaneously showcasing their academic excellence. As the EMAI coordinator explained: *"Internships are a key opportunity to demonstrate student excellence in real-world settings. We hope such positive experiences in industry will encourage partners to increase their financial support by providing other types of funding"*[44]. Similarly, a survey participant highlighted their efforts in this area: *"We persuade our industrial advisory board members and associate partners to provide part-time jobs for self-funded students"*. Other coordinators noted that such support had limited impact on overall programme viability (e.g., STEPS JMD).

Diversification of funds

Survey participants rated funding diversification as the second most influential factor to strengthen financial stability and help ensure viability beyond the EM funding period. When designing the funding system of the programme, consortia should seek to draw on multiple funding mechanisms to avoid excessive dependence on a single source and foster their long-term sustainability[45]

All programmes demonstrate some degree of funding diversification, typically combining tuition fee income with institutional, national, or EU grants – primarily EM funding. This mix reduces the risk associated with the failure or disappearance of any single funding source [46],while boosting independent financing through self-funded students. However, **both the degree of diversification and the share of tuition fee income** within the overall financial model vary across programmes, with higher levels generally correlating to greater sustainability**.**

Ensuring diversification, with tuition fees as one of the primary sources, may help **mitigate the risks of disruption caused by instability or political shifts** in European, national, or institutional funding schemes. In particular, past transformations and the ongoing evolution of public funding models have increased pressure on the sustainability of university financing and underscored the need to explore alternative sources of income. While some programmes appear stable thanks to national education funding (e.g., English and American Studies) and others benefit from targeted financial support for certain activities or events (e.g., LCT), , most reported concerns about the uncertainties of these financial sources in the long term. For instance, one of the participants in the EMCC interview noted that *"changes in university leadership, national governments, or even decisions at the EU level could jeopardise the programme's sustainability"*[47]. Similarly, the MER coordinator explained that *"the EM support arrived at a critical moment when many funding sources in both the Spanish and Basque systems were being discontinued and no longer available. It allowed us to sustain and further develop the programme"*[48]. *Another coordinator noted that* : *"while we currently have support for running the programme from the Flemish government, it will change in the near future"*[49].

Additionally, diversified funding systems **might contribute to ensuring sufficient and stable human resources allocated to the programme**[50]. Conversely, the absence of alternative funding often results in insufficient staffing once the main financial scheme ceases. This was the case for EIMAS, where the coordinator's position was not backed by any alternative funding source, meaning that when EU funding ended, the role – and by extension, the programme's operational capacity – was no longer viable.

[44] EMAI Interview, Op. cit.
[45] E. B. Pruvot, Estermann, T., Claeys-kulik, A., Op. cit., p. 18.
[46] E. B. Pruvot, Estermann, T., Claeys-kulik, A., Op. cit., p. 9.
[47] EMCC Interview. (2025, June). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes. (NTT Data, Interviewer).
[48] MER Interview. (2025, June). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes. (NTT Data, Interviewer).
[49] EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes'. (2025, July).
[50] MER Interview, Op. cit.

Similarly, the lack of sufficient alternative funding sources supporting the STEPS JMD programme leads to limited human resources, hindering the efficient management and operation of its activities.

Institutional in-kind and regulatory support

Institutional in-kind and regulatory support can play a crucial role in **reducing overall operational costs from the outset and enhancing the efficient allocation of funding to the programme** through coordinated assistance at both institutional and national levels.

This factor is closely tied to the level of institutional commitment, and thus related to the dimension of institutional sustainability. Although this type of support from partner institutions **does not involve direct financial contributions to the programme**, it enables consortia to minimise costs and reduce the financial burden on self-funded students, impacting their financial viability. Similarly, Blakemore & Burquel (2012) note in their Handbook of Excellence that securing institutional commitment can provide valuable in-kind resources that strengthen the financial sustainability of the consortium beyond core funding and substantially lower running costs. However, the nature of institutional in-kind and regulatory support may vary significantly.

Some former EM Master's programmes sustainably continued are allowed to **allocate tuition fee income directly to programme operations** rather than having it largely absorbed by the host institutions (e.g., BIM A+), enabling investment in equipment and necessary materials, while also providing dedicated, **furnished classrooms** from the institution. In the case of ALGANT, the highly committed coordinating institution allocates additional time and resources to safeguard the programme's viability and to maintain its established financial model. Similarly, sustainably running EM programmes like MER or STEPS JMD benefit from in-kind support through **administrative positions dedicated to the programme**, provided by the coordinating institution at no cost to the consortium. MER, for example, has redirected the funds saved in this way toward internal mobility grants for self-funded students. Some non-EM Master's programmes also receive institutional support through dedicated administrative staff for the management of joint programmes (e.g., English and American Studies). However, survey respondents noted that securing such indirect financial support may be difficult during periods of severe budgetary constraints or when legal institutional frameworks limit the use of coordination funds and savings generated by the programme.

Table 1. Key Takeaways: Most influential financial factors.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Providing at least some kind of financial aid to students enhances programme affordability, attracting more self-funded participants and increasing overall revenue. • Financial diversification is central to long-term sustainability. • There is further potential to secure financial support from industry, which remains limited due to barriers such as programme focus, lack of tradition, language requirements, or programme maturity. • Paid internships and part-time jobs are more feasible than direct industry funding and can indirectly support sustainability. • Higher funding diversification and greater reliance on tuition fees – identified as the most reliable and preferred funding source – generally correlate with stronger sustainability. • Diversifying funding sources reduces dependence on regional, national, or EU schemes, minimising vulnerability to political and institutional changes. • Funding diversification can help secure stable human resources for programme management. • In-kind and regulatory support help minimise operational costs and enhance the efficient allocation of funding to the programme.

Least influential financial factors

The lower selection of the remaining three financial factors may be explained by their limited influence on the choice of the programme's funding model, affecting instead its **financial management during implementation**. While the national regulatory context, along with prudent spending and cost minimisation, primarily contribute to efficient financial administration, mutual trust and understanding among partner universities can further strengthen collaboration, enabling the consortium to manage finances effectively and address emerging economic challenges.

National regulatory context

The **national regulatory framework of partner institutions** can influence the long-term sustainability of the programme, primarily by **ensuring the efficient collection of tuition fees across the consortium.** Partner universities may be subject to diverse national funding models and realities[51]. These should be considered from the outset to understand the legal conditions affecting the funding system and agree on appropriate tuition fee levels for students at each partner university[52] – bearing in mind their price-sensitive nature[53]. In this sense, the DC Lead interview participant emphasised the national legal framework implications by stating: "*make a wise choice of partner universities taking into account their national regulatory context as it can significantly affect the programme's overall expenses and affordability"*[54].

This factor is particularly relevant in countries such as Germany and Austria, where publicly funded institutions are either prohibited from charging tuition fees or restricted to imposing only minimal charges. Such regulatory diversity may have important consequences for participation costs and for the efficient allocation of the budget[55]. Despite these challenges, some programmes have successfully addressed these regulatory differences by adopting good practices [56] (e.g., EMCC, programmes participating in the survey) that allow them to benefit from diverse tuition fee policies worldwide[57], enhancing jointness and collaboration among higher education institutions.

Prudent spending and minimisation of costs

Ensuring prudent spending of the programme's budget and making efforts to minimise costs across the consortium are essential to optimising financial management. Prudent spending requires making **careful decisions on how to allocate funds to maximise their impact or reserve them for major needs**. As the BIM A+ coordinator noted, *"cost minimisation often demands creativity and problem-solving skills"*[58].

This becomes **particularly relevant during the transition from the EM funding period to a self-sustained model**[59]. As survey participants highlighted, additional costs specific to joint programmes – such as expenses for jointness, in-person meetings, marketing, mobility schemes, joint activities, and summer schools – must be carefully analysed to determine how best to invest resources and ensure sufficient financial capacity beyond the EM funding period. Common strategies for cost minimisation identified through the survey and interviews include limiting in-person meetings to reduce travel and accommodation expenses, efficiently coordinating the schedules and logistics of joint events and annual

[51] EACEA, Ferencz, I. and Kupriyanova, V., Op. cit., p. 50.
[52] Becker, R., Op. cit., p. 59
[53] DCLead Interview. (2025, July). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes. (NTT Data, Interviewer).
[54] DCLead Interview, Op. cit.
[55] EIMAS Interview, Op. cit.
[56] See Annex I for further insight into the related good practices implemented.
[57] Verspeeten, A. and Varano, M., Op. cit., p. 12.
[58] BIM A+ Interview, Op. cit.
[59] ALGANT Interview. (2025, June). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes. (NTT Data, Interviewer).

graduation ceremonies, and seeking ways to limit specific teaching and registration costs – often by adopting hybrid teaching formats (e.g., MER, Sustainable Development, English and American Studies).

However, programme coordinators also cautioned that cost minimisation can sometimes **come at the expense of scaling back some essential activities and core features of EM programmes**. Reducing costs without compromising key areas such as joint procedures, joint degree delivery, mobility opportunities[60], and relationship-building initiatives can be particularly challenging once EM funding ends. Case studies further illustrate that non-EM Master's programmes often omit these features in order to reduce costs – for example by limiting mobility schemes, reducing joint procedures, or decreasing the number of in-person meetings held each year.

Mutual trust and understanding between partners

Evidence shows that **resource distribution varies across programmes depending on the level of trust among partners and their foundational agreements**. Some programmes allocate resources according to actual costs incurred (e.g., EIMAS), others based on the number of students hosted (e.g., BIM A+), while others apply a combination of both criteria (e.g., EMAI). By contrast, non-EM Master's programmes often manage their finances separately, reflecting fewer joint procedures established (e.g., English and American Studies, Sustainable Development). Additionally, survey participants highlighted a more trust-based approach adopted in certain cases, where budgets are distributed equally across consortium members – an approach described by one participant as following the principle *"money follows the student"*[61].

Overall, while these three factors may indirectly contribute to long-term financial sustainability by facilitating efficient financial management, they **must always be accompanied by good practices that ensure stable funding sources** directly supporting programme operations. Programmes such as DC Lead demonstrate that the inability to secure sufficient additional funding – even in the presence of a trustful consortium atmosphere and accumulated reserves – can lead to the cessation of operations once the EM funding ends.

Table 2. Key Takeaways: Least influential financial factors.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The different national regulatory frameworks influencing long-term sustainability – especially how tuition fee collection systems are implemented across partner institutions – affect the financial management of programmes and should be taken into consideration from the outset.
- Understanding the financial realities of each university and establishing clear distribution agreements are key to ensuring efficient financial management and contributing to the programme's long-term financial viability.
- Mutual trust among partner universities enhances collaboration, supports efficient financial management, and shapes resource allocation systems.
- Prudent spending and cost minimisation improve financial management and resource allocation, particularly relevant during the transition to a self-funded model.
- Cost reductions may compromise essential activities and high-impact procedures of EM programmes, especially those linked to joint and mobility-related initiatives.
- These factors improve financial management but cannot compensate for insufficient funding when ensuring long-term sustainability.

[60] EIMAS Interview, Op. cit.
[61] EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes'. Op. cit.

Potential measures to implement

Preliminary results from the desk research and interviews enabled us to identify a set of general measures that could be implemented in EM Master's programmes to ensure their financial viability in the absence of EM funding.

In the survey, participants were asked to select up to three of these measures that they considered they should implement for ensuring financial sustainability after the EM funding period ends. *Figure 6* shows the proportion of respondents who selected each measure, offering insights into their perceived effectiveness for supporting long-term financial viability.

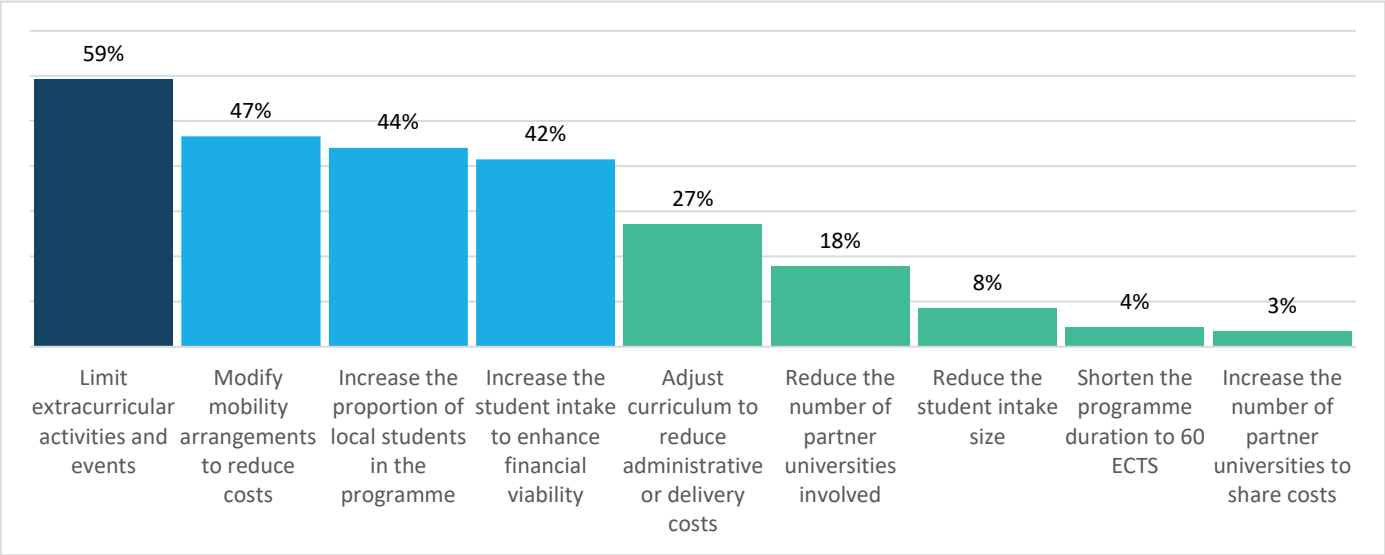

Figure 6. Measures to ensure financial viability in the absence of EM funding.
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes'

The most frequently chosen measures – particularly the proposed limitation of extracurricular activities and events, modification of mobility arrangements – **may conflict with the core features of the EM programmes**, which position them as excellence-based and unique in the European higher education landscape. This prompts consideration of potential measures to implement could influence the identity of EM Master' programmes . This raises the question of what would remain of the EM identity of the programme should these measures be implemented.

Measures such as adjusting the curriculum (including shortening the programme duration to a one-year format), and reducing the student intake were selected much less frequently. Only one clear revenue-generating measure – linked to fund diversification – was identified during the preparatory phase, that of increasing the student intake, which features in fourth place. From the data, it is not clear whether increasing the proportion of local students in the programme would be a cost-saving or a revenue-generating measure. Similarly, reducing the number of partner universities, which ranks sixth in frequency, is not clearly associated with either cost minimisation or strengthening the mutual trust and understanding within consortia. Finally, the idea of cost-sharing by increasing the number of partner universities was the least frequently selected measure.

These survey responses are purely exploratory and require further discussion, contextualisation and development. For context-specific good practices that have already been actually implemented (as identified through the interviews and answers to open-ended survey questions), we refer the reader to **ANNEX I - Good practices to enhance long-term sustainability.**

Institutional sustainability

The complexity of sustainability relies on joint effort across consortia[62], particularly within the institutional dimension of EM programmes. From the inception stage, consortia need to engage with their home universities' administrations and cooperate effectively with partner universities to ensure the programme is well embedded within each institution[63]. At this early stage, it is crucial to **foster supportive conditions within each institution** that enable progress and adaptability, allowing the programme to grow and achieve its long long-term goals[64].

