



EUROPEAN UNION

~FACTSHEET~

EU-US AGREEMENT ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Issue

EU-US cooperation in higher education and vocational training aims for greater understanding between the peoples of the European Union and those of the United States of America, including broader knowledge of each other's languages, cultures and institutions, as well as to improve the quality of human resource development in both the EU and in the US. A new 8-year agreement will be signed at the EU-US Summit on 21 June 2006.

EU policy aims

The overriding idea is to promote structural links between EU and US institutions so that they can improve their educational offer by pulling together their best resources, compare and modernise their curricula, improve transparency and portability of credits and qualifications and develop joint study programmes.

Core activities will be joint curriculum development, structured exchanges of students and faculty, recognition of study abroad periods and of qualifications, and other measures facilitating structural academic links over the Atlantic. New elements compared to the previous agreements, have been introduced in order to respond better to the demands of the international education community:

1. **A new Transatlantic Degree action**; providing support to multilateral partnerships of EU and US institutions for the purpose of setting up joint/double degrees
2. **Excellence Mobility Projects**, providing follow-up financial support for student mobility to joint consortia that have a proven track record of excellence in transatlantic cooperation;
3. **Policy-oriented measures** addressing horizontal issues and promoting dialogue on recognition of qualifications and accreditations;
4. **A new Schuman-Fulbright mobility action** reinforcing of the EU dimension in the cooperation with Fulbright.

EU strategy

Through professional evaluations, the majority of projects conducted so far under the terms of the previous agreements have proven to successfully establish transatlantic partnerships and develop for students a stronger sense of the relationship between Europe and the US. Exchange students have dramatically improved their knowledge and international skills and are much better prepared for the global market place. The EU-US education cooperation therefore has been an effective public diplomacy tool improving mutual understanding, stimulating long term relationships, and as such, is at the heart of 'people to people' policies.

Under the terms of the agreement partner institutions will have to create an integrated joint study programme, with students from the two sides spending a period of study both in the EU and in the US institutions and getting either a joint degree (issued jointly by two institutions) or a double degree (two degrees, one from an EU institution, the other from the US institution) encompassing the whole period of study.

Link to US

On 20 June 2005 Leaders at the Washington EU-US Summit agreed on an initiative to enhance transatlantic economic integration and growth which identified education cooperation as one of the tools “to increase synergies across the Atlantic as we become more knowledge-based economies,” and committed to work to “renew and reinforce the EU-US agreement on Higher Education and Vocational Training, which includes the Fulbright/European Union program, to boost education cooperation and transatlantic exchanges between our citizens.”

The wider context

The objectives and activities of the new EU-US agreement are coherent with the policy line reaffirmed by G8 Education Ministers who, at their meeting in Moscow on 1-2 June 2006 called for more innovative cross-border education, international mobility, transparency and development of intercultural skills and mutual understanding. The programme also contributes to a better understanding in the US of the rationale, objectives and consequences of the emergence of the European Higher Education Area.

Facts and figures

Since the inception of the programme in 1995, a total of 107 transatlantic consortia were funded, involving 726 European and United States institutions of higher education and vocational education and training. More than 4000 US and EU students were involved with these consortia projects and have participated in the study abroad programmes.

Since 1995 the programme has run with an annual budget of about EUR 2 million from each side. The European Union and the United States of America are working to ensure a three-fold increase in the programme budget to a total of EUR 45 million on the EU side and an equivalent amount on the US side over the period from 2006 to 2013. The new Transatlantic Degree Programme foresees for each consortia project EU funding in the region of EUR 700.000, the bulk of which will be devoted to student mobility and exchange grants. Moreover, the new programme plans to implement up to 274 projects and some 6.000 EU and US individuals will participate in mobility activities over the period 2006-2013.

History

Following a pilot phase in 1993, cooperation with the US in the field of higher education and vocational training formally started in 1995 with the signature of a 5-year agreement between the EU and the US. The agreement was renewed in the year 2000 for another five years until 2005 and has been renewed again in 2006 inaugurating a new Transatlantic Degree action.

For more information go to: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/eu-usa/index_en.html

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