



# ERASMUS MUNDUS STUDENTS HANDBOOK (action 1)



EMA  
Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association

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**Dear Erasmus Mundus participants or perspective students,**

This Handbook is envisaged to assist you throughout the whole period of your involvement with Erasmus Mundus Master programme: from the very beginning when you want to find out more about Erasmus Mundus and apply for the chosen Erasmus Mundus Master Course to the moment when you get ready to return home after successful obtaining of Master degree.

The Handbook is written based on previous experience of former Erasmus Mundus students, interviews with Courses coordinators and results obtained during the Graduate Impact Survey and the General Programme Evaluation conducted in 2007-2011. The Student Handbook is elaborated for all Erasmus Mundus students and, therefore does not include concrete details about every Erasmus Mundus Master Course or every host country, but contains information that would definitely be applicable to all Erasmus Mundus students, and those coming from outside of the EU in particular.

Certainly, this Handbook cannot answer all possible questions; however it is a handy information tool during your Master study experience, since it contains practical tips and additional materials to help you make your Erasmus Mundus more successful.

With any feedback comments and suggestions, please feel free to contact us at [service@em-a.eu](mailto:service@em-a.eu) as the Student Handbook is to be yearly updated.

Best wishes,

ICUnet.AG

Service Provider for Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association

## ABOUT ERASMUS MUNDUS

### Goals of the Erasmus Mundus Programme

Erasmus Mundus programme is a co-operation and mobility programme in the field of higher education on a Master level. Named after the prominent 15th-century Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam and highlighted by the Latin word “mundus”, which stands for “world”, the programme promotes the European Union as a centre of excellence in learning around the globe.

The goals of Erasmus Mundus are the following:

- to improve the accessibility of higher education and visibility of European higher education throughout the world;
- to promote a quality offer in higher education with a distinct European added value, attractive both within the EU and beyond its borders;
- to encourage and enable highly qualified students from all over the world to obtain postgraduate qualifications and experience in the EU;
- to develop more structured co-operation between the EU and Third Country institutions;
- to promote dialogue and understanding between peoples and cultures through co-operation with Third Country.

#### *In other words...*

Erasmus Mundus affords you mobility, which means that if you are an EM student, you will study at least in two different universities according to the programme's regulations and arrangements.

The programme has been up and running since the academic year 2004/2005 and at the moment includes 131 Erasmus Mundus Master Courses<sup>1</sup>.

Here is the most updated list of [Erasmus Mundus Master Courses](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/selected_projects_action_1_master_courses_en.php)

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus\\_mundus/results\\_compendia/selected\\_projects\\_action\\_1\\_master\\_courses\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/selected_projects_action_1_master_courses_en.php)

### Education system in Europe



Education is a key issue for governments in all European countries; however the organisation of education systems differs considerably within the EU. The European Union does not have a “common education policy”, but rather acts as a forum for the exchange of ideas and good practice; in

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<sup>1</sup> As of July 15, 2011

fact, each member state remains responsible for the content and organisation of its education.

Nevertheless, it is by means of programmes such as Erasmus Mundus, that the EU supports the Bologna process – an intergovernmental European reform process aimed at creating more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe, not only limited to the EU member states. 47 participating countries work together in implementing the three priorities of the Bologna process: introduction of the three cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate<sup>2</sup>); quality assurance; and recognition of qualifications and periods of study.

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a tool of the Bologna process, which makes study programmes easy to read and compare for students from different countries. An Erasmus Mundus Master Course carries between a minimum of 60 and up to maximum 120 ECTS credits, where student workload generally amounts to around 1500-1800 hours per year and one credit stands for around 25-30 working hours (meaning lectures, seminars, independent reading, research and academic writing, exams, etc).

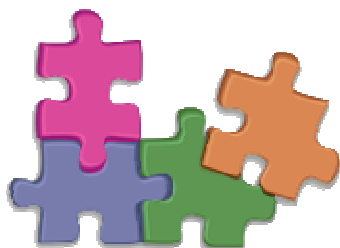
**N.B.** You should keep in mind that the Bologna process is an ongoing reform, and therefore, many education aspects have not yet been fully harmonized. Do not be surprised, if, for example, two partner universities from different countries do not have a similar semester and vacations schedule. Many universities in Europe still use their own grading system, while gradually introducing ECTS system and grades according to Bologna process.

You can find more about Bologna process under

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html)

[www.bologna2009benelux.org](http://www.bologna2009benelux.org)

### Erasmus Mundus consortium



An Erasmus Mundus consortium is a group of at least three higher education institutions from three different eligible countries, at least one of which must be a member of the EU, that has been selected to offer a joint Erasmus Mundus Master Course (EMMC). Those universities cooperate within the framework of Erasmus Mundus consortium to deliver a jointly

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<sup>2</sup> Please, note that when a word is written in grey, there is an explanation of that term in Glossary section.

developed curriculum of courses and award joint or multiple degrees. It is within the consortium that the student chooses which universities he/she will attend.

Each consortium has a co-ordinating institution (one of the universities) which deals with scholarships transfer and acts as a European Commission contact partner. However, the co-ordinating institution does not necessarily play a predominant role in the delivery of the Master Course – all participating universities are important within the consortium.

At every university of the consortium there is a coordinator of the Erasmus Mundus Course in question, who you can always refer to with questions or concerns.

**N.B.** Because some consortia are quite large, it might be the case that you will not get to meet all students from your Erasmus Mundus Master Course, if they happen to study at universities other than the 2 or 3 that you picked. Some Courses offer a short intensive programme or summer school where all students from all consortium institutions get to participate, and you would get to meet the other fellow students.

### Erasmus Mundus Master Courses

Erasmus Mundus Master Courses are integrated study programmes offered in a variety of disciplines from architecture to food science on a Master level only. A complete list of presently offered [Erasmus Mundus Master Courses](#) is available. The list changes every year with new Courses joining the programme.

Erasmus Mundus Master Courses provide an integrated Master level study programme offered at all universities of the consortium. The application procedure and selection criteria are commonly agreed within every Erasmus Mundus consortium. It is required that an Erasmus Mundus student attends at

#### *In other words...*

Within one joint curriculum of an Erasmus Mundus consortium, a Spanish university might offer to look at case studies from Latin America, while a Polish professor might prefer the examples of German companies. But the core subjects and content will be coordinated.

least two universities in at least two different countries during his/her studies.

All students studying at different universities within one Erasmus Mundus Master Course are required to obtain the same amount of ECTS, however the types of exams (written vs. oral) or thesis defence procedure (some universities do not have obligatory thesis defence) can differ within the consortium. Examinations passed at one institution of the Erasmus Mundus Master consortium are recognized fully and automatically by the other institutions of the consortium.

**N.B.** All universities within the Erasmus Mundus consortium deliver a jointly developed curriculum that corresponds to a set of common standards. Even though all classes offered are elaborated within the agreed joint modules, they can have a different focus at each universities, which enriches the programme.

The consortia enjoy freedom to decide which types of classes they offer, whether Erasmus Mundus students attend courses together with others, or have exclusive seminars. In any case, the programme always aims at creating a “group feeling” and includes projects and classes specifically for the students of a particular Erasmus Mundus Course. The number of students may vary, but in general relatively small group sizes allow for closer contacts with professors, intensive intercultural exchange, and effective teamwork.