The literature reviewed and insights from interview participants point to several factors that may affect the institutional dimension of EM programme sustainability. To assess their relevance, EM coordinators participating in the survey were asked to rank four key factors based on their perceived influence on programme sustainability. *Table 3* shows the weighted results.

Table 3. Weighted institutional factors affecting sustainability.

Institutional factor	Ranked 1	Ranked 2	Ranked 3	Ranked 4	Total weight
Institutional commitment and recognition of the programme	208	87	56	9	360
Personal commitment and motivation of the staff involved	176	78	58	19	331
Trust and collaboration among partner institutions	48	93	70	40	251
Institutional structure	40	96	52	50	238

Source: EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes'

Most respondents identified **institutional commitment and recognition** as the most influential institutional factor affecting sustainability**,** closely followed by **personal commitment and motivation of the staff involved.** By contrast, **trust and collaboration among partner institutions**, as well as **institutional structures**, were considered to have less of an impact on the long-term sustainability of the programme, with a substantial difference in weighted responses.

As in the previous section, the detailed findings for these factors are outlined in the following subsections, organised by the level of influence reported by survey participants. This section also presents measures that could be implemented to foster institutional sustainability.

Most influential institutional factors

The institutional commitment and strategic recognition of the programme, along with the personal commitment and motivation of staff, were identified by survey participants as the most influential institutional factors. Together, these interlinked components are essential for the long-term sustainability of EM programmes: institutional support secures operational continuity within the hosting universities, while committed human resources ensure the effective delivery of daily operations.

[62] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 26.
[63] Gallerano, A., Bertilorenzi, M., and Thiene, M., Interview. (2024). Erasmus Mundus and the notion of jointness. (NTT Data, Interviewer).
[64] LCT Interview. (2025, July). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes. (NTT Data, Interviewer).

Institutional commitment and recognition of the programme

Interview participants highlighted the importance of **institutional backing** for the sustained development of EM programmes. In this sense, the English and American Studies coordinator noted that during programme development one of the most important factors was to *"secure strong institutional support",* while the EIMAS coordinator similarly highlighted *"Ensure institutional support and commitment from your central university"*. However, achieving institutional backing usually **requires programmes to be strategically recognised within the institution**.

Strategically, one of the key goals of EM programmes is to foster the internationalisation of higher education institutions (HEIs) making their development and growth a top priority for some universities in pursuit of this objective[65]. These programmes add value to the institution by promoting knowledge exchange within a multicultural environment of students and lecturers, broadening the scope of research, and introducing innovative teaching approaches. Moreover, cultural exchanges significantly enhance the visibility and reputation of academic institutions across borders[66]. In this context, survey participants further underscored the **strategic relevance of EM programmes**, describing them as *"catalysts of education reform"* and *"good case examples"* within their institutions.

However, it is crucial that these contributions are recognised as part of achieving the institution's strategic goals by both the central administration (e.g. rectorates) and the faculty level. Such recognition helps **build strong commitment across the various hierarchical layers of the institution.** The case of EIMAS illustrates the importance of this dual commitment: despite strong faculty enthusiasm and dedication, the absence of support from central university leadership ultimately undermined the programme's long-term viability.

In practice, securing the strategic recognition of the programme and building institutional commitment **often translates into substantial in-kind institutional support**. The financial, human and administrative resources provided by the institution can greatly enhance the financial sustainability of the programme – as mentioned in Institutional in-kind and regulatory support –, facilitate the achievement of programme goals, and the effective delivery of operational activities[67]. Across the case studies, several examples highlight how strong institutional commitment results in meaningful support. Programmes such as BIM A+ and EMCC are regarded as relevant contributors to their university's internationalisation goals, gaining high visibility within the institution and collaborating with the institution for conducting promotional efforts. Universities can strengthen communication with partners and external stakeholders, contributing to the sustainability of their activities[68]. Additionally, BIM A+ together with other highly sustainable programmes such as ALGANT or MER have successfully translated strategic recognition into tangible in-kind support from partner universities, helping to maintain daily operations.

Strategic recognition and institutional commitment often encourage the surveyed universities to **host additional joint programmes** – fostering the creation of new programmes –, and the **allocation of common resources** to support them. For example, English and American Studies benefits from two dedicated staff members who handle the administration of all joint master's programmes hosted by the institution, while the coordinating institution of STEPS JMD provides visibility for all its EM programmes through a unified institutional promotional strategy that covers them.

However, **institutional support can fluctuate** with political changes, leadership turnover, or shifting priorities [69] – issues that, as highlighted by the LCT interview participant, may have significant consequences for the programme's sustainability. Moreover, the approach adopted during the initial

[65] Gallerano, A., Bertilorenzi, M., and Thiene, M., Interview, Op. cit.
[66] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Loc. cit.
[67] Blakemore, M., Burquel, N. (2012). Handbook of Excellence - Transnational Joint Master Programmes, p. 16: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272838933_Handbook_of_Excellence_-_Transnational_Joint_Master_Programmes
[68] E.B. Pruvot, A. Claeys-kulik, T. Estermann, Op. cit., p. 19.
[69] DCLead Interview, Op. cit.

stages of the programme can shape the level of support secured over time. Programmes that followed a **bottom-up approach** – initiated by scholars and academics across the partner institutions – often gained lower levels of institutional commitment initially, whereas those developed through a **top-down approach** – driven by leadership within the institution – secured higher-level of institutional support from the outset. As the DHJM coordinator noted: *"The disparity across hosted programmes underscores a difference in institutional backing between top-down and bottom-up approaches to programme development"*. Still, good practices in sustained advocacy can ensure strong support regardless of the initial approach.

Personal commitment and motivation of the staff involved

Closely tied to strategic recognition and institutional backing from partner universities is the **personal commitment of staff involved in the programme**, which can also play a central role in ensuring long-term sustainability. Consortia should rely not only on institutional commitment but also on highly engaged individuals who build on personal relationships and mutual trust[70]. In many cases, the motivation and dedication of individuals – such as coordinators, faculty, administrators, and students – constitute a key binding element that sustains programme cooperation over time.

As survey participants noted, this trust often develops not only during programme implementation but also on related research projects, *"the programme has been built and extended by a group of colleagues who know and trust each other and who have worked together on other projects"*.

Maintaining high motivation levels is **essential for efficient daily operations and for the consortium's long-term performance**[71]. As the MER coordinator emphasised *"personal commitment of staff is essential to carry out the daily operations that might be challenging sometimes due to the particularities of EM programme"*.

Unlike institutional support, personal commitment is often stronger during the early stages of programmes developed through a bottom-up approach, as demonstrated by the DHJM project in its EMDM phase. These initiatives are primarily promoted by staff from the participating institutions, which increases their personal investment from the outset. Nevertheless, there is broad agreement that **institutional recognition and support must always complement personal commitment** to safeguard long-term sustainability. Without this balance, staff turnover may destabilise the consortium – as experienced by LCT and SD programmes – and even lead to the withdrawal of partner universities lacking institutional backing. Literature also supports this view: *"The negative effects of staff turnover can be mitigated by strong institutional commitment"*[72]. Together, they ensure that if a dedicated coordinator leaves, sufficient institutional support is in place to enable a smooth transition without major consequences for the consortium's structure[73].

Table 4. Key Takeaways: Most influential institutional factors.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Strong institutional backing often requires programmes to be strategically recognised and supported by both central administration and faculty leadership. • Institutional recognition can translate into financial, human, promotional, and administrative support that facilitates programme delivery.

[70] English and American Studies Interview, Op. cit.
[71] Verspeeten, A., Interview (2024). Erasmus Mundus and the notion of jointness. (NTT Data, Interviewer).
[72] EACEA, Fernández-Figares, I., Garre, B., et al. (2025). Planning and delivering jointness in Erasmus Mundus master's programmes, p. 7: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6c020d83-02e7-11f0-9503-01aa75ed71a1
[73] Gallerano, A., Bertilorenzi, M., and Thiene, M., Interview, Op. cit.

- Institutional support may fluctuate with political changes, leadership turnover, or shifting priorities.
- Personal commitment of staff involved is crucial for long-term sustainability, as motivated and dedicated individuals help maintain collaboration and programme continuity over time.
- Top-down initiatives often secure stronger institutional commitment initially, while bottom-up initiatives rely more on staff personal commitment and usually require more time to gain strong institutional support.
- Institutional support must complement personal commitment to safeguard programme long-term sustainability.

Least influential institutional factors

Although survey participants acknowledged these factors as relevant for long-term programme development, they perceived their impact on institutional sustainability to be lower.

Trust and collaboration among partner institutions

Creating a **trustful environment within the consortium is essential** to build the capacity to deliver programmes efficiently over time. This requires strong collaboration between partner institutions from the outset, laying the foundations for a governance structure[74] that supports programme growth and progress. As the ALGANT coordinator noted: *"This involves establishing a solid foundation from the outset, together with ensuring a shared understanding of the project and the consortium agreement"*[75]. Three key streams of action can help build a solid consortium.

First, it is crucial to develop a **strong understanding of each other's systems and work practices**. Exploring the operational realities at each partner university helps identify the strengths and weaknesses of the governance structure and anticipate when support from other partner universities may be required. For example, IDEAS has promoted in-person meetings already during the EMDM phase, as its coordinator explained: *"These gatherings have enabled partners to gain deeper insights into each university's operational context"*[76].

Second, **effective and open communication is fundamental**. Robust communication and coordination mechanisms ensure that all partners remain engaged, informed, and accountable[77], while facilitating the collaborative resolution of emerging challenges[78]. To achieve this, maintaining regular on-line and in-person meetings between partners institutions is essential. In this regard, it should be noted from the case studies that most EM programmes manage to hold two in-person meetings each year – sometimes organised on a rotational basis to enhance collaboration and share costs – whereas non-EM joint Master's programmes typically manage only one, placing less emphasis on face-to-face interactions and prioritising cost savings.

Third, **establishing a clear and shared cooperation framework within the consortium** may enhance long-term sustainability by reducing uncertainty and ensuring clarity for all partners[79]. This includes defining cooperation agreements that cover key governance aspects[80]. As one survey

[74] EACEA. (2025). Erasmus Plus Programme Guide, p. 250: https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/erasmus-programme-guide-2025-version-1
[75] ALGANT Interview, Op. cit.
[76] IDEAS Interview, Op. cit.
[77] English and American Studies, and Sustainable Development Interviews (2025, June). Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes (NTT Data, Interviewer).
[78] ALGANT Interview, Op. cit.
[79] UNITE, University Network for Innovation. Sustainability of Joint Master's Programmes. (UNITE, last accessed September 2025): https://joint-edu-offerings.unite-university.eu/sustainability-in-joint-programmes
[80] Sustainable Development Interview, Op. cit.

participant stressed, these should include *"the joint management structures in place to assure the programme runs smoothly, as well as details on how funds are fairly distributed in the absence of EC funding"* [81] . Literature reinforces this view, highlighting the importance of allocating clear responsibilities among partner universities[82] and staff involved in the programme to foster long-term viability.

Finally, a high level of jointness itself can strengthen collaboration between partner institutions[83]. As explicitly mentioned in Planning and Delivering Jointness in Erasmus Mundus Master's Programmes:

> *"Close cooperation can foster greater commitment and trust among institutions, ensuring not only the sustainability of the programme itself but also promoting future collaboration on new research and related programmes"*[84].

In line with the previous statement, trustful environments enhance the consortium's capacity to address emerging challenges and foster participation in related joint research initiatives, as emphasised by programme coordinators such as STEPS JMD, IDEAS and several survey participants. In this regards, MER and Sustainable Development show that long-term relationships, shared values, and clear expectations are **powerful drivers for navigating institutional differences and tackling challenges collaboratively.** Similarly, interviewees from DC Lead, EMAI, and LCT highlighted how trust-based collaboration enabled them to overcome bureaucratic hurdles without disrupting consortium operations.

Institutional structure

The institutional structure adopted was identified by programme coordinators participating in the survey as having relatively low impact on long-term sustainability. Interestingly, and in line with this perception, evidence from the case studies show that the **institutional model – centralised or decentralised – of the host university does not inherently determine sustainability**, as outcomes vary across universities and structures.

Centralised systems typically foster stronger involvement of central university services, increasing institutional visibility. However, they can be bureaucratically rigid, slowing decision-making and operational processes[85]. Conversely, decentralised systems offer greater flexibility and operational efficiency but may lack cooperation and visibility at the central level and substantially increase programme's workload. While each model has initial advantages, the ultimate impact on sustainability depends on the good practices and operational procedures implemented at each university.

Case studies illustrate that sustainable programmes such as BIM A+, ALGANT, or EMCC achieve strong institutional sustainability regardless of whether they operate within centralised or decentralised frameworks. Their success lies in ensuring high visibility and strong involvement of central services across the consortium. Similarly, EMAI, though a stand-alone programme with a decentralised structure, benefits from substantial support from a wide range of central services. By contrast, less sustainable programmes such as DC Lead or EIMAS also operated under decentralised systems but lacked adequate central involvement, resulting in low visibility and limited institutional support. Overall, the evidence suggests that sustainability is not determined by the type of institutional structure, but rather by the **degree of engagement and cooperation secured with central services at each partner university.**

In this context, programmes like Sustainable Development highlight the value of inclusive governance across partner institutions, involving not only academic staff but also international offices, quality assurance teams, and central student services in programme development. *The Practitioner's Toolkit:*

[81] EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes'. Op. cit.
[82] Verspeeten, A. and Varano, M., Op. cit., p. 5.
[83] EACEA, Fernández-Figares, I., Garre, B., et al., Op. cit., p. 4.
[84] EACEA, Fernández-Figares, I., Garre, B., et al., Loc. cit.
[85] Verspeeten, A., Interview, Op. cit.

Designing and Delivering Sustainable Joint Master's Programmes also emphasises the need to engage a wide range of university services and stakeholders[86]. Similarly, the impact study *20 Years of Erasmus Mundus: Beyond Borders and Boundaries* confirms that sustainability depends on factors beyond financial considerations, stressing **intra-institutional collaboration as a key enabler**:

> *"The sustainability of EM Master's programmes depends on many factors that go beyond pure financial considerations. One such key factor and enabler is intra-institutional collaboration and support. While department-level academic staff play a crucial role in delivering the programme, EM Masters also garner support from several central and faculty-level units"[87].*

This broad engagement enhances visibility, fosters ownership, and facilitates smoother operations across partner institutions. Consequently, as the EIMAS coordinator strongly recommended, to ensure sustained collaboration and sufficient institutional support central services should not be left out of the loop.

Nevertheless, involving various services can be challenging given the specific particularities and requirements of EM programmes, which often differ from standard processes. To engage central services effectively, **it is essential to raise awareness of these particular needs and adapt operations accordingly**. Several survey participants emphasised the importance of universities recognising the specific coordination requirements of joint master's programmes and addressing them differently from other programmes in their academic catalogues. This issue was also highlighted by the MER coordinator, who explained that local administrative staff and procedures are not always equipped to operate in English – typically relying on the local language – thus requiring programme staff to step in and support the completion of these administrative processes.

Table 5. Key Takeaways: Least influential institutional factors.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Building a trustful environment and understanding each partner's systems are essential for efficient programme delivery and long-term sustainability, enabling the consortium anticipate and address challenges collaboratively. • Open and regular communication across partner institutions ensures engagement, accountability, and effective problem-solving. • Clear cooperation agreements and defined responsibilities enhance sustainability by reducing uncertainty within the consortium. • While the type of institutional structure has initial trade-offs, it does not inherently determine sustainability. • Ensuring visibility and involvement of central services, regardless of institutional structure, can strongly influence institutional sustainability of EM programmes. However, successful intra-institutional collaboration often requires additional efforts to keep central services informed about the specific needs of EM programmes.