*In other words...*

Please pay attention to the description of courses offered by universities of the consortia and note if local language knowledge is a requirement.

Generally, most classes within the consortium are conducted in English; however, some universities also offer classes in local language, which you can find out about by reading the descriptions on a corresponding Erasmus

Mundus Master Course’s website. Normally, all universities have language centres where students, upon their wish, can learn national or other languages.

**N.B.** Based on the experience of previous Erasmus Mundus students, it is recommended to take a “survival language course” if you come to a country whose language you absolutely do not know. Even though you will be very busy with your academic work, as well as with social activities, basic understanding of signs on the streets and groceries’ names in stores can make your stay more convenient. Moreover, it can help you learn more about your “host” country and its culture.

### **Tuition fees**

Most current students accepted on an Erasmus Mundus Master Course must pay tuition fees. The amount to be paid differs among different consortia. Moreover, the amount to be paid by students coming from Third Country (outside the European Economic Area) is not the same as the fees for European (within the European Economic Area) students.

You should check the website of the particular Erasmus Mundus Master Course of your choice to get precise information on the fees.

## Erasmus Mundus scholarship

Being an Erasmus Mundus student means that you study in one of the Erasmus Mundus Master Courses in the framework of the Erasmus Mundus programme no matter which country you come from and how your studies are financed.

Citizens of the EU/EEA are eligible for grants that are partly sponsored by the European Commission, but there are also scholarships available at the universities or national education agencies. Students who are EU/EEA citizens and who would like to study in an Erasmus Mundus programme should contact the consortium coordinator or university

### *In other words...*

The limited scholarships are awarded on a competitive basis, and therefore not all students who follow an Erasmus Mundus Master Course will necessarily receive an Erasmus Mundus scholarship, in other words an applicant can be accepted as an Erasmus Mundus Course student, but not granted an Erasmus Mundus scholarship.

admissions office to get more information about funding options.

One of the goals of the Erasmus Mundus programme is to open up European higher education to the rest of the world. That is also why the European Commission provides scholarship for competitively selected non-EU citizens to enable them to study in Europe.

Students eligible for scholarship are:

- Citizens of “Third Countries” – those who are not nationals or residents of the 27 EU Member States, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Turkey
- Those who have not lived and carried out their main activities (studies, work etc.) for more than a total of 12 months over the last five years (reference date: 28 February) in any of the above mentioned countries
- Graduates who have successfully obtained a higher education degree awarded by a recognized higher education institution anywhere in the world
- Those who are selected to attend an Erasmus Mundus Master Course by the consortium

When a **Third Country national** applies for a chosen Erasmus Mundus Master Course, he/she can also apply for an Erasmus Mundus scholarship. The scholarship application form can be found together with other application materials at the website of each consortium.



The consortium of universities selects the potential scholarship recipients and presents the list to the European Commission together with a reserve list. Upon the approval of the European Commission, the applicant receives confirmation of scholarship and status of an Erasmus Mundus



student.

The amount of scholarship for non-European students can vary from 24,000 € per student for a one-year Course (with tuition fees) to 48,000 € for those studying on 2-years Erasmus Mundus Courses (with tuition fees); if the Course is between 1 and 2 years, than the proportional amount is granted. For European students who study in a Third Country for at least one mobility period, scholarships can vary from 13,000 € for those studying on 1-year Erasmus Mundus Courses (with tuition fees) to 23,000 € for those studying on 2-year Erasmus Mundus Courses (with tuition fees).

**N.B.** In most cases the tuition fee has to be paid from the EM stipend, however, the experience shows the amount left after paying the tuition is sufficient to fully enjoy the study process comfortably and be able to travel. Your coordinator will inform you about fees and methods to pay them. You will not be asked to pay any tuition fees before the final results of scholarship awarding are known.

If you are selected for an Erasmus Mundus Master Course, but are not awarded the scholarship, you might want to ask the coordinator for recommendations regarding other funding opportunities available and look for alternative financing. European students should also enquire about university grants or other bursaries. Admission office of every university would have that information.

Students who are awarded an Erasmus Mundus scholarship sign a contract where the relation between the scholarship on one side and course attendance and academic performance on the other side is clarified. The scholarship goes together with academic performance obligations. Be sure to read the contract to be aware of your rights and duties.

## APPLICATION

### Procedure

Non-European applicants can apply to a maximum of three Erasmus Mundus Master Courses at a time (application to each is conducted separately). If an applicant is admitted to two Courses, he/she must choose one.

While enrolling for an Erasmus Mundus Master Course, students from non-EU countries can at the same time apply for an Erasmus Mundus scholarship.

Erasmus Mundus scholarships are granted on a very

#### *In other words...*

Erasmus Mundus offers Master degrees only within the selected Erasmus Mundus Master Courses.

It is not possible to apply for an Erasmus Mundus scholarship to study on a programme which is not part of the EMMC.

competitive basis and are given only to participants in one of the Erasmus Mundus Master Courses – it cannot be used to study on other programmes.

Every Erasmus Mundus Master Course has its own application procedure. Detailed application instructions, admission conditions and selection criteria are provided on website of every Course. Please see a list of available [Master Courses](#), which includes description of every Course, website address, application requirements and address where to send your documents.

You should apply directly to a chosen Erasmus Mundus Master Course (not to the European Commission, not to the Education Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, etc.).

All expenses related to the application, including translation and certification services, English tests costs, postal expenses, etc. must be covered by the applicant.

It might be a good idea to send your application by registered post with an option to track the delivery, rather than by regular mail, to make sure that your documents do not get lost and reach the consortium on time.

Gathering documents for an application might be a long and time-consuming process, please plan in advance!!!

### Requirements and deadlines

In most cases the required documents for an application are:

- student application form
- motivation letter
- CV
- reference letters
- IELTS/TOEFL certificate
- certified copy of the 1st degree diploma



#### *In other words...*

For any type of information about the Erasmus Mundus Course, consortium universities, scholarship, application rules and deadlines, etc. you should contact the coordinator of the respective EM Course.

Often it is also required to provide samples of academic writings or proof of professional engagement in the field.

Some consortia require the application to consist of two or more copies of all documents – please check the corresponding website and keep it in mind when you make diplomas' translation.

Many Courses also have an initial online registration procedure.

Be very attentive when you read all the requirements for application at the website of the chosen consortium. Very often incomplete applications are simply put aside; hence, you lose your chance to be considered as an applicant if you are not attentive enough. In some cases Course coordinators may contact you and request the documents that you failed to include, but certainly an incomplete application already affects your image negatively. **READ ALL THE APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS, FAQs SECTIONS AND GUIDELINES.**

There is no single deadline – application deadlines vary from Course to Course (can be as early as December and as late as February). Pay attention whether “deadline” means the date before which they should already *receive* all your documents, or the date before all the documents must be *mailed* according to the postal stamp. If your application is late, it will not be considered (one day after the deadline means “late”!).

Applicants will normally know whether or not they have been accepted for the Course in March-June. Courses start between August and November, depending on the university.



### Reference letters

- 🌐 Depending on the requirements of the consortia you could provide reference letters from your former academic supervisor or professor, employer, head of the organisation where you were involved as a volunteer, leader of the academic or professional association you are a member of, etc.
- 🌐 Please note that sometimes it is required that recommendation letters are sent separately by the referees themselves, while in other cases you can include them in your application set with the other documents.
- 🌐 Reference letters must be written in English or otherwise be supplied with an officially certified translation. Be sure that contact details of the person who recommends you are mentioned in the letter.

### Proof of language knowledge

- If you do not originate from an English speaking country or have not received your 1st degree in English, you are required to demonstrate your proficiency in English. This can be done by providing a copy of TOEFL or IELTS scores or other officially recognized international tests. If you just had a foreign language course within the framework of your first degree programme – it is not enough, you need the official internationally recognised test results!
- Please note, that institutions where those tests can be taken might have a tight examinations schedule, and sometimes registration for the test, taking the exam and obtaining the results can take up to 5 months. Be sure to plan in advance!!!
- Pay attention that in some cases consortia indicate which is the minimum language score they require
- Carefully read if the chosen consortium also requires an official proof of another foreign language, besides English (which could be the case if at one of the participating universities the language of instruction is not English)

### Writing a motivation letter

- Try to write a “personal”, targeted motivation letter, in which you explain what makes you in particular worth to be selected and clearly explain why you apply for this particular Master programme.
- If you have any work or volunteer experience, be sure to mention it, as well as any publications of your previous research. When you can indicate your scientific interests and the direction of your future Master thesis, it is also viewed as a plus.
- State clearly what your expectations are and what you would like to do upon finishing the programme with the knowledge that you acquire during Erasmus Mundus.

### First degree diploma

- If your 1st degree diploma is not in English, the certified copy and the diploma supplement with courses, hours and grades must be officially translated and certified by a notary or with an apostil.
- If you are currently finishing a degree and have not yet received an official university graduation certificate, in most cases you could still apply for an

Erasmus Mundus Course, and are required to submit an official transcript for all semesters completed to present. Please, be sure to check consortium requirements!



Note how many certified copies the consortium requires.



Keep in mind that all participating universities have access to databases containing detailed information about the majority of universities and grading systems from all over the world. The certified copy of diploma that you submit will be hence checked and verified.

*In other words...*

**My Erasmus Mundus application steps:**

1. Choose the course I want to apply for
2. Go to the website of the chosen Course and find out about the admission requirements, list of necessary documents and deadlines
3. Make a list of documents I need to prepare and note the deadline
4. Register for English test (if needed)
5. Have my first degree diploma translated and officially certified
6. Ask relevant persons for recommendation letters
7. Fill in the application form or when possible apply online
8. Write a motivation letter
9. Make copies of all documents
10. Check once again that I include all the required documents and provide the required amount of copies
11. Send the application set to the chosen Erasmus Mundus Course

**ERASMUS MUNDUS STUDENTS AND ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (EMA)**



**Erasmus  
Mundus  
Association**

When you are accepted to the Erasmus Mundus programme and have received a confirmation from both, the consortium and the European Commission, you are welcome to become a member of the Erasmus

Mundus Students and Alumni Association (EMA). It is open to all Erasmus Mundus

students and alumni of any nationality who are under Action 1 of Erasmus Mundas programme. It means that, unfortunately, students and alumni under Action 2 and 3 cannot apply to be a member of this association. In order to register with the Community, go to [www.em-a.eu](http://www.em-a.eu). EMA is run by the Erasmus Mundus students and alumni themselves with the help of a service provider company.

On the community website you can read the news, ask questions to fellow students on message boards, read and place housing related posts, read about new job opportunities or share with others when you know of a vacancy, find students from the same Erasmus Mundus Master Courses, peers from your country or fellow students studying in the same city as you. The website is constantly updated and new features are added.

EMA website is an excellent networking instrument, make a use of it!

## VISAS AND RESIDENCE PERMITS

This chapter has more relevance for non-EU students, since European citizens need neither visas nor residence permits when moving within the EU.



### Visas for Third Country nationals

Most of Erasmus Mundus students coming from non-European countries need to have a visa to start their studies in Europe. Despite the enlargement of the EU, the Schengen zone and general harmonisation of regulations regarding movement within the EU, it is important to understand that most visa issues are under competence of national states, and therefore there are no single regulations and requirements for all European countries. Please consult the [latest document](#) to clarify whether you need a visa.

**N.B.** It may be better if your passport is valid for at least 2-3 years before you start Erasmus Mundus Master programme to avoid problems with receiving passport while you study and with lack of pages in your passport if you already had a lot of visas in. Some countries require it to be valid for at least one year to issue a visa.

Once a student is admitted to an Erasmus Mundus Master Course, he/she should start the procedures to obtain the necessary visa

#### *In other words...*

To apply for visa you need, as a rule

- valid passport
- letter of admission from the university scholarship confirmation letter from the European Commission (or another document proving how you will finance your studies)
- medical insurance
- filled in application form (with indication of your future address or address of the university and contact person there).

in his/her home countries in the embassy/consulate of the respective European country (first semester country). The international office of the first semester university will advise students on how to obtain their visas. Documents confirming admission to the Erasmus Mundus Master Course and a certificate confirming the scholarship will be provided by the Course coordinator.



Students will also need a second visa when they move to their second host country in Europe (or third, if applicable). Again, Erasmus Mundus Master Courses coordinators will advise students on how to obtain this visa and facilitate the procedure.

There are several types of visas issued by embassies of European countries: type C, type D and type C+D, regulating the duration of your stay, the possible number of entries, and permission to travel to other EU countries. Before you apply for a visa, clarify with your coordinator or university international office desk which visa type would be the best for you.

Please note that the United Kingdom and Ireland have autonomous visa procedures different from the majority of European countries.

**N.B.** Based on the previous experience of Erasmus Mundus students, visa issues demand much time and attention. Sometimes it might take up to 6 months. For a more effective result, please start with the visa paperwork as soon as possible; be very concentrated when

you prepare the documents for visas and residence permits applications. Pay attention to small details, such as photos format or amount of passport pages to be copied; double-check all your forms and the data you fill in. Always keep copies of originals (it's a good idea to have them in a

*In other words...*

Apply for your visa **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE...!!** You will be given all assistance and supporting documents, but you should make an effort to get it organised in time. Rules at embassies might change often, so be sure you get the most updated information on the required documents.

digital form, too) when submitting applications for your own administration, since sometimes consulates do not return any documents (make sure you make several copies of the Erasmus Mundus Master Course admission proof, of the official scholarship confirmation letter from the European Commission; of the insurance policy statement and the insurance card, etc).

You should keep your Erasmus Mundus coordinator informed if you face visa problems.

If you would like to have your spouse or a child accompany you during your studies, be sure to inform your coordinator that this is the case as usually extra documents are needed

for family members. In general universities cannot provide invitations for family members of students, but you will certainly get assistance and referred to relevant sources of information.

### Residence permit for Third Country nationals

In most European countries staying longer than three months requires a residence permit, hence besides obtaining a visa, non-EU students enrolled in the Erasmus Mundus Program also have to apply separately for a residence permit in every country they study in, unless their nationality exempt them to do so. Residence permits can be a plastic card, a paper document, or a sticker in one's passport. Note also, that some countries combine the functions of long-term visas and residence permits, in which case the residence permit is granted by embassies, and sometimes one can obtain residence permit only upon arrival.