[86] Verspeeten, A. and Varano, M., Op. cit., p. 6
[87] European Commission, EACEA, Ferencz, I., Kupriyanova, V., Op. cit., p. 51

Additional institutional factors identified

In addition to the factors ranked through the survey, programme coordinators also identified one final element influencing the institutional dimension of sustainability: **engagement with relevant programmes and EU initiatives.** This includes other EM programmes, non-EM joint Master's programmes, local programmes, and other EU initiatives – most notable the European Universities alliances. Strengthening these connections fosters synergies that can generate significant benefits both within and outside partner universities.

At the institutional level, collaboration with other programmes and initiatives can increase the sustainability of EM programmes by promoting **knowledge sharing on how to effectively integrate them into the university**, while also enabling the **sharing of resources** and **enhancing interaction** with local students and academic staff. In this sense, programmes such as LCT or Sustainable Development share credits with local programmes at each university, pooling teaching efforts and encouraging greater flexibility in the academic offer. This approach can facilitate the integration of the programme into the institutional academic portfolio, raising their visibility and providing tangible benefits to students. These include greater access to central student services, smoother integration into academic life, and the creation of a more intercultural environment on campus[88].

Beyond individual institutions, **synergies with other programmes and initiatives across the consortium are equally important**. These facilitate the identification of good practices for effective programme integration and help secure institutional support, while also reinforcing other sustainability dimensions. This inter-institutional collaboration can further benefit local staff and administrators, as illustrated in Planning and Delivering Jointness in Erasmus Mundus Master's Programmes: *"The exchange of good practices between partner universities positively influences local staff and administration, motivating them to update and innovate their EM masters"*[89]

Finally, engagement with relevant programmes and EU initiatives appears to be particularly relevant during the **initial stages of programme development**, especially in the EMDM phase. Both the IDEAS and DHJM initiatives emphasised the value of engaging with existing EMJM programmes and EU initiatives – such as the European Universities alliance EU-CONEXUS – to secure additional support and gather inspiration for programme design.

Table 6. Key Takeaways: Additional institutional factors identified.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Connecting with similar local programmes, other EM programmes, and EU initiatives – both within and beyond the institution – fosters synergies and knowledge sharing, positively impacting programme sustainability. • Such engagement can enhance visibility across each institution, promote resource sharing, support integration into university portfolios, and benefit both students and local staff. It is particularly relevant during programme design and early development stages.

[88] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 35.
[89] EACEA, Fernández-Figares, I., Garre, B., et al. Op. cit., p. 4.

Potential measures to implement

Preliminary results from the desk research and interviews enabled us to identify a set of general actions that EM Master's programmes could implement to enhance sustainability within both institutions and consortia.

In the survey, participants were asked to select up to three actions that they considered they could take for ensuring institutional sustainability and effective coordination over time. *Figure 7* shows the proportion of respondents who selected each action, providing insights into their perceived effectiveness in supporting long-term institutional sustainability and consortium effectiveness.

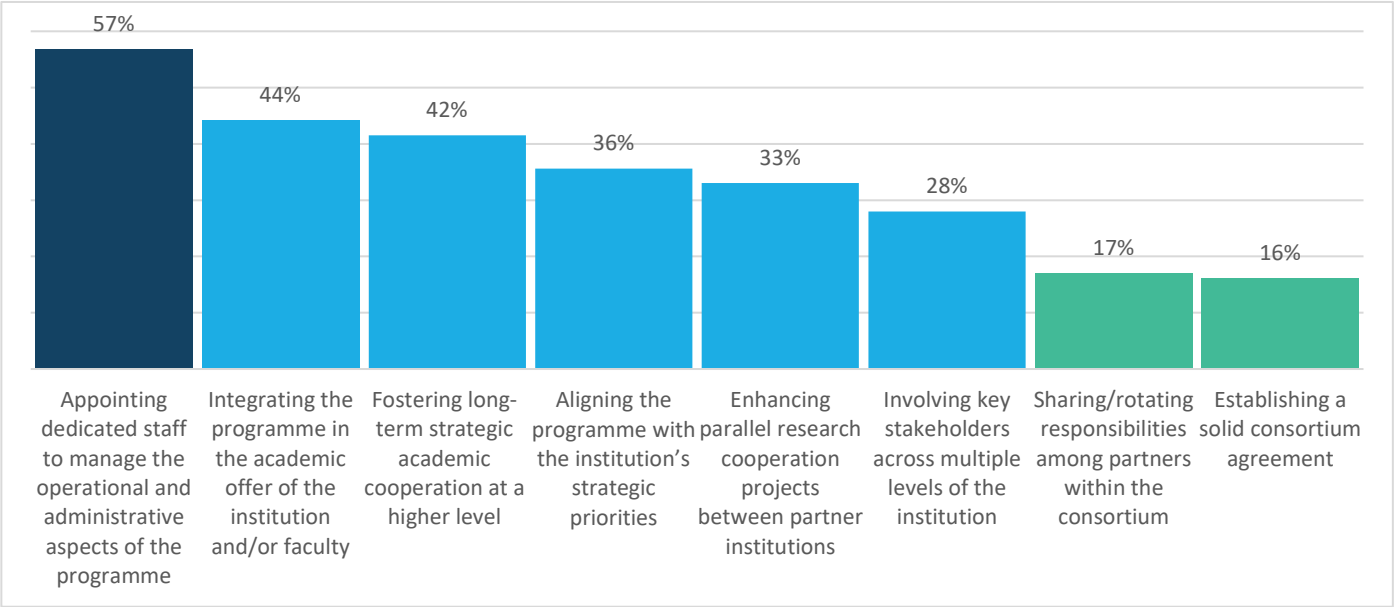

Figure 7. Actions to ensure long-term institutional sustainability and effective coordination.
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes'

It is noteworthy that **the most frequently selected action** – appointing dedicated staff for the operational and administrative management of the programme – **relates to strengthening trust and collaboration among partner institutions**. Dedicated personnel manage the programme's day-to-day operations, coordinate universities, and ensure that procedures run smoothly across institutional boundaries. By providing consistent oversight and maintaining clear lines of communication, they help create an efficient collaborative environment. However, the effectiveness of this measure depend on maintaining these positions over time, thereby underscoring the need to secure sufficient funding to support them[90].

Other actions in this area, particularly fostering long-term strategic academic cooperation at a higher level and enhancing parallel research cooperation projects between partner institutions, were ranked third and fifth, respectively. Moreover, integrating the programme into the academic offer of the institution – ranked second – and involving key stakeholders across multiple levels of the institution – ranked sixth – are both linked to institutional structures, and the intra-institutional cooperation outlined earlier in the text. Finally, the possibility to share/rotate responsibilities among partners within the consortium and establishing a solid consortium agreement – also tied to strengthening trust and collaboration – were the least frequently selected actions.

[90] EIMAS Interview, Op. cit.

It should be noted that these survey responses are primarily exploratory and require further discussion, contextualisation and development. For context-specific good practices that have been actually implemented (as identified through the interviews and answers to open-ended survey questions), we refer the reader to **ANNEX I - Good practices to enhance long-term sustainability.**

Academic excellence and attractiveness

Ensuring academic excellence and promoting the distinctive features of EM programmes that enhance their attractiveness are crucial for their long-term viability, forming the third sustainability dimension. EM programmes should uphold the academic excellence associated with the initiative and remain appealing to prospective students and partners. These aspects are essential for attracting talented students and ensuring a **consistent level of enrolment** throughout the programme's lifetime.

Previous studies reinforce this view, stressing the interdependence of academic excellence, attractiveness, and sustainability: *"Other added values of EM programmes are […], and the quality of the education provided. Consortia need to capitalise such potential for attracting students as part of their sustainability strategy"*[91].

Although all interviewed EM programmes consistently attract strong student cohorts and demonstrate academic excellence, maintaining these achievements over the long-term may be influenced by several factors. The literature review and interview participants highlighted several factors that may affect the long-term sustainability of EM programmes. These findings are presented in the subsections below.

Table 7. Academic excellence and attractiveness subsection directory.

Subsections
Relevance of the field of study
Employability prospects
Network of industrial and research partnerships
Academic reputation of partner institutions
Programme uniqueness and limited competition
Communication and outreach efforts
The Erasmus Mundus "label" and presence in the Catalogue
International consortia and mobility opportunities
Availability of scholarships
Factors to attract international talent

Relevance of the field of study

Drawing on interview responses, the relevance of a programme rests on two main attributes: **being anchored in a topic relevant for the economy and/or society and delivering excellent education.** Ensuring both over time allows the programme to remain aligned with high academic standards and needs of the economy and society, **attracting a steady flow of motivated students** and thereby contributing to its long-term sustainability[92].

[91] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 18.
[92] Sustainable Development Interview, Op. cit.

Regarding the first attribute, consortia should wisely select the topic of the programme, ensuring it meets current and emerging needs. As highlighted by programme coordinators (e.g., BIM A+, MER, Sustainable Development), the programme should respond to an **emerging area of interest, be labour-market-oriented, or an academically challenging topic**, or a combination of these. Equally important, the second attribute requires programmes to ensure **excellent course delivery** to meet students' expectations and ensure student inflow[93].

Additionally, sustained relevance **requires ongoing evolution**: programmes need to adapt their content to reflect advances in the topic while maintaining established quality benchmarks. The case studies confirm this commitment, showing that most programmes regularly review and update their curricula – albeit to varying degrees – in response to academic developments, labour market demands, and student feedback.

To achieve this, all programmes studied rely on **quality assurance mechanisms**, most of which adopt a multistakeholder approach – including academia, industry, and alumni. These mechanisms range from student feedback (e.g., LCT, EIMAS, BIM A+, Sustainable Development) and formal periodic quality assurance reports (e.g., DC Lead), to external advisory boards and validators (e.g., LCT, EMAI, MER) and external quality assurance accreditations. While some EM coordinators interviewed reported having conducted the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (e.g., MER, DC Lead), even during the EMDM phase (e.g., DJHM, IDEAS), only ten programmes participating in the survey (8%) have been identified as using the European Approach. Although these mechanisms provide the foundation for curriculum updates and pedagogical improvements, some – such as external advisory boards – can involve additional costs, making them difficult to maintain beyond the EM funding period[94].

Complementary to this, the **commitment of academic staff** responsible for teaching plays a significant role in keeping curricula and courses updated and aligned with emerging trends. As the DC Lead coordinator emphasised: *"At the heart of all EM programmes lies a group of deeply passionate individuals whose intrinsic motivation fuels the programme's continuity and quality".*

To better support coordinators in addressing these issues, preliminary results from the desk research and interviews helped identify a set of **general actions that could ensure the continued relevance of EM programmes**. To assess their importance, survey participants were asked to select up to five actions they considered most critical. *Figure 8* presents the frequency of these selections.

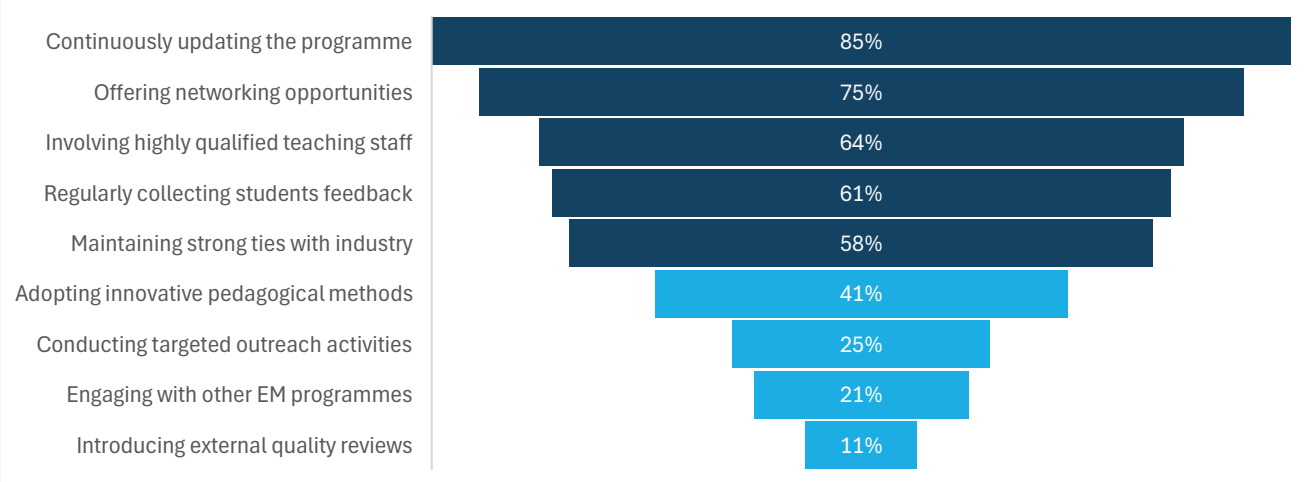

Figure 8. Actions to be implemented for continued relevance.
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes'

[93] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 30.
[94] EMAI Interview, Op. cit.

The most frequently selected actions for maintaining programme relevance were continuously updating the curriculum to reflect emerging trends and involving highly qualified teaching staff. Over 50% of respondents also highlighted offering networking opportunities, collecting student feedback, and maintaining strong ties to address both **employers and student needs while strengthening the programme's labour market orientation**. Measures like adopting innovative pedagogical methods or external quality reviews, were perceived as less impactful, while less frequently selected actions included conducting targeted outreach and engaging with other EM programmes. Although less directly linked to programme relevance, they can still enhance other factors influencing programmes' quality and attractiveness, as further discussed in the following subsections.

Table 88. Key takeaways: Relevance of the field of study.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Programme relevance and attractiveness depend on being anchored in an emerging, labour-market-oriented, and interdisciplinary topic, and delivering consistently excellent education. • Sustained relevance requires ongoing adaptation, with curricula evolving to reflect advances in the field while maintaining established quality benchmarks. • All case studies implement quality assurance mechanisms to ensure continued interest and excellence, most of which rely on a multistakeholder approach involving academia, industry, and alumni. • Committed and excellent academic staff are essential for keeping programmes innovative and aligned with evolving trends.

Employability prospects

Ensuring employability prospects within EM programmes is crucial, as **high employability rates are key** to attracting students. As established by EACEA, in the report Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master Courses:

"Strengthening a master's ability to impact on professional opportunities can have a positive effect on its sustainability, as it will be an important factor in convincing potential students to enrol: a degree that can pave the way to a satisfying job or to important career developments may be definitely worth a financial investment from the student's side"[95].

According to the STEPS JMD coordinator, ensuring high employability requires not only aligning curricula with market needs but also fostering strong connections with the world-of-work. To this end, **involving employers throughout the programme** – by engaging them in events and lectures (e.g., MER, IDEAS, LCT) – can strengthen these connections[96] and create additional networking opportunities for students[97]. **Internship opportunities** – whether in the industry, research institutions, or NGOs – are particularly valuable, as they allow students to showcase their skills and aptitudes to potential employers. This, in turn, increases employers' interest in the programme and encourages the creation of additional job and PhD opportunities. As the EMAI coordinator noted: *'Internships are key opportunities to demonstrate student excellence in real-world settings.'* Moreover, for more academically oriented EM programmes, the **availability of PhD pathways** is essential to ensure continuity for students' research interests[98]. This enables them to begin their academic careers upon graduation while strengthening the appeal of EM programmes in research-focused fields.

[95] EACEA, Voelkl, C., and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 23
[96] Becker, R., Op. cit., p. 36.
[97] UNITE, University Network for Innovation, Op. cit.
[98] MER Interview, Op. cit.

Employability can also be enhanced by further adapting programmes to labour market needs, ensuring they remain practical and **compatible with working requirements**[99]. Programmes like BIM A+ prioritise a one-year structure that enables students to combine study with employment during the programme or to re-enter the workforce quickly after completion, broadening the programme's appeal to a market-oriented audience.

Finally, it is essential to **track alumni careers**[100]**.** Collecting data on graduates' professional integration provides evidence of employability outcomes, reinforcing the programme's attractiveness to prospective students[101], and contributing to a sustained inflow of enrolments that support long-term operations.

Table 9. Key takeaways: Employability prospects.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• High employability rates attract self-funded students by promising strong job prospects. • Aligning curricula with employers needs and involving them throughout the programme design strengthens labour market ties and student networking opportunities. • Organising guest lectures, events with the world-of-work, internships and PhD pathways enhances real-world experience and academic career prospects, boosting attractiveness. • Tracking alumni careers and gathering data on their employability outcomes provides evidence of the final employability rate achieved and in turn can be used for promotional purposes.

Network of industrial and research partnerships

Closely connected to the previously discussed factors is the network of industrial and research partnerships developed by the programme, which can be leveraged for employability prospects through networking opportunities and internship options.

As the LCT coordinator highlighted, *"a strong network of associated partners plays a key role in enhancing the programme's attractiveness to students"*[102]*.* Collaboration with industry and research partners helps **align the curriculum with professional and academic needs**, while offering students **valuable networking opportunities** through internships, stakeholder events, and specialised training courses[103]. Such partnerships strengthen academic excellence, student prospects, **and international visibility**[104], making them crucial for the long-term sustainability of EM programmes[105].

For example, STEPS JMD has established a strong network of around 20 partners – including multinational companies, startups from university spin-offs, innovation companies, and public institutions. Similarly, the MER programme has built an extensive network of over 100 associated partners, all engaged in an active community. Both programmes benefit from paid internships and thesis placements offered by these partners, demonstrating that a strong network can also generate financial and in-kind contributions, **reinforcing both the financial and academic sustainability of the programme**[106]. Additionally, interviewed EMDM projects highlighted that building such networks is often a priority from the earliest stages of EM programmes, with the DHJM coordinator noting: *"Securing*

[99] BIM A+ Interview, Op. cit.
[100] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 23.
[101] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 23.
[102] LCT Interview, Op. cit.
[103] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 30.
[104] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 38.
[105] EACEA, Fernández-Figares, I., Garre, B., et al., Op. cit., p. 32.
[106] IDEAS Interview, Op. cit.

partnership and ensuring internship placements occupies a priority for the long-term sustainability of the programme".

Furthermore, **alumni play a pivotal role in connecting programmes to labour market**. Graduates often facilitate connections with their employers, many of these organisations subsequently becoming associated partners in the consortium. As the DC Lead coordinator explained – and in line with earlier points on employability – alumni demonstrate the professional capabilities of graduates through their internships and employment outcomes, thereby showcasing their added value to employers and fostering greater willingness to support or sponsor the programme[107].

However, establishing a large and reliable network of partners **requires significant time and effort[108]**, especially in the early stages when few graduates have entered the labour market[109]. Beyond the additional time and human resources required to secure new partners[110], maintaining partnerships over time is equally demanding. The MER coordinator noted: "*Managing this network requires significant effort and coordination: maintaining contacts, collecting offers, resolving day-to-day issues, signing agreements, and ensuring academic recognition throughout programme development".* Consequently, these efforts should be carefully planned and integrated into the overall programme strategy.

Finally, while an extensive network can boost networking opportunities, financial support, and overall attractiveness, a larger network is not always more effective. As the DC Lead coordinator observed: *"Sometimes it is better to have a smaller number of highly committed associated partners than a higher number of non-committed ones"*. In this sense, EMCC coordinators emphasised that **maintaining a cohesive group of dedicated partners with shared interests** can attract high-quality students more effectively than simply expanding the network. Additional partnerships may entail administrative costs that outweigh actual benefits[111], ultimately risking the long-term sustainability of the programme.

Table 10. Key Takeaways: Network of industry and research partnerships.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Strong industrial and research partnerships help keep programmes relevant and enhance employability by fostering internships, networking opportunities, and alignment with stakeholders needs. • Alumni connections expand partnerships by linking programmes with employers who offer internships and employment opportunities. • Managing partnerships requires significant time, coordination, and resources to maintain active and valuable collaborations. • The quality and commitment of partners often outweigh quantity; a smaller, engaged network can be more effective than a large, inactive one.

Academic reputation of partner institutions

The **reputation of partner universities or their recognised expertise in the field** can significantly increase the attractiveness of a programme, serving as a benchmark of academic excellence.

ALGANT and English and American Studies illustrate this influencing factor. ALGANT attracts a large number of students thanks to the strong academic reputation of several of its partner universities. By leveraging the academic prestige in this field of study of institutions such as the Universities of

[107] DCLead Interview, Op. cit.
[108] STEPS JMD Interview, Op. cit.
[109] EMAI Interview, Op. cit.
[110] LCT Interview, Op. cit.
[111] DC Lead Interview, Op. cit.

Regensburg, Paris-Saclay, Bordeaux, and Leiden, the programme has gradually built a solid academic reputation that continues to draw high-quality students beyond EM funding period. Similarly, the English and American Studies programme views the inclusion of a recognised international partner, the City College of New York, in the consortium as a **major asset and unique selling point**. This not only highlights the programme's academic expertise but also enhances its overall appeal.

Consequently, academic reputation can play a decisive role in strengthening the programme's academic excellence and long-term sustainability beyond EM funding period.

Table 11. Key Takeaways: Academic prestige of partner institutions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• The academic reputation and inclusion of prestigious partner universities significantly enhance programme attractiveness, serving as a benchmark of academic excellence and increasing its global appeal.

Programme uniqueness and limited competition

Ensuring that a programme addresses specific market needs and offers distinctive features is essential for long-term sustainability. Conducting such strategic analysis during programme design helps identify real market demands and position the programme clearly for its target audience[112]. **This strategic advantage can reduce competition**, securing a targeted audience and contributing to a steady inflow of students over the long term.

While all studied programmes display distinctive features, only those **former EM Master's programmes that have continued sustainably** were found to have a clear strategic position to the target audience, limiting overall competition in the market. Specifically, BIM A+ stands out in a field where most similar programmes are taught in local languages, offering instead a full complete curriculum in English. This makes it uniquely accessible to an international audience. Similarly, ALGANT benefits from limited competition in its academic niche, adopting a globally distinctive approach to mathematics. This exclusivity provides it with a strategic advantage, ensuring strong international demand and a consistent student intake over time.

Table 12. Key Takeaways: Programme uniqueness and limited competition.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Designing a programme with distinctive features and a clear market position may support its transition to a self-funded model. It provides the programme with a strategic advantage, helping to limit competition and facilitating the recruitment of a sufficient number of students over the long term.

[112] UNITE, University Network for Innovation, Op. cit.

Communication and outreach efforts

Communication is essential for an effective sustainability strategy, as it maximises outreach and demonstrates the programme's added value to future applicants[113]. As emphasised by the STEPS JMD coordinator, *"it is crucial to implement sufficient advertising efforts to ensure it attracts a high number of students and effectively communicates the professional and academic advantages it offers"*[114]. Every EM programme should clearly present its focus and value proposition, **highlighting distinctive features** that position the programme as a valued and recognisable brand[115] and contribute to its long-term sustainability. To achieve this, a **coordinated marketing strategy is required**.

As the MER coordinator noted:

> *"Best practices should aim to establish a strong and effective communication culture. This includes enhancing communication with key internal stakeholders, such as academic staff, managers, students, graduates, and the wider community of associated partners, as well as with society at large"*[116].

Such promotional activities should be consistent throughout the programme implementation while addressing specific needs at each stage. They should be carried out through coordinated effort by all members and targeted towards a wide audience[117]. Interviews show that consortia adopt diverse marketing strategies to remain visible in the competitive international education landscape. These may take place primarily at the programme level, through a dedicated outreach strategy (e.g., IDEAS), or at the institutional level, leveraging the credibility and broad outreach capacity of universities (e.g., DHJM). Many successful programmes combine both approaches, **using institutional support to reinforce dedicated marketing plans** (e.g., EMAI, EMCC, MER). Across the marketing strategies studied, some promotional activities have been commonly identified. They include participation in international fairs, active use of social media, information sessions and webinars, collaboration with student organisations such as the Erasmus Mundus Student and Alumni Association (EMA) and regionally relevant associations, orientation sessions, alumni testimonials, and dedicated websites.

Several coordinators also emphasised the importance of **targeted outreach** to attract students from both EU and non-EU regions. In cases where EU students are underrepresented – such as EMAI or STEPS JMD – stronger national or EU level promotional efforts can increase visibility of EM programmes among EU students[118]. Specifically, some programmes incorporate such high-level efforts into their marketing strategies by engaging governments and public institutions, **involving associated partners, and creating synergies with other EU initiatives to leverage their global presence** (e.g., IDEAS, EMAI). This approach is supported by the Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2025, which highlights that involving public and private partners can enhance both promotion and sustainability.

Additionally, a common practice across EM programmes is **leveraging the experiences of students and alumni by turning them into ambassadors** of the programme. Coordinators often describe the student experience itself as one of the most powerful drivers of effective outreach. In this context, EM programmes are often described as *life-changing*, and this emotional connection translates into strong alumni engagement and word-of-mouth promotion[119]. Alumni advocacy is a type of community-building approach that strengthens the programme's reputation and sustainability. Most programmes plan community building from the inception stage, recognising alumni as their primary ambassadors (e.g., IDEAS, EMAI). As the EMAI coordinator recommended: *"Develop an engaged alumni network to promote*

[113] Burquel, N., Blakemore, M.,, Op. cit., p. 16.
[114] STEPS JMD Interview, Op. cit.
[115] IDEAS Interview, Op. cit.
[116] MER Interview, Op. cit.
[117] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Loc. cit.
[118] STEPS JMD Interview, Op. cit.
[119] DC Lead Interview, Op. cit.

the programme by leveraging their academic excellence and positive experiences"[120]. Similarly, the IDEAS coordinator suggested:

> *"Engage with students from the very beginning of the intake and ensure they remain actively involved throughout the programme. This approach can help cultivate future ambassadors for the programme that would attract prospective students from different targeted regions"*[121].

Ensuring a positive **student experience is therefore essential** to creating alumni ambassadors. Their contributions to promotion include managing social media channels (e.g., BIM A+, DC Lead), attending events with current students (e.g., ALGANT, EIMAS, STEPS JMD, LCT, Sustainable Development, English and American Studies), or promoting the programme within their regions (e.g., EIMAS, MER). To achieve this, **joint activities and strong support systems for students** are crucial[122]. In this context, EM programmes particularly excel in providing personalised support, active engagement with alumni networks, and regular in-person events that foster community – practices less common in non-EM programmes, which often prioritise more cost-efficient online or hybrid formats. MER, BIM A+, and ALGANT stand out as examples of vibrant alumni networks.

Moreover, to ensure high levels of alumni satisfaction leading to potential ambassadors, programmes should **systematically monitor students' progress and experience**. Surveys, regular discussions, and local coordinators can provide valuable feedback throughout the programme[123].

Finally, while continuous promotion through the various outreach actions outlined is important for sustainability, developing and implementing a comprehensive marketing strategy requires significant time and effort[124]. As noted by EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F.: *"This process might take years, but it is nonetheless essential to attract students"*[125]. Appointing dedicated marketing staff to coordinate outreach and communication across partners can streamline this process[126]. Some programmes, such as BIM A+, DC Lead, and EMAI, even rely on external agents and specialised companies to further strengthen their communication efforts.

Table 13. Key Takeaways: Communication and outreach efforts.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Developing a coordinated marketing strategy is essential to clearly communicate the programme's focus and added value, positioning it competitively to attract students. • Combining tailored outreach with institutional support enhances visibility and impact, leveraging university credibility and targeted promotion across regions. • Collaboration with associated partners, governments, public institutions, and EU initiatives can further amplify global reach and support long-term sustainability. • Engaging alumni as programme ambassadors is regarded as a powerful driver of promotion, enhancing credibility and visibility through word-of-mouth; this approach requires strong community-building and student support systems.

[120] EMAI Interview, Op. cit.
[121] IDEAS Interview, Op. cit.
[122] ALGANT Interview, Op. cit.
[123] Becker, R., Op. cit., p. 46.
[124] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 18.
[125] EACEA, Voelkl, C., Pirocchi, F., Loc. cit.
[126] EACEA, Fernández-Figares, I., Garre, B., et al., Op. cit., p. 21.

The Erasmus Mundus "label" and presence in the Catalogue

Obtaining the Erasmus Mundus "label"[127] is considered a key milestone in ensuring the academic excellence of a programme. However, it goes beyond compliance with academic standards, **representing an official international recognition of excellence.** Being part of the EM action and being listed in its official Catalogue serves as a strong indicator of excellence in course delivery and research, while also enhancing the visibility, reputation, and internationalisation of the participating universities[128]. This external recognition not only increases the attractiveness of the programme but also supports its long-term sustainability, as higher visibility and institutional prestige help attract both students and partnerships. In this way, belonging to EM reinforces quality and enhances viability of the programme, with **significant implications across all stages of its lifecycle**.

At the **design stage**, the IDEAS case illustrates the crucial role of EM funding in launching the programme and establishing a strong quality benchmark from the outset.

During **programme delivery**, the MER coordinator – who has managed the programme both within and outside the EM initiative – highlighted the significant contributions of the EM "label". It enabled the programme to attract and retain over 100 associated partners supporting thesis placements and research, while also enhancing credibility with prospective students and institutional stakeholders. In this sense, EM represented a decisive academic quality milestone in the programme.

Even after EM funding ends, **the value of the "label" persists**. In this sense, the BIM A+ coordinator noted that the presence in the EM Catalogue as a former programme continues to act as a powerful academic excellence signal, serving as an important entry point for prospective students beyond the EM funding period.

Overall, the evidence suggests that upholding the EM identity of a programme and maintaining its associated academic excellence **can enhance its reputation and attractiveness worldwide**. The presence in the EM catalogue contributes to long-term sustainability by not only attracting talented students but also fostering the continued support of associated partners from academia and industry.

Table 14. Key Takeaways: The Erasmus Mundus "label" and presence in the catalogue.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Obtaining EM funding provides official recognition as a global benchmark of quality, signalling excellence in course delivery and research while enhancing the reputation and internationalisation of participating universities. • The inclusion in the EM Catalogue significantly increases programme attractiveness throughout its entire lifecycle, not only during design and implementation, but also well beyond the EM funding period.

[127] As detailed in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2025, p. 279: *"Beside the financial contribution to run joint Master programmes (see below section on funding rules), any EM funded projects ending in the period 2021-2027 (including those that started during 2014-2020 period) may continue to run the course as Erasmus Mundus master for up to three additional editions after the end of the action, provided that the assessment of the grant agreements performed by EACEA at final reporting stage will result in a score of 75 or more. The concerned masters should commit to (i) continue respecting the objectives, scope, expected impact of the action, (ii) engage to ensure continuity with the previously funded Master programme and (iii) provide an activity report at the end of the period concerned "* .