Third Country nationals who are holders of a residence permit of a Schengen state may freely enter into and stay in any other Schengen state for a period of up to three months. Note, that for a longer stay, they require a residence permit of the target member state (keep it mind when you look for an internship and agree on its duration).

**N.B.** Before you can apply for a visa (whether for your next study destination or for vacation) for country 1 in country 2, you must have the residence permit of country 1.

For more information about travel rights and regulations of Third Country nationals, please refer to the website

([http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/borders/borders\\_visa\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/borders/borders_visa_en.htm)).

Most countries' student visas and residence permits do allow part-time work (only in the issuing country and often only in connection with the field of your study), others require a separate work permit. Third Country nationals who are admitted in the territory of one Member State do not normally have the right to work and reside in another Member State.

Tip: as previous experience shows, sometimes birth certificate is required for applying for the residence permit or for receiving the diploma upon finishing the programme. Hence, maybe it is worth just in case to take it with you before you leave your home country.

#### *In other words...*

For example, you as a third-country national, study in Germany and have a German residence permit. You go to Austria for a month-long intensive course. During your stay in Austria you get an invitation to go to Russia for a conference. If you need Russian visa, in most cases, you cannot simply go to Russian Embassy in Vienna, because you do not have an Austrian residence permit, therefore you should apply for the visa only in Germany. However, rules might vary and sometimes exceptions can be made. Be sure always to call corresponding embassies and verify the rules.



## HOUSING

Whatever housing option you prefer, you will get all the information from your Course coordinator. Housing options, of course, depend on the city where you are going and on the university. A lot of European universities do not have a campus, and the faculties, as well as student houses are spread out around town. In general, there are usually the following variants.

### *In other words...*

You will be provided information on how to find accommodation and given contacts of university housing office, but remember that it is your responsibility to find suitable lodging for yourself.

### Student house (dormitory)

The majority of European universities do offer accommodation in dorms. It might be the easiest option, since you do not need to perform any search yourself, but simply get in touch with the housing office of your university. Contact details will be provided to you by the Erasmus Mundus Master Course coordinator or university international office staff. Note that in some cases, there is an administrative fee that a housing office might charge for their services.



In some countries university student houses are the cheapest accommodation option, while in others they are as expensive as non-student lodging.

Sometimes, dorms are intended for all students, sometimes there are dormitories specifically for international students. The reason for this separation is in most cases purely administrative, since foreign students “come and go”, and thus it is easier to have one or several dormitories where room tenants change so often.

There is usually a student manager who is responsible for assistance to students, household issues and any organisational matters.

The level of comfort in dormitories can vary from separate rooms with own kitchen corner and bathroom to shared rooms with facilities on the floor and kitchen to be shared. Sometimes there are also so called “blocks” in dormitories, where several rooms are located in one block and kitchen and facilities are then shared within this block. As a rule, rooms offered in dormitories, especially in those for international students, are furnished.

The main advantage of living in a student house is, of course, socialization: you can always eat dinner together with roommates or neighbours, meet people from different countries, throw parties, ask for help and simply make friends.

Having many students under one roof can certainly also be a disadvantage when there are just too many noisy parties held while you need to write your first paper; or when your idea of a clean kitchen seems to differ substantially from the perception of your neighbours.

Often there is a deposit that you need to pay before you move in, which would be returned after you move out (unless you leave your room in very poor condition).

### Shared student flat or independent apartment

If you do not want to live in university student houses and would rather find a room yourself, here is where you can look:

- 🏠 Local newspapers
- 🏠 Internet (there are always specific websites where ads are placed or forums where people post information about available rooms). Note that sometimes there might be a small fee for using the online room-search services. Usually those websites are also in local languages, rather than in English.
- 🏠 Message boards inside university buildings
- 🏠 EMA website [www.em-a.eu](http://www.em-a.eu) (Housing section)

Housing on the private market leaves you two options: shared student flat or independent apartment. By choosing the latter, you would certainly have more privacy and comfort, but generally this option is rather expensive.

Sharing a flat with other students is very common in a lot of European countries – there can be small shared flats or huge apartments with more than ten people of both genders living together. As a rule, an apartment belongs to a landlord, who rents out rooms to students, and he/she is the one with who you will sign a contract with and who you would contact in case of any problems. A deposit is also usually envisaged.



While living together with other, often local, students indeed helps to get to know the culture of the host country and make close friends, it is often the case that landlords prefer not to rent rooms to students for a period less than a year. Moreover, in a lot of cases, rooms on the private market come unfurnished, though not necessarily. Sometime is it possible to find a short-term let apartments, when, for example, local student goes abroad

for an internship, and rents out his/her room for short period of time. You might also consider that option yourself if you know you will return for the third semester back to your host university.

If you would like to have more privacy, there is always an option of living by yourself in a private apartment, but it can be quite costly, and in most cases do not expect it to be a large flat.

### **Tips:**

- 🍷 When you check out prices for shared flats or single apartments, pay attention whether utilities costs (water, gas, heating, telephone, Internet, etc.) are included in the stated price or if you would need to pay for them extra.
- 🍷 Note, that in some countries the rent is charged weekly (in the UK, for instance), while in others the price is per month.
- 🍷 In some cities it is not hard to find housing, but it might be somewhat problematic in others. Therefore, make up your mind about which housing option you would like to use and start looking for a place to live well before the semester begins. Once classes have started, there are not many rooms left.
- 🍷 Make sure you carefully read the rent contract conditions and dormitory rules (pay attention if it mentions special arrangements for changing rooms, moving out earlier than planned, etc.), payment requirements.
- 🍷 It is often the case that Erasmus Mundus students do not have a chance to actually visit the flat or student house room before they arrive. Do not hesitate to ask the contact person for pictures, check the house location of the map to estimate how close it is to university, and ask about public transport possibilities.

## **AFTER ARRIVAL**

### **Registering with local authorities**



Both, EU and non-EU citizens should register with local authorities when they come to a new country to study. This is done for the population census as well as security purposes. The Course coordinator or international office staff would inform you how it is done and will assist. In most cases you should present a rent agreement, your ID (passport) and letter of acceptance to the university.

When you leave the country in the end of the semester you should de-register with the same local authorities.

## Insurance



All non-European students selected for an Erasmus Mundus scholarship automatically receive free medical insurance cover at no extra costs. Those students are automatically registered with an Insurance Scheme selected by the respective consortium and receive an insurance card upon arrival from the Erasmus Mundus Master Course coordinator. Scanned copies of the insurance card will be sent to you by the coordinator so that you can submit it with other documents when applying for visa in your home country. The insurance is valid worldwide for the whole period of your enrolment in Erasmus Mundus programme.

### *In other words...*

Whether you go to a conference in Ethiopia, travel to the rainforest for your research, or if you just go back home for up to 4 weeks – your Erasmus Mundus insurance covers you everywhere.

In most cases, you pay for the doctor's visit yourself, get the original receipt and a copy for your own administration, fill out the claim form (where, among other data, you indicate your bank account information) and send those two documents (receipt and claim form) to the insurance company in Brussels. The insurance company then contacts you to confirm the payment of the claim and transfers money to your account.

[Detailed information about the insurance coverage scheme](#), claim forms and general rules is available.

**N.B.** Always contact the insurance company in case of serious medical condition, hospitalization, severe accident, etc. Hence, always have your insurance card with you.