[128] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 27.

International consortia and mobility opportunities

A highly relevant feature of EM programmes is their international character, by bringing together **partner universities from diverse countries and offering mobility schemes around the world**. These aspects generate benefits in three main areas.

First, incorporating partner universities from diverse global regions diversifies promotional efforts and facilitates the recruitment of a broader, more international student body to the programme – including local students from each partner university. As the ALGANT coordinator noted: "*Including partner universities from different geographical regions helps attract new students from specific areas"*[129]. In practice, **each participating university can leverage its local networks and outreach channels** to attract students from its own region. This approach not only simplifies recruitment in specific geographical areas but also enriches the international composition and diversity of the student cohort.

Second, the international composition of the consortium **enriches the academic offer** by expanding the range of available courses, expertise, and specialisation paths available through different mobility options. This diversity fosters knowledge exchange within consortia and facilitates the customisation of academic pathways. Programmes such as EIMAS, LCT, IDEAS illustrate partner expertise can be leveraged to enhance curriculum flexibility and provide optional courses, giving students the opportunity to tailor their studies to their interests. In this context, comparable non-EM programmes studied (i.e., EMCC, English and American Studies, Sustainable Development) strongly reinforce this flexible approach, allowing for a high degree of curriculum customisation and autonomy across partner institutions. As the coordinator of English and American Studies explained:

> *"The programme follows a flexible academic approach that balances a joint academic framework with institutional autonomy. While all partner universities follow a jointly agreed curriculum with a defined number of ECTS in core thematic areas, each institution can freely implement it in line with its own academic strengths and departmental structures"*[130].

While this flexibility may be considered as a strength, the coordinator also acknowledged certain challenges in this regard. The main difficulties lie in limiting jointness within the consortium and programme coordinators' influence over the academic offering. This signals the importance of **carefully balancing flexibility with jointness in curriculum development and delivery**. As outlined in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, jointness should remain a defining attribute of EM programmes and be fully embedded in curriculum design[131].

Finally, by nature EM programmes have extensive mobility schemes[132]. Such opportunities not only deepen cultural understanding but also expose students to varied marketplaces and professional contexts[133], enriching their overall education. Unlike the non-EM programmes studied, which typically adopt a one-semester mobility model, EM programmes provide broader mobility opportunities, increasing their international appeal.

However, increasing the international composition of the consortium and expanding mobility opportunities may create coordination challenges. Adding new partners often requires adapting governance structures to accommodate each institution's particularities, which can hinder cooperation and raise costs. As the ALGANT coordinator stressed: **"There is a need to balance the mobility opportunities offered by partner institutions and the cost they entail"**[134]**.** This balance becomes especially critical during the transition to a self-funded model, where mobility paths must remain sustainable over time without external funding[135]. Avoiding overcomplicated mobility schemes and

[129] ALGANT Interview, Op. cit.
[130] English and American Studies Interview, Op. cit.
[131] EC, Erasmus+ Programme Guide. Op. cit., *pp. 288-289.*
[132] EIMAS Interview, Op. cit.
[133] EC, Erasmus+ Programme Guide. Op. cit., pp. 288-289.
[134] ALGANT Interview, Op. cit.
[135] Gallerano, A., Bertilorenzi, M., and Thiene, M. Interview, Op. cit.

unnecessarily enlarging the consortium can simplify programme management while still preserving the programme's international appeal after the EU funding period ends.

Table 15. Key Takeaways: International consortia and mobility opportunities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Global partnerships within consortia ensure representation from target regions while strengthening the overall international profile of the student cohort. • A diverse academic offer across partner institutions expands the range of available courses and expertise, supporting flexibility and curriculum customisation. • While flexibility can be a strength, programmes must carefully balance institutional autonomy with joint curriculum development and delivery. • EM programmes have extensive mobility schemes, enabling students to study across multiple countries and enriching their cultural understanding and academic experience. • Balancing international mobility opportunities with manageable consortium size is essential to ensure efficient coordination, cost management, and long-term sustainability, particularly after the EU funding period.

Availability of scholarships

It has already been observed that providing at least some financial support can increase the number of self-funded students willing and able to invest in the programme (see the subsection **Financial aid available to students**). The sustainably continued former EM Master's programmes ALGANT and BIM A+ highlighted the key role of scholarships in ensuring financial accessibility and helping maintain a stable flow of students[136], which in turn secures tuition fee income for the programme. Moreover, the availability of scholarships may **impact not only financial viability and attractiveness, but also the academic excellence of the programme**: enabling talented students from diverse economic backgrounds to participate enriches the academic experience by fostering diversity and upholding high academic standards.

As the EMAI coordinator highlighted: *"**Candidates with an excellent academic background are fundamental** for the programme's long-term resilience"*[137]. Attracting talented students worldwide is essential, as the quality of those enrolled, together with their diverse cultural and educational backgrounds, directly influences the quality of the curriculum delivery. Moreover, talented students often result in excellent performance in the labour market, further strengthening the programme's reputation, attracting substantial associated partners, and reinforcing its overall sustainability.

Nevertheless, as already discussed, EM programmes entail additional costs primarily due to their international scope and joint nature. These higher costs may raise student participation fees, which can reduce attractiveness and limit enrolment to those financially able to invest in the programme[138], potentially affecting academic excellence. This challenge becomes even more critical under self-funded models, when EM scholarships are no longer available [139].

As highlighted by programmes such as MER or BIM A+, it is vital to avoid the massive loss of talented students from low-income backgrounds. Offering non-EM scholarships can play a decisive role in addressing this issue, **ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent talented students from enrolling and remaining in the programme** beyond the EM funding period. In this sense, the IDEAS

[136] ALGANT and BIM A+ Interviews. Op. cit.
[137] EMAI Interview, Op. cit.
[138] EACEA, Ferencz, I. and Kupriyanova, V., Loc. cit.
[139] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 20.

coordinator emphasised: *"Financial support will enable talented students – both from Europe and beyond – who lack the financial means to invest in their education, to enrol in the programme"*[140].

This factor is particularly relevant for attracting and retaining talent from outside the EU, especially from developing countries. Several survey participants noted that non-EU students often require additional financial support to participate in the programme. Their participation is widely regarded as an added value, fostering interaction across diverse regions and cultures, and significantly enriching the education and training experience.

While non-EM scholarships help reduce the financial burden for talented students once EM scholarships are no longer available, they are typically less substantial. As a result, programmes still face difficulties in maintaining both the volume of enrolments and the socioeconomic and geographic diversity of their student cohorts[141]. In this context, programmes that have operated both with and without EM support (e.g., BIM A+, MER) indicate that the absence of EM funding represents a turning point in student intake[142], amplifying the influence of financial constraints and most visibly reducing participation –with **the most visible impact on non-EU participation**[143]. The BIM A+ coordinator, who managed to ensure the availability of non-EM scholarships after the funding period, reinforced this concern emphasising:

"The shift from an Erasmus Mundus-funded model to a self-funded initiative has significantly influenced the student profile. Previously, EM scholarships made the programme accessible to students with limited financial means. Without these scholarships, financial constraints now play a greater role in determining student participation, losing talented students with limited financial resources"[144].

Table 16. Key Takeaways: Availability of scholarships.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Scholarships attract and retain talent by reducing financial barriers and enabling participation of qualified students from low-income backgrounds. This applies in particular to students from non-EU countries, who are faced with higher costs. • Academic excellence and student diversity directly strengthen curriculum delivery, programme reputation, and long-term sustainability. • While non-EM scholarships play a crucial role in attracting and retaining talent beyond the EM funding period, they are often insufficient to prevent a decline in student intake.

Factors to attract international talent

Attracting international talent is a central element of Erasmus Mundus. Engaging students from across the world is not only a goal in itself but also a defining feature that **enriches the academic excellence and diversity of the EM experience** that should be preserved over the long term. Exposure to a wide range of academic, cultural, and professional backgrounds enhances the distinctiveness of the programmes and fosters mutual learning among participants, meaningfully contributing to their attractiveness and academic sustainability.

Additionally, evidence from the Graduate Impact Studies (GIS) shows that **non-EU graduates are more likely to recommend studying in Europe** and that participation in EM programmes positively shapes their perception of the EU[145]. Consequently, it becomes essential to understand how EM Master's programmes can further strengthen their appeal to prospective students from outside the EU, ensuring

[140] IDEAS Interview, Op. cit.
[141] EACEA, Ferencz, I. and Kupriyanova, V., Loc. cit.
[142] MER Interview, Op. cit.
[143] EACEA, Voelkl, C. and Pirocchi, F., Op. cit., p. 19.
[144] BIM A+ Interview, Op. cit.
[145] European Commission, EACEA, Ferencz, I. and Kupriyanova, V., Op. cit., p. 107.

the sustained inflow of talent from around the world. To explore this, survey participants were asked to select up to five factors that strongly influence the attractiveness of the programme for students from outside the EU (see *Figure 9*). It should be noted that many of these factors have already been examined in detail as elements influencing the overall academic sustainability and attractiveness of the programme. Here, they are briefly revisited in relation to the appeal for non-EU students, with references made to previous subsections for more in-depth analysis.

Most participants agreed that **the availability of scholarships is a pivotal driver in attracting talent from outside the EU**. This is supported by the fact that "*over the entire 20 years of programme to date (…) the share of scholarship holders from non-associated countries is 82%*"[146]. Furthermore, as discussed in the subsection **Availability** of **scholarships** financial aid remains particularly important to enabling participation from students with limited financial means, particularly those from developing countries. As noted in survey responses, without such financial support, participation from the Global South would decline significantly, reducing diversity and weakening the programmes' global reach. The EM "label" and presence in the Catalogue was also widely selected as a key factor influencing attractiveness for non-EU students. As outlined in the subsection **The Erasmus Mundus "label" and presence in the Catalogue**, **upholding the EM identity of a programme** and maintaining its associated academic excellence **can enhance its reputation and appeal worldwide.**

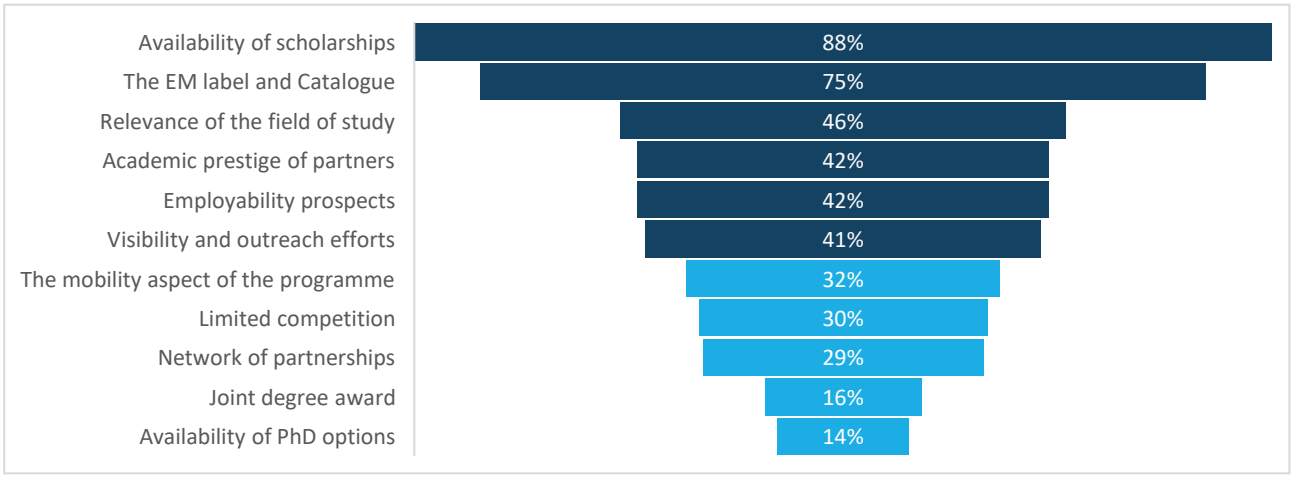

Figure 9. Factors influencing the attractiveness for international talent.
Source: EMSI, Survey 'Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes'

Relevance of the field of study, academic prestige of the partner institutions, employability prospects, and visibility and outreach efforts were also frequently selected. In this context, interview insights revealed that the reputation of partner institutions is crucial not only in shaping the perceived excellence and credibility of EM programmes, but also in enhancing their capacity to attract students in non-EU regions. **The global visibility and networks of reputable partner universities allow programmes to broaden their outreach and diversify their student profile**[147].

Regarding visibility and outreach efforts, some interviewed coordinators highlighted the importance of **targeted marketing strategies to attract high-quality students from non-EU regions**. With this purpose, programmes have implemented comprehensive promotional strategies tailored to different world regions, encompassing both higher-income and lower-income contexts. As discussed in the subsection **Communication and outreach efforts**, such strategies include developing partnerships with regionally relevant institutions, collaborating with other EU initiatives, or using the global

[146] European Commission, EACEA, Ferencz, I. and Kupriyanova, V., Op. cit., p. 85.
[147] IDEAS Interview, Op. cit.

networks of associated partners to extend their outreach efforts and diversify their applicant base[148]. Finally, factors such as the mobility component, limited availability of competing programmes, and the network of industrial and research partnerships were cited less frequently, while the award of joint degrees and the availability of PhD opportunities were identified as the least influential factors in attracting non-EU students.

In addition to the factors influencing academic sustainability and attractiveness detailed throughout this report, context-specific good practices gathered through in-depth interviews and the survey enhancing academic sustainability are available to the reader in **ANNEX I - Good practices to enhance long-term sustainability.**

[148] IDEAS, EMAI, MER's Interviews. Op. cit.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The present report investigated three key dimensions for the sustainability of Erasmus Mundus programmes, namely, financial, institutional, and academic. The findings confirmed that achieving sustainability should be understood as a complex process, shaped by a wide range of interrelated elements and factors.

While the vast majority of surveyed Erasmus Mundus programmes do have financial independence from EM funding as a short, medium- or long-term goal, 22% do not see a future for their programme without EU funding. It is important to understand that a project which is "funded by EM" is not necessarily a project "unable to operate without EM funding". In fact, many programmes have already organised some editions without EM funding, either prior to being selected, in between funding periods or towards the end of their project lifetime.

The survey and interviews showed that for the **financial autonomy** of the programmes, ensuring a stable income of tuition fees paid by self-funded students is a crucial factor. To attract sufficient self-funded applicants, the availability of some financial aid (in the form of fee waivers, partial fee waivers, paid internships, credit mobility scholarships, consortium/industry scholarships, etc.) to at least some of the students is essential. Furthermore, diversifying funding sources (including private, national, and institutional co-funding) and ensuring institutional in-kind support, like administrative resources, promotional efforts and shared facilities – helps programmes reduce operational costs and withstand political or economic changes. Although securing financial aid from industry was identified as one of the preferred funding sources for achieving sustainability, it remains largely limited due to different factors such as programme focus, language requirements or lack of tradition. Further debate is needed on how cooperation with the world-of-work could generate new forms of financial support and evolve into partnerships that directly benefit the financial sustainability of programmes. The implications of prudent financial management and cost minimisation to ensure financial viability should be discussed further. Identifying and analysing the specific cost components that make Erasmus Mundus programmes more expensive than regular master's programmes could help clarify where efficiencies can be gained and which costs are inherent to their joint international nature and their excellence.