Keep in mind, that pre-existing medical conditions are usually not covered by the insurance (for instance, if you have a chronic

### *In other words...*

Carefully read the guidelines of the insurance company. Note that there are limits on reimbursement on some types of medical services (dental care, for instance). Be prepared to pay upfront when you visit a doctor, you will then get your money reimbursed.

disease) – if you are not sure whether a certain medical procedure is covered, carefully read the rules or call the Insurance Company.

If you are a Third Country national and do not hold an Erasmus Mundus scholarship, it is your personal responsibility to take care of your medical insurance for the entire period of studies in Europe. Sometimes universities have special arrangements with national insurance companies, and then you can get a discount. Be sure to ask your Erasmus Mundus Course coordinator.

Erasmus Mundus students who are EU citizens can have a special insurance policy in case they travel to Third Countries outside of the EU in the framework of Erasmus Mundus Master Course partnership. Please, contact the respective Course coordinator to know more.

### Bank account

Opening a bank account in Europe is highly recommended to students coming from Third Countries, since your credit card might not be accepted everywhere, plus, withdrawing money from a foreign bank account in Europe might result in paying additional fees. In general, Europeans do not carry much cash around, and paying with bank cards is widespread. Moreover, if you receive Erasmus Mundus scholarship, it will be transferred to your European bank account from the co-ordinating university.

**N.B.** Opening a bank account might take some time. If it takes too long, you could talk to your coordinator to see if it is possible to receive the first scholarship payment in cash.

Many banks have special student account offers with very low service fees. Note that usually you are given a simple debit card with no overdraft option.

#### *In other words...*

You spend your first semester in Spain, and then you go to Poland. The co-ordinating institution of the Erasmus Mundus consortium is a Dutch university. You come to Spain and open a bank account there. The Dutch university will transfer your scholarship every month to your new Spanish account. When you go to Poland you can continue using your Spanish account and your scholarship will still be paid there. However, you might want to open a Polish bank account, considering that they use a different currency in Poland and that there might be additional fees by ATM money withdrawal. You can either make a request via your coordinator for your scholarship to be transferred to your new Polish account or simply transfer the money from your Spanish bank to your Polish account yourself with internet banking.

## Enrolment

Even though you will be automatically accepted in all the participating universities where you will conduct your studies, it is still necessary to enrol into each university (for the first, second and, if applicable, third semester). The enrolment process is a means of recording data on students and for institutions to provide important information to students. During the enrolment process students also declare that they will abide by the regulations of the universities concerned. This rather simple procedure is done with student administration office of each university in the beginning of the semester or shortly before, and your coordinators will inform you of the formalities. As a result, at every university where you study you get a student card, which is your student id, and in some universities - also a cafeteria card and a library card.

After you finish your studies, there is usually a procedure of de-registration from university, which the coordinators will inform you about.

## Internet /Telephone

Most university student houses, as well as private flats are provided with Internet access. Sometimes it is at extra cost; sometimes it is included in the rent price. Even if there is no Internet access at your accommodation place, there is always a computer room at university library or with faculty buildings. Hence, it is guaranteed that you will have Internet access for academic, as well as personal purposes. In some cases you have to register with university computer services office to receive a login or to install special security software.



Many universities in Europe provide Wi-Fi Internet access, which you might keep in mind if you plan to buy a new laptop before starting your Erasmus Mundus studies.



Mobile phones are so popular in Europe and became such an integral part of life, that often student houses and even private flats do not have landline phones. It is recommended that you subscribe with a local cellular provider, since using your home country's provider when abroad will result in expensive roaming bills. Generally, the best deals offered by most mobile phone companies in Europe are usually included as part of a year or two years contract, which means that a person signing the contract is obliged to pay a certain amount per month for the whole period. Since, as a rule, Erasmus Mundus students do not spend in one country more than

one year, therefore, in most cases it is better to simply buy pre-paid cards for your mobile phone.

Tip: Skype, MSN Messenger, Yahoo Messenger and some other online communication software provide for real-time voice conversation regime online at very attractive costs. Even though, the quality of sound depends on your internet provider, you still might want to consider that option to keep in touch with your family and friends back home.

### Inviting guests

Third Country nationals, who would like to invite relatives or friends from home countries for a visit, should check the visa procedure requirements for them. In many European countries, once you have a temporary residence permit, you can go to International Desk at the City Hall and make an invitation for your relative or friend, which they then present at a respective consulate/embassy when applying for visa. As a rule, you need to prove that you have enough financial resources to support your guest (so to say, that you accept responsibility for him/her) and also provide information where they would stay (hotel reservation or your rent contract that shows that you have enough space in your room). A small fee sometimes is to be paid for the invitation.



Note that rules vary in all European countries, so you should definitely check with International Office at the local town hall or municipality.

If you would like your guest to stay with you, it is advisable to check whether student house rules allow guests and for which period. Sometime, there is a fee if someone else stays in the student house. If you live in a shared flat, you should also inform your flat mates about your guest in advance and confirm that it is ok with them.

### STUDY

Erasmus Mundus programme offers high quality Master Courses, in most cases, designated specifically to the selected Erasmus Mundus students. Therefore, please be ready for intensive study, challenging tasks and much independent academic research.



In order to make your studies successful, always strictly follow the deadlines for any type of study projects (papers, presentations, essays, reports, etc.). Failing to comply with deadlines results in lower grade.

Most European universities exercise an attendance policy, when you can only miss a certain amount of classes. With a lot of classes attendance is compulsory, and thus, failing to comply with attendance policy can have a lower grade as a consequence. Your professors or coordinators will explain about the attendance policy in the beginning of each class. If, due to illness or other special circumstances, you are unable to attend a class session, please notify your professor. If you are likely to be absent for an extended period of time, you should notify the coordinator.

Often you will also get a syllabus – study plan for every class with professor's office hours and contact information, lectures plan, final assessment procedure, bibliography and recommended reading, etc.

**N.B.** Cheating is not tolerated at any point of study process and examinations. Cheating can result in expulsion from the programme.

A lot of universities also use electronic learning systems, which are online intranet portals, where professors can put course information, weekly timetable, reading lists, etc., and students can hence download documents for classes (assignment descriptions, examples of presentations, questions for examinations, etc.). Sometimes, those online portals can also be used to organise group work, submit ready assignments and watch your grades.

All participating universities have a short introduction programme before starting the classes, where you will be shown around the university and explained the structure of the courses. This introduction is usually very useful, because answers to a lot of questions are provided and you get a clearer understanding of what is expected from you.

## Library

Libraries at European universities are generally very good and offer a rich selection of sources, including access to online journals database, archives, publications in various languages, etc. There are also computer rooms in libraries, where it is possible to scan materials or make copies. Most libraries have an online catalogue that you can search within from any location, and even sometimes order books in advance, so that all you

need to do is come with your library card and pick them up. Please, keep in mind that books must be returned in time; otherwise you will have to pay a fine for every day of delay. Many libraries have established partnerships with other libraries and often it is possible to order a book that your university library does not have, from another library and have it delivered.





### Academic writing

Note, that there are many reference styles specific for various disciplines or even geographic locations, so be sure to find out which style is accepted at your Erasmus Mundus Course. You will be able to get this information from your professors, academic advisers or Course coordinators.

**N.B.** It is extremely important to closely follow the rules of reference when you write any type of academic work in order to avoid **plagiarism**. All European universities treat plagiarism as a major failure to comply with university rules, and punishment can be very severe up to expulsion from the Erasmus Mundus Course.

When you work on your papers or Master Thesis, please be sure to thoroughly read the guidelines for writing and documentation of research. There is no common Erasmus Mundus academic writing standard set, but there is one certainly within every consortium. Every Erasmus Mundus Course has elaborated common guidelines for Master Thesis writing, but each participating university might have its own specific requirements. Be attentive and ask your academic supervisor.



Some universities also organise a defence (oral presentation) of final master thesis, while others require several printed copies for the archives. You will be provided with detailed description of what is expected from you, what the deadlines are and how you should conduct your research. The consortium coordinators and study directors are responsible for that.

### Language learning

If you would like to attend a language course at your university, let your coordinator know, as sometimes there are special offers for Erasmus Mundus students. Please note, that as a rule you do not get ECTS credits for language courses, if they are not part of obligatory Erasmus Mundus Course curriculum. But you are still encouraged to take the opportunity to study a language surrounded by the very language environment.

You might as well consider other options to improve your language skills. Often international clubs at universities offer “tandems” where you are paired up with some

native speaker of the desired language, who, in turn, wants to improve his/her skills in your mother tongue. This can be an exciting and useful experience at no extra cost.

Tip: do not be afraid to try to use your newly acquired language skills, even though you do not feel confident yet – local people, as a rule appreciate your attempts to speak their language, and will be willing to help you.

## STUDENT LIFE AND FREE TIME

### Travelling in your free time

Europe offers numerous wonderful travelling opportunities and with EU enlargement, Schengen zone growth and gradual introduction of the euro it becomes even easier to travel. If you would like to explore the old continent, you might consider using low-cost airlines, which offer rather inexpensive flights with minimum service provided, while security guaranteed.

#### *In other words...*

Booking tickets for low cost airlines is usually only possible via Internet with a credit card. You will not get a regular paper ticket, but just a verification of booking and a confirmation number. There is a significant limit on baggage weight, and no seats assigned. The exchange or cancellation of ticket results in paying fees. There are no complimentary snacks or beverages on board. Often, low cost airlines use smaller airports located far outside of major cities. All those measures allow the airlines sometimes to offer tickets as cheap as 30 € one-way.

Besides airlines, there are extensive train networks and bus lines in Europe. Always check if there are any special student discounts and conditions for their application. Notice, that sometimes it is cheaper to purchase tickets online and well in advance.

Renting car is possible in every European country. Be sure you have valid international driving license and credit card, since in most cases credit card slip is used as a guarantee.

Sometimes on message boards inside university buildings there are special travelling sections, when it might be possible to find co-travellers for sharing a car. In some countries, Germany and Austria for instance, “riding along” websites are very popular.

It might even be a good idea to make a use of EMA website [www.em-a.eu](http://www.em-a.eu) when you plan a trip – ask for an advice or even housing possibilities with fellow Erasmus Mundus students all around Europe.

**N.B.** Always make sure you find out if you need a visa when you make travelling plans.

## Extracurricular activities

Universities as a rule offer a variety of activities that students can engage in during their free time: sports, theatre, choir, dance classes, art studios, etc. Being involved in any sort of activities will help you integrate better into the host country society; it is a good way to meet new people, make friends and get a feeling of exciting, rich and well-balanced life.

Do not be afraid of language barriers – instructors and your peers can always explain at least the basic things in English, and you will be surprised how quickly you pick up new words and acquire new skills.

The experience of many Erasmus Mundus students shows that often they, surprisingly, do not have enough contact with local students, especially in case majority of their classmates come from all over the world, and they live in international student houses. Getting involved in various types of extracurricular activities is a good way to meet local students.

Moreover, such European-wide student associations as ESN and AEGEE often organise various events for international students with involvement of local youth. Find out more at [www.aegEE.org](http://www.aegEE.org) and [www.esn.org](http://www.esn.org).

## INTERNSHIP

Internships are very popular among European students and many companies offer intern positions for various periods of time (from 3 months up to two years). The main point of an internship is to get a work-related learning experience and develop practical skills. Pursuing an internship during your Erasmus Mundus Master programme is a perfect opportunity to try to combine theory with practical work experience in the area of your potential future employment.



In general the Erasmus Mundus Master Courses encourage an internship, and you could ask your coordinator whether it is possible to receive ECTS credits for it.

European institutions, such as, for example, the European Parliament or the European Commission offer internships for EU/EEA nationals, but also a limited number of places for nationals of Third Countries. Please note that one should apply well in advance. Rules and the lists of necessary application documents are available at websites of the corresponding institutions.

Most European universities have career bureaus where you can get assistance in internship search. Those career offices often also offer workshops on resume writing and

interview preparation. Besides, there are many websites, which offer internship search options. EMA website [www.em-a.eu](http://www.em-a.eu) can be a source of information about internship vacancies as well.

Note that you should start with internship search well in advance, since you never know how much time it will take to find one, and, in case it involves moving to another city or even country you need to find accommodation and so forth.

Please, always make sure you find out about visa or residence permit requirements in case you plan to have an internship in a country other than the one you study in.

*In other words...*

Some previous experience shows that for third-country nationals it is easier to have an internship in the country where they study, since in that case no other visa or residence permit paperwork is needed. Delivery of visas for periods of professional traineeships in another European country might require a longer period due to the need to provide specific working documentation.

You should not be discouraged by those rules, but simply make sure you find out about the regulations in advance and keep them in mind when applying for internships.

**N.B.** When starting an internship, always make sure you sign a contract where your responsibilities, working hours, compensation, etc. are written out. Upon completing the internship, be sure to ask for a letter of recommendation containing information on the time period of the internship, your tasks and how successfully you carried them out.

## FINISHING THE PROGRAMME

### Graduation

There are no common requirements on graduation ceremony or time period for issuing the final Erasmus Mundus Master diplomas. Universities might have a tradition of conducting ceremonial graduation processing or might simply have you pick up the diploma at the coordinators' office.







Some universities need more time to complete the paperwork necessary to produce an official diploma, especially considering the fact that diplomas must be coordinated with all the consortium universities where you conducted your studies. Do not be surprised, if in the end you receive your Diploma several months after having the final exams and submitting the Master Thesis. If you already

will be back to your home country, the Diploma will be sent to you by post. Your coordinator will explain all the procedures.

Depending on regulations within the consortium and also national rules on multiple vs. joint degree, you can either receive a joint diploma, issued by all the attended universities together or multiple diplomas, which means a separate diploma from each university where you studied. It can also be so that two universities can issue a joint diploma and third university where you conducted your studies will provide a separate diploma.

### Leaving the country of study

Do not forget to:

-  Collect rent deposit (if applicable)
-  De-register with local authorities
-  Return books to the library
-  Close bank account if necessary

### Returning home



This section is aimed at those students who will be soon going home after completing the programme.



Most people do not realise that returning home after a long stay in another country (in your case, even in several countries) might be as challenging as dealing with the culture shock while being abroad.

When preparing to leave for Erasmus Mundus you are ready that a lot of things, people, culture, food etc. would be different, but when you go home you expect everything to be very familiar, and thus usually students are not prepared to experience a “re-entry” or “reverse” culture shock.