In addition to financial considerations, the **institutional dimension** of sustainability raises several hypotheses for discussion. Long-term viability depends on strategic recognition, stability and commitment at both the institutional and individual levels. It also relies on strong collaboration and effective coordination mechanisms, both within each institution (in-kind, administrative and regulatory institutional support) and between consortium partners (based on well-defined partnership agreements and clear governance structures). A key question is how institutional frameworks and governance practices can be further developed to strengthen sustainability, particularly by integrating Erasmus Mundus programmes into universities' overarching strategies while preserving their inherently international, joint, and flexible character.

Finally, the third dimension, **academic excellence and attractiveness**, is essential to secure a consistent and diverse student intake. Talented students from all over the world are not only drawn by the availability of scholarships, but by a combination of many different factors. These include the reputation of Erasmus Mundus and its core attributes: jointness, international mobility, innovation, and excellence. Also employment prospects, networking and outreach possibilities with industry and research entities, thematic relevance, international exposure and academic reputation. Graduates' tracking systems may reinforce the perceived value of the programme among prospective students. Aligning curricula with emerging trends and maintaining an updated thematic area with strong ties with the world-of-work is essential for a masters' sustainability chances. The academic reputation of partner institutions and the limited availability of competing programmes are other important aspects of attractiveness. International mobility opportunities enrich the academic experience and enhance the appeal of Erasmus Mundus programmes.

The sustainability of Erasmus Mundus programmes may depend on how successfully they reconcile funding realities with the nature of EM and its key characteristics. Further discussion on the best ways to attract and retain global talent and on the balance between financial viability and the Erasmus Mundus 'jointness' and excellence requirements will be needed during the conference.

The factors influencing all three dimensions should be taken into consideration from the earliest stages of programme design through their integration into a **comprehensive sustainability plan**. Such planning requires a long-term strategic perspective that combines financial, institutional, and academic considerations – and their interactions – ensuring that programmes can maintain their core activities and societal impact independently of EM funding. Survey responses show that sustainability plans are not yet consistently integrated across programmes, suggesting that there is scope to reinforce their importance through programme requirements.

Additionally, sustainability can be further strengthened across all its dimensions by **fostering synergies and collaboration** with other Erasmus Mundus programmes and EU initiatives. Knowledge sharing and the exchange of good practices can help programmes enhance factors that support long-term sustainability. Moreover, **practical tools and guidance** – such as sustainability planning templates, financial modelling tools, and collection of good practices – could also help academic teams in addressing sustainability challenges while reducing administrative burden.

Despite the complexity of all these interlinked factors, Erasmus Mundus programmes may significantly increase their chances of becoming sustainable by adopting effective financial measures and good institutional practices, by fostering collaboration, and leveraging EU initiatives.

The sustainability conference organised on 20 and 21 November in Brussels will be looking beyond how diversified funding, institutional anchoring and academic innovation can be strengthened, exploring how these elements can be integrated into a coherent long-term vision for the future. The insights and experiences shared during this conference shall feed into actionable recommendations for institutions and policymakers. The aim is to formulate measures to promote the resilience, autonomy and accessibility of Erasmus Mundus programmes, while ensuring they continue to deliver on their excellence objectives and attract new generations of talented students across the world.

7. ANNEX I - Good practices to enhance long-term sustainability

The table below summarises the good practices implemented by consortia to enhance the long-term sustainability of their programmes, indicating the primary sustainability dimension affected by each practice. These practices have been identified through interviews with programme coordinators and open-ended responses from survey participants.

Table 17. Implemented good practices affecting sustainability.

Sustainability dimension	Good practice
Financial sustainability	Reflecting on the programme's sustainability from the outset by developing a comprehensive sustainability plan and structuring the programme to ensure long-term goals and adaptability.
	Applying varying tuition fees across partner institutions to accommodate differing national and institutional regulations at each home university.
	Sharing responsibilities with a partner university without limitations on tuition fee collection, enabling the consortium to set tuition fees based on the actual cost of delivering the programme.
	Prudent spending of EM grants to support the transition to a self-funded model.
	Ensuring that the partner university hosting a larger number of students receives a greater share of the budget and assumes increased responsibility within the programme.
	Reducing registration costs for self-funded students by limiting the registration fee each semester to the university they physically attend, while paying only minimal administrative fees to the others.
	Sharing costs with related research projects and programmes at the host university, for example by aligning consortium in-person meetings with research events or sharing administrative staff for programme management.
	Incorporating blended and online teaching components to optimise staff resources by enabling two groups of students at different institutions to be taught simultaneously.
	Providing consortium-funded scholarships to self-funded students, depending on enrolment numbers and the overall financial capacity of the programme.

Sustainability dimension	Good practice
Institutional sustainability	Advocating for the added value of the programme by consistently emphasising its strategic importance at the highest institutional levels, ensuring that leadership changes and shifting priorities do not result in reduced support to the programme.
	Raising awareness across central services of the participating institutions so that the programme and its particularities are known and taken into consideration.
	Engaging various institutional units, including central administration, international offices, and student support departments, to ensure sustained collaboration and strong institutional backing and visibility for the programme.
	Appointing dedicated staff for key operational, administrative, and coordination roles – supported by secure funding –, to ensure the smooth running of the programme, continuity of responsibilities, and reliable management across partner institutions.
	Operating within the facilities and under the umbrella of the relevant faculty at each partner university to promote resource sharing and leveraging existing administrative structures to streamline programme operations.
	Promoting flexibility within university systems by establishing common standards based on the most demanding partner's requirements, while remaining adaptable to specific cases to ensure smooth cooperation and broad participation.
	Sharing and rotating responsibilities among partner institutions while establishing clear operational procedures and roles to guarantee equal involvement and collective ownership of the programme.
	Creating regional inter-institutional EMJM working groups to exchange best practices, align strategies, and address common challenges. This strengthens collaboration and increases visibility across institutional and governmental stakeholders.
	Holding regular joint coordination meetings with administrative staff and programme directors from all EM programmes within the institution to collectively address programme-specific challenges and align approaches to common administrative and academic issues.

Sustainability dimension	Good practice
Academic excellence and attractiveness	Facilitating networking opportunities with local and international industry stakeholders by organising annual workshops that showcase students' dissertations.
	Involving industry and academia stakeholders by inviting guest speakers and lecturers, engaging them into curriculum design and governance, including them in annual programme reviews, and fostering ongoing collaboration through regular meetings.
	Aligning programme design and curriculum with labour market needs by analysing employability reports, consulting industrial partners, and considering regional and global employment trends.
	Conducting regular market analysis involving various stakeholders – including students, graduates, and employers – to identify emerging needs and trends, and update the curriculum, specialisation options, and programme tracks accordingly.
	Hiring or appointing dedicated marketing staff, or engaging specialised external companies, to support communication and outreach efforts by evaluating how the programme is presented to the market, managing social media presence, and exploring new market opportunities.
	Identifying and agreeing on the targeted student group to direct promotional efforts towards a specific audience.
	Fostering a strong sense of community by providing personalised support to students, designing structured mobility pathways, and maintaining active engagement with alumni networks through initiatives like biannual newsletters.
	Defining clear learning outcomes and aligning them with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) to ensure consistency and provide a common reference point for quality assurance.
	Developing a set of employability tools, including employability events, employability boards, and employability guides, to support students' career readiness and strengthen links with industry partners.
	Enhancing student experience by integrating real-world learning activities throughout the programme – including internships, study trips to local industries, and international industry symposiums – to foster practical skills, labour market exposure, and professional networking.
	Continuously refining and enhancing the curriculum by systematically analysing student research and integrating dissertation topics that directly contribute to the programme's improvement.

8. ANNEX II – Case studies fiches

Former Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes sustainably continued

BIM A+ | European Master in Building Information Modelling

Background

Consortium

- **Universidade do Minho** ⭐
- Univerza v Ljubljani

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
Started as an EMJMD in 2019 and has continued independently since 2023.	Open choice mobility	1 academic year (60 ECTS credits)	Engineering, manufacturing and construction

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)

- Around 20-30 self-funded students pay €9,000 in **tuition fees** for the programme to the university hosting their first semester.
- **In-kind contribution** from each institution in the form of a dedicated furnished classroom.

Financial aid(s)

- Between 12-15 Consortium Scholarships of €5,000.
- Max. 2 Consortium Scholarships of €14,000, only available when programme reaches full capacity (i.e., 50 students).
- Max. 4 EU Scholarships of €6,500 for EU citizens.
- Tuition fee reductions.
- Industry-sponsored scholarships.

Financial management

- Universidade do Minho, often receiving a larger share of tuition fees, takes on more responsibilities and costs (e.g., BIM A+ Secretariat).
- Tuition fees are directly allocated to the programme operations rather than being absorbed by partner institutions.
- Scholarships depend on total enrolments and expected tuition revenue; students may not receive a scholarship initially but could later.
- This tuition fee structure and arrangement was in place even during the EMJMD funding period.

Consortium Governance

- A dedicated BIM A+ Secretariat supports administrative operations. To reduce costs, the programme shares this service with another European Civil Engineering Master's programme within Universidade do Minho under a mutual agreement between directors.
- BIM A+ structure includes six modules, each university leading two and contributing to all, ensuring clear roles and concurrent delivery.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility

Universidade do Minho acknowledges the programme as an excellent asset, contributing to its **reputation**, **communication** and **internationalisation** efforts.

Institutional structure

BIM A+ retains its independent structure within each partner institution:

- **Univerza v Ljubljani**: BIM A+ is managed at the faculty level with a dedicated internationalisation department.
- **Universidade do Minho:** All administration is handled centrally.

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance

- Student interviews were initially conducted to gather feedback and refine the programme.
- Industry-driven field requiring constant updates and refinement.
- **Student research** directly informs and shapes ongoing programme improvements.

Partnerships

- Partner network meets three times a year at key academic stages, with flexible levels of involvement.
- Some partners offer **student sponsorships**, often with conditions like language requirements.
- 80% of theses are developed in collaboration with **industry partners**, with some topics proposed by alumni now working in the industry.

Attracting Talent

Career prospects

- A **cutting-edge industry-focused field** attracting professionals from various engineering disciplines within construction.
- The one-year format is appreciated, balancing effective training with a quick return to work.
- Few Master's programmes in this field are offered in English, making BIM A+ uniquely **accessible** to **international students.**
- Participation typically targets students with the financial capacity to **self-fund**.

Communication and promotion

- Communication leverages institutional reputation, BIM A+ industry relevance, and student experience and community.
- Alumni serve as ambassadors, supported by website sections for testimonials and LinkedIn-linked alumni profiles.
- A closely-knit environment is fostered through personal attention to students, supported by a dedicated WhatsApp group per cohort.
- A **cost-effective** Portuguese firm manages social media, enhancing programme content for better reach and impact under a light contract.
- BIM A+ remains listed in the **EM catalogue**, serving as a **key entry point** for prospective students.

Additional information

- BIM A+: https://bimaplus.org/

ALGANT | Algebra, Geometry, and Number Theory Master Programme

Background

Consortium

- **Université de Bordeaux** ⭐
- Universiteit Leiden
- Università degli Studi di Padova
- Université Paris-Saclay
- Università degli Studi di Milano
- Concordia University
- Universität Duisburg-Essen
- Universität Regensburg

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
ALGANT began operations as an EMJMD in 2004. Although EM funding ended in 2016, it is still operating.	Open choice mobility	2 academic years (120 ECTS credits)	Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)

EM funding and transitional periods:

- EM grants.
- Tuition fees exceeding operational costs.
- Internal funding.

Self-funding period (since 2019):

- Each cohort is composed of 35 students. Half of them are self-funded students paying €4,000/year, while the rest receive **fee reductions** or **scholarships**.

Financial aid(s)

During the self-funding period, the consortium has been able to offer **financial aid** to students, which plays a crucial role in keeping the programme attractive.

- 2 or 3 24-month scholarships based on academic merits.
- Around 20 12-month scholarships based on academic merit.
- Full or partial tuition fee reductions for top-ranked students.
- The Hadamard Foundation supports the consortium by providing some of these scholarships.

Financial management

- Prudent EM funding management from the consortium over the first 10 years created **reserves** that supported the transition to a **self-funded model.** Parallely, ALGANT continued collecting tuition and internal funds, aiming to make these its primary funding sources.
- **During the self-funding period**, each partner university **minimised programme costs**, covering **local tuition fees**, specific **teaching expenses**, and the **annual graduation ceremony**.
- Currently, the coordinating institution bears the management costs of the programme exceeding the costs covered by the consortium agreement to remain part of the consortium without compromising the established financial model.

Consortium Governance

- Two in-person annual meetings, along with the thesis defence, are hosted by partner universities on a rotational basis.
- The consortium was enlarged in 2014 with the German universities. It increased **course variety** and **mobility options** while attracting students from targeted areas. However, no further expansion is planned to avoid additional coordination challenges.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility

For the coordinating university, ALGANT holds:

- **Strategic relevance** and priority as an **EM programme**, enhancing its visibility across the institution.
- The faculty of Science and Technology considers it a high-quality international project and a source of **PhD talent**.
- University commitment of extra time and resources to ensure the programme's viability.

Institutional structure

Coordinating university:

- **Fully embedded** in the institution, with administrative management bieng handled by the International Relations Office.
- Efforts to establish a **network** connecting institutional staff across EM programmes to promote knowledge sharing at the coordinating university.

Other consortium partners:

- **Decentralised models**, with administrative and academic management being handled mainly at the departmental level.

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance

- ALGANT maintains **high teaching quality** and avoids major structural changes in the courses offered.

Partnerships

- Academic partnerships are prioritised to maintain a strong focus on pure mathematics rather than an industry-oriented curriculum.

Attracting Talent

Career prospects

- Most graduates pursue **academic careers**, enrolling in PhD programmes or securing teaching positions.
- Students choosing the specialised branch in Cryptography may enter the private sector.
- The programme benefits from **low-competition** due to its unique academic focus.

Communication and promotion

- Alumni organise an event every 18 months to strengthen connections, community and foster cohesion, promoted through the alumni's website
- ALGANT leverages the strong **academic reputation** of its partner universities in the field to promote its high academic quality.

Additional information

- ALGANT: https://www.algant.eu/pages/consortium/.

Concluded former Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes

EIMAS | European Interdisciplinary Master African Studies

Background

Consortium

- **Universität Bayreuth** ⭐
- Université Bordeaux Montaigne
- Universidade do Porto

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
The programme was first established as an EMJMD in 2019. It will cease operations in November 2025.	Fixed path with thesis flexibility	2 academic years (120 ECTS credits)	Arts and humanities

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)

- **EM grants**.
- A small portion of students have been self-funded (5 out of 64 enrolled students). **Tuition fees** per semester range from €2,250 to €4,500 depending on country of origin.

Financial aid(s)

- **EM scholarships** (59 out of 64 total students).
- Franco-Bavarian University cooperation centre grants €500 plus up to €450 **travel allowance** for self-funded students studying in France or Bavaria.

Financial management

- The coordinating university is responsible for **collecting all funding** and **distributing** it based on needs and expenditures. As the Universität Bayreuth is not allowed to collect tuition fees, this revenue is allocated entirely to the Portuguese and French institutions.
- **Remaining programme funds** will be used to organise an alumni event in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) in October 2025.

Consortium Governance

- **Administrative** and **mobility management** is primarily handled by the programme coordinator at the coordinating institution, with targeted support on mobility-related issues from Universidade do Porto.
- Challenges in securing new, especially African, partner universities have significantly impacted its **long-term sustainability**.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility

The programme receives **faculty-level support** but lacks **sufficient commitment** from the central university.

Coordinating university:

- The central administration does not fully recognise the programme's added value and overlooks its distinct **EM identity** and **international relevance**.