Certainly re-integration back to own culture differ from person to person, but being aware of common re-entry challenges and, hence setting right expectations could help you to diminish the reverse culture shock.

#### Possible aspects of reverse culture shock:



-  Unrealistic expectations and idealisation of returning home
-  Feeling of “being left out” and **lagging** behind on what has been happening home

- 🍷 Misunderstanding with friends and family who might not show enough interest to the stories you tell about your adventures
- 🍷 Lack of interest in activities that you were involved in before you went on the programme
- 🍷 Unpreparedness for you to see your friends and family changed and for them to see “the new you”
- 🍷 Inability to use the new acquired skills and knowledge right away

### Recommendations on how to diminish re-entry culture shock

- 🍷 Think about it. Prepare for the re-adjustment process and be aware of potential challenges of the upcoming period of change.
- 🍷 Keep in mind that even though people would politely listen to your stories about Erasmus Mundus experience, you might soon discover that they are not that much interested. Be ready to discuss other subjects and show interest in their topics.
- 🍷 Prepare for “catching up” with what is happening in your country and in lives of your friends and family.
- 🍷 Do not be too critical. Refrain from judgements and comparisons “it is better over there”.
- 🍷 Do not expect everything to be just as it was before you left.
- 🍷 Talk to people who might be going through the same emotional phase. Contacting your former Erasmus Mundus classmates or communicating with peers on EMA website [www.em-a.eu](http://www.em-a.eu) might be useful.
- 🍷 Reflect about how you have changed during your Erasmus Mundus experience. Think about what skills you would like to use now, what interests you want to pursue. Come up with concrete career goals and steps to enhance further personal development according to your new attitudes, which would help to incorporate the positive aspects of your international experience into your life at home.



## INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION ISSUES



When you get ready to move abroad to study, it is always good to find out some facts about the country and the city in advance: main attractions, dominant religion, large industries of the region, transport networks, proximity to other places, population statistics, etc. Moreover, it is important to think about cultural essentials of the country you are going to. Preparing yourself for cultural peculiarities and mentality specifics of your destination country might help to avoid misunderstandings and potential conflicts. Besides, being aware of what exactly makes cultures differ from one another would be of assistance when dealing with your classmates from all over the world and when reflecting about your own culture.

### Cultural dimensions



There is a famous quote “A fish only discovers its need for water when it is no longer in it. Our own culture is like water to a fish. It sustains us. We live and breathe through it”<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, when we live in our own culture, we might not realise what makes it different from others and how it affects us. Culture in a sense can be compared to an iceberg: the top of it is above water and, thus can be seen – those are visible culture elements (art, literature, architecture, holidays, cuisine, music, etc.), but, in fact, most of the iceberg is hidden under water – those are non-visible culture elements (values, beliefs, habits, attitudes).

Such renowned scholars as Geert Hofstede, Frans Trompenaars, Edward Hall and others have researched cultural differences by defining certain dimensions that make cultures different. A few of the most important dimensions to be considered during your Erasmus Mundus experience are:



#### Individualism vs. collectivism

While in some societies individual work and responsibility is very encouraged, in others collective achievements are given priority. In more individualistic countries the individual rights are supreme; people are encouraged to express their individuality; people in those societies tend to have a lot of relations with others, but they might not be very deep or intense. In more collectivist societies friendship and family ties tend to be stronger. Group goals in this case might prevail over the individual desires. In general, Russia, Asian and

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<sup>3</sup> Trompenaars F. *Riding the waves of culture*, 2006

Latin American cultures tend to be more collective-oriented, than Australia, North European and North American societies.

### ○ Power Distance

This dimension signifies the level of perceived equality/inequality between people and also reflects the importance of hierarchy in a given society. In countries with low power distance people usually do not emphasise differences in status, wealth or power, but value equality. Superiors can also be criticised. Also, the perception of hierarchy in those countries is, as a rule, rather low, less stress is put on politeness and etiquette norms. Australia, the USA and Europe are characterised as societies with lower power distance; however, there is a distinction between South and Eastern Europe, where power distance index is higher than in Northern countries. Arab and Asian countries, East African societies, Russia turn out to be countries with high power distance, which means that members of society with less power accept and expect the unequal distribution of power. For instance, professor's views are rarely challenged or questioned by students, but rather accepted, due to his higher status.



### Uncertainty avoidance

Cultures differ in their perception of uncertainty and acceptance of ambiguity. Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance scores tend to be very rules- and thorough planning- oriented, their existing laws and established regulations are unconditionally valued (the USA, Great Britain, China, Sweden, Japan). Representatives of societies with lower uncertainty avoidance scores are more eager to experiment, take risks, and tolerate improvisation (Russia, Eastern European countries, Latin countries, Greece). Most Western European countries show scores in the middle.



### Indirect vs. Direct communication

There can be significant differences in how **direct** members of certain cultures express themselves compared to other cultures. Societies which prefer more direct ways of communication (the US, Germany, the Netherlands) people are used to openly state their opinion, even if it involves criticism. People in countries that incline towards more indirect models of communication (Russia, Japan, China) avoid direct confrontation and open criticism, and are more concerned about preserving harmony in relations and “saving face”.



### Relationship vs. task orientation

In some cultures people concentrate on the task right away and focus on its completion (USA, Germany), while for other cultures it is important to get to know **your** partners first and maintain good relations (France, Japan, China, Russia). Representatives of the latter tend to engage in a small conversation before they actually start a project discussion, it is important for them to have a pleasant working atmosphere.

### Time management

One could distinguish linear time management and parallel time management. For countries with more inclination for linear time handling, it is typical to value planning, to arrange most issues by appointments and deadlines, to confirm the discussed decisions in writing, to do things step by step, punctuality is very important. Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Scandinavian countries, Japan, and the USA tend to be more monochrome (linear) in their time management. African countries, South Asian states, Middle East and Latin American countries turn out to be **polychrome** (parallel), which means that many tasks are handled at once, often change of deadlines and unplanned meetings are considered more normal. People in these cultures as a rule do not pay much attention to being punctual.



**N.B.** You should realise that differentiation of cultures according to dimensions is not absolute, those are rather prevailing tendencies and preferences. Concrete context, personal character together with cultural background – all that influences people's behaviour. However, being aware of cultural differences helps you prevent misunderstandings and conflicts, better understand the reasons for certain actions and have more effective results in any type of intercultural teamwork<sup>4</sup>.

### Culture shock

Extensive research conducted in the field of psychological effects of living abroad shows that there might be several stages of cultural adjustment:

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<sup>4</sup> If you would like to know more about intercultural communication, you can read the following books:

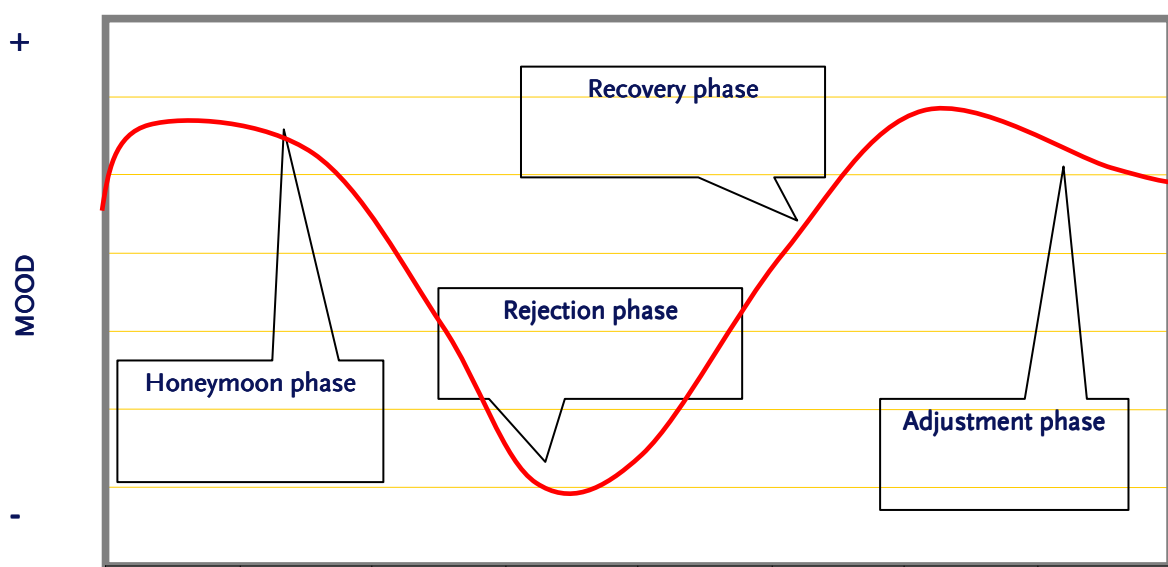
Hall, Edward T./ Hall, Mildred R.(1990): *Understanding Cultural Differences*, Yarmouth.

Hofstede, Geert (1991): *Cultures and Organisations. Software of the Mind*, London.

Trompenaars, F., Hampden-Turner, C. (1997). *Riding the waves of culture: Understanding cultural diversity in business*. London.

1. Honeymoon. You are fascinated by the new country, are excited and tend to idealise it. All the differences between your own culture and the host culture are seen as positive, you take pictures of every pretty building, try local food and drinks, discover nice places and feel very content.
2. Rejection. You settle down, start doing daily routine and begin encounter misunderstandings, get feelings of incompetence and disillusionment, and start seeing the host country's disadvantages. Local people start to seem unpredictable, unfriendly or ignorant. You might start missing home where everything just all of a sudden seems better. It is natural during this phase to think in terms of stereotypes and conclude that all Germans/Dutch/Spanish/Swedes... are rude/reserved/crazy/stupid/snobby...
3. Recovery phase. You begin to realise the cultural differences, accept them and even sometimes adopt certain behaviour patterns from the new culture. You start feeling like you belong to the new community; you understand how things are done and feel less isolated.
4. Adjustment. You feel normal and get used to the routine in the foreign country. Rather than using stereotypes, you begin to understand the reasons why those stereotypes exist and see the reasons for certain national behaviour patterns.

No doubt, everyone experiences different phases of culture shock at different periods of time; the phases might switch or last longer or shorter. The intensity of culture shock also depends on personality type, previous experience, financial conditions, family relations, level of education and language skills.



There are several hints that can help you to prevent negative experience of culture shock:

- 🌐 Study the host country's language, history; participate in life of the community. The more you know, the more you try, the more you will be able to understand the reasons for certain behaviour or traditions.
- 🌐 Be positive, optimistic and do not forget about sense of humour. Your complaints and criticism will not change your host country culture and environment, just see it from the bright side, and joke about it.
- 🌐 Keep in touch with your friends and family at home. With all the technology available now, it is very easy to update your beloved ones on what is going on in your life, share your impressions and hear their news. That helps you prevent feeling of loneliness, the sentiment of being behind on your normal home life and not knowing anymore what is going on there
- 🌐 Exercise. Without you noticing it, your body and brain are under much stress when you study (which is already hard) in a foreign country (double-hard) in a foreign language (very challenging). Help your body keep up the immune system. That would improve your moods.
- 🌐 Be active. Besides doing all the study assignments on time, try to manage your time in an effective way so that there is time for extracurricular activities, social life, meetings with new friends and little trips.
- 🌐 Take some time to think about yourself and what you are going through, to figure out what bothers you exactly, what the specific reasons for your difficulties are. Calm reflection can help you see what you personally can do to make your abroad experience pleasant.

## GLOSSARY

**Consortium** (pl. consortia) - is a group of at least three higher education institutions from three different European countries which has been selected to offer an Erasmus Mundus Master Course

**Joint degree** is defined as a single diploma issued by at least two of the institutions offering an integrated study programme.

**Multiple degree** is defined as two or more nationally-recognised diplomas issued officially by two or more institutions involved in an integrated study programme. Delivery of joint vs. multiple degrees depends on the appropriate arrangements at national level. You can find out from the coordinator of an Erasmus Mundus Master Course in question whether the consortium awards joint or multiple degrees. A multiple degree is a minimum requirement for the Erasmus Mundus Master Course to be approved by the European Commission. Presently, most consortia deliver multiple degrees.

**Insurance claim form** – is a form provided by the insurance company for Erasmus Mundus scholarship holders that needs to be filled out and sent by post in order to receive reimbursement for a medical case. You can download [the form](#).

**Recognition of qualifications and periods of study** – part of Bologna educational process, which aims at establishing a comparability system of qualifications, education degrees, training certificates and time periods for their obtaining in all participating countries, which in result would help employers, institutions and other interested parties to access foreign qualifications.

**Bachelor/master/doctorate** – part of Bologna educational process, which aims at establishing three cycle education system (bachelor-master-doctorate) in all participating countries to make the education system more easily comparable.

**ECTS** – is a tool of Bologna process, which expresses study load of each course, including contact hours (lectures, seminars and study groups), time spent completing papers and assignments, and preparing for examinations.

**Residence permit** - Official permit, which allows the holder to live in a country for a certain amount of time, in the case of Erasmus Mundus students issued on the basis of enrolment in university.

**TOEFL** - stands for Test of English as a Foreign Language. This examination was elaborated in the USA and measures the ability of non-native speakers of English to use

and understand English as it is spoken, written, and heard in university settings.  
([www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org))

**IELTS** – stands for International English Language Testing System. This test was prepared by the university of Cambridge and assesses the communicative skills in English in two modules - Academic and General training. ([www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org))

Both exams are internationally recognised, and scores from both, TOEFL and IELTS are valid for two years from the date of the exam.

**Schengen zone** – means countries, which have signed the Schengen Agreement, and abolished border controls. Likewise, a visa granted for any Schengen Agreement signatory country is valid in all other countries that signed the treaty. Sometimes only national visas are issued without the right to travel. Not all EU members have signed the Schengen treaty and not all Schengen treaty countries are members of the EU.

**Plagiarism** - using the phrases or words, ideas of someone else and passing them for one's own in academic writing or falsification of the results of data collection and analysis. Plagiarism is absolutely not tolerated at any European university.

**Pre-paid mobile phone** – if you already have a mobile phone, you can simply buy a SIM card from almost any cellular provider. That would mean that you have no contract and no monthly payments, but you simply pay per every minute or every SMS. To upload money on your phone you could buy pre-paid cards or use the online payment system. Staff of any mobile phones shop would be able to explain you how it all works.



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