Universidade do Porto:

- **Limited visibility** and awareness of EIMAS across faculties.

Institutional structure

Coordinating university:

- EIMAS operates as an **independent project**.
- Strategic decisions are made at the programme level.
- The university fosters **academic exchange** between EIMAS and non-EIMAS students.

Universidade do Porto:

- The programme is managed at the faculty level, supporting specialisation but limiting engagement with central services.

Université Bordeaux Montaigne:

- **Limited commitment** and integration with central services.

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance

- **Academic rigour** is sustained through close collaboration and continuous monitoring of students.
- Modules are adapted flexibly to evolving needs. Nevertheless, flexibility varies across partners due to **differing regulations**.

Partnerships

- The academic focus of EIMAS and the research-oriented career paths of its graduates have led to **stronger partnerships** with **academic** and **research institutions** than with industry.

Attracting Talent

Career prospects

- Career prospects of the programme include **PhD studies** and **research positions** both in EU and non-EU countries.
- The academic offering is highly flexible, allowing students to select courses and write theses on topics aligned with their career goals.
- Students gain **hands-on experience** in research and data collection, enhancing their **employability** in the field.

Communication and promotion

- Promotional efforts focus on leveraging students and alumni as programme ambassadors, participating in conferences, meetings, and Q&A sessions with prospective applicants.
- **High student involvement** and **personalised support** are considered key elements of the programme's outreach strategy.

Additional information

- EIMAS: https://www.eimas.eu/en/

DC Lead	Erasmus Mundus joint Master Degree in Digital Communication Leadership

Background

Consortium

- **Paris-Lodron-Universität Salzburg** ⭐
- The Wageningen University & Research
- Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- Aalborg Universiteit

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
The programme was established in 2015. After ten years of activity, it will cease operations as of September 30th, 2025.	Choice-based sequential mobility	2 academic years (120 ECTS credits)	Information and Communication Technologies

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)	Financial aid(s)
• **EM grants**. • **Tuition fees** from a small portion of self-funded students per cohort (0-7 out of an estimated cohort of 18-25 students).	• Additional support from partner universities has resulted in reduced participation costs.

Financial management

- **Participation costs** vary significantly by academic track and nationality, in accordance with institutional and **national regulations**.
- Due to the programme's focus, securing **corporate sponsorship** proved challenging, and formal financial support did not materialise.
- The consortium mobilised accumulated **internal reserves** to reduce participation costs and make the programme more affordable. However, these efforts were unsuccessful in stabilising funding sources and attracting a sufficient number of self-funded students.

Consortium Governance

- Coordination across the consortium has proven especially demanding and time-consuming when developing procedures that satisfy the requirements of multiple partner institutions, (e.g., ECTS, examination formats and schedules, grading protocols). This posed challenges to the implementation of a **harmonised curriculum**, that was nonetheless successfully implemented.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility	Institutional structure
In the coordinating university: • DCLead is **internally recognised** as a prestigious initiative, but this has not translated into effective institutional support. • DCLead has served as a reference for other EM programmes. **In other partner universities:** • The programme is valued for its contribution to **internationalisation objectives**. • **Shifting political priorities** have significantly weakened institutional commitment to the programme. • The **high costs** of EM programmes reduce the incentive for universities to maintain them beyond EU funding period.	**In the coordinating university:** • The programme is embedded within the internationalisation strategy but treated as a **stand-alone programme** both academically and administratively. • The programme receives **limited institutional support** from the central services and departments of the university.

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance	Partnerships
• DCLead conducts a biannual review involving students, alumni and partners. The findings are compiled into a report and discussed within the consortium. • Courses are regularly updated to reflect **emerging trends**. • The programme was evaluated by the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) in 2022.	• DCLead has a wide **network** of academic and industry partners. • Alumni play a key role in linking the programme to industry, fostering connections and promoting collaborations.

Attracting Talent

Career prospects	Communication and promotion
• Career prospects of DCLead graduates include **PhD studies** and work in **public international organisations**.	• The consortium engages an **external consultant** to support its **communication** and outreach strategy. • Students and alumni play an active role in managing communication through social media channels. • DCLead focused on changing and adding new **associated partners** to increase attractiveness. However, this had limited impact on the programme's visibility and appeal.

Additional information

- DCLead: https://dclead.eu/

Current Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes

STEPS JMD	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Sustainable Transportation and Electrical Power Systems

Background

Consortium

- **Universidad de Oviedo** ⭐
- Sapienza Università di Roma
- Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel
- Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
The programme began operations as an EM Master's in 2012 and has continuously received EM funding until 2024. Additionally, It has been selected for funding in the 2025 EM application process.	Convergent cohort mobility	2 academic years (120 ECTS credits)	Engineering, manufacturing and construction

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)	Financial aid(s)
• **EM grants**. • Around 15% are self-funded students, paying either €9,000 or €18,000 **tuition fees** for the programme.	• EM **scholarships**. • 1 scholarship provided by the Sapienza Università di Roma.

Financial management

- STEPS JMD had not been able to open an application call in 2025 due to the pending resolution for EM funding and insufficient alternative sources. As it has been selected for EM funding, this will allow the consortium to launch the next call in September 2026.
- **Limited human resources** hinder regulatory compliance and timely scholarship payments.

Consortium Governance

- Successful and committed collaboration has encouraged consortium partners to engage in **joint research projects**.
- Political changes during BREXIT led the University of Nottingham, a renowned partner institution, to withdraw from the consortium. It was replaced by the Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, charging **lower tuition fees** and reducing **participation costs**.
- **High bureaucracy** and conflicting regulations across partner institutions hinder **consortium management**.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility	Institutional structure
• The coordinating institution publicly aknowledges the **high quality** of EM Master's programmes. • All partner universities in the consortium benefit from consistent institutional commitment.	• The coordinating institution has a **dedicated administrative unit** managing EM programmes centrally. • Sapienza Università di Roma operates with a centralised structure. • Universities of Coimbra and Kiel are managed at faculty level.

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance	Partnerships
• The programme was initially designed based on **market needs** and is regularly updated through employability reports and consultations with industrial partners. • The consortium focuses on enhancing its **teaching methodologies** by introducing innovative approaches and ensuring the **required expertise** among lecturers.	• The programme's **network** of associated partners includes around 20 companies and organisations, ranging from multinationals, start-ups, spin-offs, innovation firms, and public institutions. • Partners collaborate with STEPS in providing **economic support** for students to complete their master thesis research. • Associated partners offer **paid internship placements** for STEPS students (around €1,000 per month).

Attracting Talent

Career prospects	Communication and promotion
• The consortium ensures the number of internships offered exceeds the number of students per cohort. • Students benefit from valuable **networking opportunities** with industrial stakeholders thanks to the programme's partnerships with leading companies across various sectors. • STEPS achieves a **high employability rate**.	• The coordinating institution has a **dedicated promotional strategy** to advertise all EM programmes within the university. • Alumni actively promote the programme through press engagements and participation in events and conferences. • **Industrial partners** and press representatives are invited to thesis defences to showcase the excellence of graduates. • Additional high-level promotional efforts are needed to attract more students, particularly from the EU.

Additional information

- STEPS JMD: https://www.emjmdsteps.eu.

MER | Erasmus Mundus joint Master Degree in Marine Environment

Background

Consortium

- **Universidad del País Vasco** ⭐
- Université de Bordeaux
- Université de Liège
- University of Southampton
- Universidade dos Açores

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
The programme was established in 2006 and became an EM Master's in 2013. The introduction of EM funding marked a turning point in academic excellence. The EM grant was not renewed in 2025.	Choice-based convergent mobility	2 academic years (120 ECTS credits)	Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)

Self-funding period:
- Registration fees from self-funded students.
- Targeted financial support from the regional government.

EM funding period:
- EM grants.
- Around half of each cohort's 40 to 45 self-funded students pay €4,500 or €9,000/year in participation costs – depending on their country of origin – to the university hosting their first semester.
- Internal agreements for research-related expenses.
- In-kind contributions from partner universities.

Financial aid(s)

Self-funding period:
- Registration cost reductions. Full registration fees apply only when students attend a university physically.
- National mobility grants.

EM funding period:
- 20 to 22 EM scholarships.
- Scholarships to self-funded students from their home governments.
- MER Consortium Grants in the form of annual registration fee waivers, mobility grants or research grants.
- Institutional and governmental aid for mobility and accommodation.
- Registration cost reductions.

Financial management

- MER launched the 2025 application cycle without EM scholarships, reaching a total of 26 self-funded students. As the EM grant was not renewed in 2025, this edition will continue running **without EM funding**.
- While the programme could continue operating beyond the EM funding periods, it would be forced to scale back many of its most attractive activities, high-impact procedures, and joint initiatives, **reducing** its overall **academic excellence**.

Consortium Governance

- A joint MER Secretariat, composed of two staff members at the coordinating institution, supports its administrative operations.
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the **selection process** shifted **online**, allowing for an extended timeline and making it more manageable.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility

- A **high level of commitment** is demonstrated through the awarding of joint diplomas across the consortium.

Institutional structure

- Fully integrated into the postgraduate offering of the coordinating institution and recognised as a key element of **internationalisation** and **academic excellence**.
- Despite institutional commitment, MER still faces challenges within partner institutions (i.e., language barriers, regulatory constraints).

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance

- The programme has applied the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes for its accreditation since 2023.
- A **visiting validator** monitors the implementation of the quality assurance process, in which stakeholders are actively involved.

Partnerships

- The programme benefits from the participation of numerous **guest lecturers** and **contributors** from institutions and companies at no cost to the programme.
- The consortium has over 100 associated partners, offering 50 thesis placements per intake.

Attracting Talent

Career prospects

- **Highly appealing topic** from the academic, political, social, and economic perspectives.
- The programme fully aligns with the UN Decade of Ocean Science, making it highly relevant for **academic research**.
- The programme offers varied career pathways, including **employment** in related fields – typically secured within a year –, academic roles, PhDs studies, among others.

Communication and promotion

- Currently, the MER Community includes over 600 actively engaged members, supported by a biannual newsletter.
- Alumni play a key role as ambassadors of the programme.
- Some partner universities host dedicated events – Erasmus Day – to promote EM Master's programmes locally.
- The consortium collaborates with EMA and **relevant regional institutions** for targeted outreach efforts.

Additional information

- MER: https://merconsortium.eu/.

EMAI | Erasmus Mundus joint Master in Artificial Intelligence

Background

Consortium

- **Universitat Pompeu Fabra** ⭐
- Sapienza Università di Roma
- Radboud Universiteit
- Univerza v Ljubljani
- University College London

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
The programme was established as an EMJM in November 2022, with its first cohort of students in September 2023 – expected to graduate in 2025.	Choice-based sequential mobility	2 academic years (120 ECTS credits)	Information and Communication Technologies

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)	Financial aid(s)
• **EM grants**. • In 2025, it will welcome a small group – 4 out of 34 – of self-funded students from both EU and non-EU countries. The **tuition fee** is €9,000/year.	• EM **scholarships**. • **Tuition fee-waivers**. • 50% **tuition fee discount** for self-funded EU students.

Financial management

- The **coordinating institution** receives the EM grants and is **responsible for distributing** them between partner institutions based on the number of students they host and the planned events at each university – detailed in the grant and Partnership Agreement.
- To avoid challenges with local payment procedures, financial details are clearly specified in the EMAI Partnership Agreement.

Consortium Governance

- The coordinating institution plays a central role in ensuring **effective consortium management**.
- **Regular meetings** proceed smoothly, supported by defined committees and boards with specific roles and responsibilities.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility	Institutional structure
• The communication office of the coordinating institution enhances **programme visibility** across the organisation by regularly updating the institutional website.	• EMAI is embedded within institutional structures but treated as a **stand-alone programme** due to its particularities. • It receives **support** from the central services of the coordinating institution. • Some partner universities lack **sufficient administrative support** at the institutional level.

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance	Partnerships
• Semestrial surveys regularly collect students' feedback. • **Internal quality assurance** units at each partner university regularly issue quality recommendations. • An **External Advisory Board** annually assesses the programme's performance, and topicality through formal reports. Maintaining this board may be unfeasible without continued EU funding.	• Although **private sector partnerships** have been challenging to attract, the programme has built a network of 17 associated partners • Some associated partners offer **paid internships** to students. • The entry of the first generation of EMAI graduates into the labour market in 2025 is expected to be a benchmark for private-sector partnerships and potential funding.

Attracting Talent

Career prospects	Communication and promotion
• No cohort has yet entered the **labour market** due to the recent nature of the programme.	• EMAI holds contracts with educational portals like StudyPortals or EuroEducation, and maintains active social media accounts to boost its **international visibility**. • A consortium representative ensures EMAI is consistently present at **international fairs worldwide**. • To enhance engagement during application periods, EMAI organises different types of **webinars** and Q&A sessions with prospective students.

Additional information

- EMAI: https://www.upf.edu/web/emai.

LCT | Erasmus Mundus joint Master in Language and Communication Technologies

Background

Consortium

- **Universität des Saarland** ⭐
- Université de Lorraine
- Univerzita Karlova
- Rijksuniversiteit Groningen
- Universidad del País Vasco

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
Established in 2006 as an EM Master's, the LCT programme has been running for 19 years, with three consecutive funding periods: 09/2007-08/2013, 09/2013-08/2019, and 09/2019-08/2025.	Open choice mobility	2 academic years (120 ECTS credits)	Information and Communication Technologies

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)

- **EM grants**.
- Around one-third of each cohort – approximately 10 out of 30 students per intake – are **self-funded**.
- Targeted governmental **support** for activities and events.

Financial aid(s)

- EM **scholarships** (during EM funding periods).
- Erasmus+ **mobility grants**.
- A limited number of **partial fee waivers** for self-funded students.
- National financial **support**, including a €5,000 grant in Groningen.

Financial management

- LCT is expected to remain **financially viable** without EM grants until at least 2027, supported by self-funded students' **contributions** and **reserves** deliberately saved from EM grants.
- Securing **private sector sponsorship** was originally part of the sustainability plan. However, it never materialised due to limited time and human resources hindering networking efforts.
- **National financial aid** was also explored, but required conditions, like local language requirements, that could not be met.

Consortium Governance

- In September 2025, the partnership was reduced to five universities, with Trento and Malta leaving the consortium.
- The central management of the consortium is handled by two part-time dedicated administrators.
- The consortium holds monthly online meetings to address broader challenges and share programme updates. These are typically well-attended and often include student representation.
- In addition to regular communication, annual in-person meetings are hosted by different partners on a rotational basis.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility

In the coordinating university:

- The department ensures **institutional visibility** of the programme by involving local lecturers, fostering interaction between local and LCT students, and promoting it through its official website.

Institutional structure

In the coordinating university:

- The university adopts a **decentralised structure**, with management handled at the department level.
- While the programme is academically integrated, its administrative and financial management operate independently.

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance

- From an external perspective, quality is maintained through biannual reviews by an external QA board and input from industry speakers at the annual meeting.
- The curriculum follows a **flexible approach**, with core compulsory courses at all institutions and optional ones at each partner, ensuring **local alignment**.

Partnerships

- The consortium includes eight **research** and **industry associated partners**, and nine academic supporters from targeted regions, boosting the programme's attractiveness.
- Some associated partners regularly offer **paid internships** to students.
- The consortium is exploring adding new associated partners who can contribute meaningfully to the programme – either through financial support or internship opportunities.

Attracting Talent

Career prospects

- The **flexible curriculum** allows students to customise their learning experience by selecting optional courses aligned with their professional interests.

Communication and promotion

- The programme maintains a mailing list of alumni, which is used to regularly invite former students to events.
- LCT maintains **dedicated social media** pages on LinkedIn and Instagram managed by the dedicated administrators.
- LCT has requested a three-year extension to maintain its visibility in the EM catalogue.

Additional information

- LCT: https://lct-master.org.

Erasmus Mundus Design Measures

IDEAS	Master in Innovative Design of Themed Entertainment and Attractions for Sustainability

Background

Consortium

- **Universitat Rovira i Virgili** ⭐
- Breda University of Applied Sciences
- Université Côte d'Azur

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
The project has been funded as an EMDM initiative from 2023 to 2025 and applied for funding to continue as an EMJM in 2025.	Fixed path with thesis flexibility	2 academic years (120 ECTS credits)	Business, administration and law

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)	Financial aid(s)
For the development of the project: • EM grants. **For the delivery of the programme:** • EM grants. • Tuition fees from self-funded students.	**For the delivery of the programme:** • **EU mobility grants** • **Monthly grants** for international mobilities offered by the coordinating university.

Financial management

- The consortium has developed a financial strategy to ensure the programme is sustainable beyond EM funding periods, aiming to eventually rely primarily on **tuition fees** from self-funded students.

Consortium Governance

During the EMDM phase:

- **In-person meetings** have allowed partners to become familiar with the administrative and operational contexts of partner universities.
- The consortium has scheduled two to three in-person meetings annually **with industry associated partners**, held at key locations.
- Smooth consortium coordination has enabled joint spin-off activities with students, fostering early collaborative work.

Looking ahead to the EMJM phase:

- The consortium plans to hold at least two in-person meetings yearly, involving an assessment board composed of industry partners.
- The consortium envisions maintaining dedicated roles, including a project manager and local coordinators.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility	Institutional structure
• The consortium has raised awareness among central services that might be involved in the future delivery delivering the future EMJM programme. • IDEAS expects strong **support** from central university services during the EMJM implementation.	• The programme will be fully integrated into the academic offerings of partner universities, receiving **administrative support** and **visibility** from their central services. • The consortium plans to operate within the facilities and under the umbrella of **relevant faculty** at each partner university.

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance	Partnerships
• European Approach for Quality Assurance submission has been made, and programme is formally accredited by the coordinating university. The programme will benefit from external and internal quality assurance. • A **multidisciplinary curriculum** and a **student-centred approach** to ensure flexibility will be maintained.	• The project aims to establish **strong connections** between students and the industry, already **engaging international organisations**. • Over 20 associated partners who have signed commitment letters to **support** the programme's implementation. • The consortium plans to expand the **network** during the EMJM phase and involve them in its governance structure. • Guest lecturers from industry will deliver masterclasses.

Attracting Talent

Career prospects	Communication and promotion
• IDEAS will keep an **industry focus,** offering students opportunities for research and participate in PhD studies at partner universities. • The programme will promote **intercultural engagement** to deepen understanding of global industry challenges.	• A targeted **marketing plan** has been developed to promote the programme and attract students globally. • The consortium leverages its **associated partners' global presence** to boost visibility of the EMDM project and future EMJM. • IDEAS aims to **foster synergies** with other Erasmus+ initiatives to **support** the **dissemination of the programme**.

Additional information

- IDEAS European Approach Accreditation: https://www.aqu.cat/doc/Universitats/Titulacions/European-Approach/Visita-extena-MU-EA-IDEAS-URV-2025

DHJM | Master in Digital Humanities

Background

Consortium

- **Sveučilište u Zadru** ⭐
- Université de La Rochelle
- Universität Rostock
- Klaipėdos universitetas
- Universidad Católica de Valencia

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
The project was awarded funding through the EMDM from 2022 to 2023. It is currently in the process of securing European accreditation.	To be defined	2 academic years (120 ECTS credits)	Arts and humanities

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)	Financial aid(s)
For the development of the project: • EM grants. **For the delivery of the programme:** • EM grants. • Tuition fees from self-funded students. • The programme may be eligible for EU-CONEXUS mobility grants for teaching staff.	**For the delivery of the programme:** • EM **scholarships**.

Financial management

- Université de La Rochelle, facing broader budget constraints, made the consortium's application for EMJM funding in the coming years a prerequisite for moving forward with the project, regardless of the level of financial support available from other partner institutions.
- **Tuition fee limits** in France and Germany assign financial coordination to the Croatian partner, allowing fees based on full costs.
- **Alternative funding sources** may be explored once the programme is launched to ensure its **long-term sustainability**.

Consortium Governance

- Partner universities are members of the European Universities alliance EU-CONEXUS, within which the programme will operate.
- For the European **accreditation self-assessment**, the team designed the consortium's governance, enrolment process, and evaluation committees, with EM funding enabling a staff member to support the report over three to four months.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility	Institutional structure
• Two other joint Master's programmes exist under the EU-CONEXUS framework. These top-down initiatives, driven by the alliance, received a **higher degree of support** at both the alliance and institutional levels compared to the DHJM, which emerged as a bottom-up programme initiated by scholars and academics across the partner institutions. • The project received **limited support** from both the alliance structure and the central administration at La Rochelle. • Since the programme secured EMDM funding, EU-CONEXUS has become progressively more actively involved, particularly in supporting the **accreditation process**.	• If the programme is awarded EMJM funding, it will benefit from an **international Secretariat** and will be embedded in the EU-CONEXUS academic offering. • Students at Université de La Rochelle will receive **local support** by the central international office.

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance	Partnerships
• The consortium revised the teaching model several times to meet the quality assurance standards of partner universities. • The programme was developed from scratch, aiming to maintain a strong connection to current research in the field.	• During the EMDM stage, the project has primarily focused on identifying organisations willing to provide **internships**. • Given the programme's focus, the main collaborators are cultural institutions and, to a lesser extent, **private companies**.

Attracting Talent

Career prospects	Communication and promotion
• The consortium plans to organise a Digital Humanities Project Lab at the end of the fourth semester hosted by the Sveučilište u Zadru.	• The EU-CONEXUS label and dedicated website are expected to boost the programme's **visibility** and appeal.

Additional information

- EU-CONEXUS Master in Digital Humanities: https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/pojects/eu-conexus-joint-master-programme-in-digital-humanities/.
- European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (EU-CONEXUS): https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/.

Comparable non-Erasmus Mundus Master's programmes

EMCC	European Master in Classical Cultures

Background

Consortium

- Albert-Ludwigs Universität Freiburg (DE)
- Westfälische Wilhelms Universität Münster (DE)
- Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu (PL)
- Εθνικό και Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών (GR)
- Université Toulouse-Jean Jaurès (FR)
- Università degli studi di Palermo (IT)
- Università degli Studi di Perugia (IT)
- Università degli Studi Roma Tre (IT)
- Universidad de Salamanca (ES)
- Universidade de Lisboa (PT)
- Univerza v Ljubljani (SL)
- Istanbul Universiteit (TR)
- Universität Hamburg (DE)
- Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου (CY)

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
EMCC received Socrates-Erasmus funding during its planning phase in 2006, but continued operations without EU funding.	One-semester mobility model	2 academic years (120 ECTS credits)	Arts and humanities

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)

- **Tuition fees** from self-funded students.
- **Institutional financial support** for administrative and operational tasks.

Financial aid(s)

- Erasmus+ **mobility grants** (incompatible with internal grants).
- **Internal grants** (incompatible with Erasmus+ mobility grants).
- **Scholarships** from external organisations, such as the DAAD or the Université Franco-Italienne.

Financial management

- While tuition fees vary according to **national and institutional regulations**, tuition fees are paid solely at the student's home university.
- To support students during their mobility periods, EMCC explored EM funding. However, it was ultimately discarded due to the programme's focus on European students, which did not align with the EM requirement to target international students.

Consortium Governance

- Candidate proposals and applications are jointly reviewed by a board of 14 professors representing all participating institutions.
- Administrative processes are handled jointly by the two universities chosen by the students, receiving at the end a **full joint degree**.
- Students come together in person at the annual Summer School, which is hosted in one of the partner cities.
- The consortium is led by co-directors, who are elected by the consortium's Assembly for a three-year term. After each term, the role rotates to a representative from another partner institution, ensuring **shared governance** and **collaboration** across the group.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility

- The programme enjoys **strategic visibility** and **institutional support,** from the departmental level up to the rectorates. However, visibility varies within the consortium.
- The programme relies on **institutional commitment**, providing support but potentially slowing processes and hindering consortium coordination.

Institutional structure

- Although administrative structures vary across the consortium, EMCC is fully integrated into the regular academic offerings of the coordinating university, and delivered in the local language of the partner universities – occasionally in English.

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance

- EMCC curriculum is annually reviewed at each partner university to ensure alignment with **labour market needs**.
- Due to its high quality standards, EMCC initially faced difficulties with the entry level of incoming students. However, academic levels improved by setting entry requirements and preparing students at the Bachelor level.

Partnerships

- Given its focus on classical culture, EMCC collaborates primarily with **research institutes** rather than with industry partners.
- Research institutions host students for **internships**. Additional internships are offered by museums and cultural organisations affiliated with partner universities.

Attracting Talent

Career prospects

- Most graduates pursue research careers and secure **PhD positions** shortly after completing the EMCC.
- Some graduates even obtain **permanent academic positions** upon graduation.

Communication and promotion

- EMCC invests in **visibility** and **outreach**, maintaining a dedicated website and active social media accounts.
- The programme is also widely advertised within partner universities through their regular communication channels.
- Alumni testimonials with fellowships play a key role in promotion.

Additional information

- EMCC: https://emccs.uni-muenster.de.

Joint International Master in Sustainable Development

Background

Consortium

- **Universität Graz** ⭐
- Universität Leipzig
- Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
The programme was established in 2008 and has been running for 17 years now.	One-semester mobility model (with optional additional mobility)	2 academic years (180 ECTS credits)	Social sciences, journalism and information

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)

- National or **institutional funding** from each university.
- **Tuition fees** from self-funded students.

Financial aid(s)

- Few **scholarships** are offered by the coordinating institution.
- DAAD scholarships are available to students entering the programme at Universität Leipzig.

Financial management

- Tuition fees vary according to **national and institutional regulations** of each partner university.
- Each partner university independently manages its **own budget** and **tuition fee collection**.
- The programme's integration into local curricula enables **cost savings** through **shared resources** in course delivery.
- The consortium explored applying for EM funding but abandoned due to the ineligibility of its Japanese mobility partner.

Consortium Governance

- The consortium incorporates three mobility partners for the specialisation tracks: Universiteit Utrecht, Universität Basel, and Hiroshima Daigaku. Moreover, the Universiteit Stellenbosch and the TERI School of Advanced Studies occasionally participate as mobility partners.
- A **joint selection process** with partner universities evaluating applicants and mobility institutions assessing students who choose them.
- A **dedicated profile** currently manages **logistical aspects**. It has proved more efficient than rotating the role among partner institutions.
- Due to funding constraints, there are **no integration activities** that bring the entire cohort together or joint graduation ceremonies. However, the consortium plans to expand its partnerships and revise the curriculum, including **jointly delivered blended courses**.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility

- The coordinating institution takes pride in showcasing the programme's success as an **internationalisation strategy.**
- There is institutional backing and growing commitment from the central services of partner universities.

Institutional structure

- The programme is **fully integrated** into the local academic offerings of each degree-awarding university.
- The programme's strong **reliance on institutional support** makes it vulnerable to a shift of priorities in central management.

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance

- The curriculum follows a **flexible approach**, combining shared core credits with locally integrated courses at each university.
- The curriculum is reviewed every five years, while local curricula is updated more frequently.

Partnerships

The programme has made limited efforts to establish **industry partnerships,** mainly due to the low likelihood of securing **private sector sponsorship** at the coordinating institution.

Attracting Talent

Career prospects

- The programme does not prepare students for a specific career path, balancing academic and professional trajectories.
- Alumni often work outside the Austrian and German labour markets due to language-related barriers.
- Student motivation ranges from a strong interest in **sustainability management** to the appeal of growing career opportunities in the field.

Communication and promotion

- National-level promotion is limited, as the programme targets a **diverse international student body** rather than primarily national applicants.
- Online information sessions with Q&A segments and alumni participation have proven effective in securing applicants.

Additional information

- Sustainable Development: https://jointdegree.eu/en/sustainable-development/programme/.

European joint Master's Programme in English and American Studies

Background

Consortium

- **Universität Graz** ⭐
- Université Paris Cité
- Universität Bamberg
- Università Ca' Foscari Venezia
- Uniwersytet Jagiellónski
- Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Lifespan	Mobility type	Duration	Study field
The programme was first established in 2007 and has been running for almost 18 years now.	One-semester mobility model (with optional additional mobility)	2 academic years (120 ECTS credits)	Arts and humanities

Financial Plan

Funding source(s)

- **National education budgets**, with partner universities receiving funding from their respective Ministries of Education.
- **Tuition fees** from self-funded students.

Financial aid(s)

- **Erasmus+ mobility schemes**, namely the European Mobility KA131 and the International Credit Mobility (ICM) KA171.

Financial management

- The financial management of the programme is handled by the **central financial unit** of each participating institution.
- Students' contributions – tuition fee and students union fee – vary depending on **national regulations** and students' countries of origin.
- The BIPs[149], under the Erasmus+ framework, are being considered as a potential financial support for additional **short-term mobilities**.

Consortium Governance

- Pécsi Tudományegyetem and the City College of New York participate in the consortium as mobility partners. The programme is considering expanding the consortium to broaden academic expertise and enhance its appeal.
- Upon graduation, students receive a double degree from both their entrance university and their respective mobility university.
- The proactive involvement of the administrative coordinator plays a key role in maintaining the consortium coordinated and aligned.
- The consortium implements a **joint selection processs**, with partner universities jointly reviewing admissions and mobility placements.
- The consortium organises several joint activities, including virtual orientation sessions, online lectures, hybrid alumni events, and an annual student conference which is hosted in person on a rotational basis by partner universities.

Institutional Support

Institutional recognition and visibility

- The programme receives **strong institutional** commitment across the consortium.
- At the coordinating institution, the programme is actively supported by the Vice-Rector for Internationalisation and Equal Opportunities.

Institutional structure

- The programme is **fully embedded** in the academic offerings of each partner university.
- At the coordinating university, two staff members manage the administration of the joint Master's programmes, while academic matters are handled by the coordinators of each programme.

Academic Excellence

Quality assurance

- The consortium follows a **jointly agreed curriculum** with a defined number of ECTS in thematic areas with the possibility for each partner to implement it academically, enabling students to tailor their studies to their interests.
- This **decentralised academic approach** means course offerings are largely shaped by faculty expertise and departmental priorities, limiting coordinators' influence.

Partnerships

- Due to the programme's focus, **partnerships with private companies** or research institutions have not been explored.

Attracting Talent

Career prospects

- The programme does not focus on a specific career track. Graduates pursue diverse paths in NGOs, translation, cultural project management, and international offices.
- To enhance **employability** and meet **labour market demands**, **optional industry-oriented courses** such as business English and translation are offered.

Communication and promotion

- The consortium actively promotes the programme to local bachelor's students through newsletters and students briefings.
- At the coordinating institution, student engagement is fostered through events, a dedicated student assistant, mobility information sesions, and a monthly newsletter.
- The inclusion of the City College of New York as a mobility partner is a key asset and unique selling point.

Additional information

- European joint Master's Programme in English and American Studies: https://www.jointdegree.eu/english-and-american-studies.

[149] Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs)