



Erasmus Mundus



CaribErasmus Final Seminar
**“Higher education cooperation between the Caribbean
and Europe: Challenges and Opportunities”**

REPORT

4th July 2012

ACP House, Brussels, Belgium



Erasmus Mundus



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1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education and research cooperation between Europe and the Caribbean has been intensifying in recent years through wide-ranging dialogues and in particular through EC funded projects that aim to strengthen collaboration between the two regions in various fields. Specifically, since 2011 the CaribErasmus project, supported by the Erasmus Mundus Programme, is promoting cooperation with the Caribbean region.

The Seminar “Higher education cooperation between the Caribbean and Europe: Challenges and Opportunities” was organised on the 4th of July 2012 by the CaribErasmus project, with the support of the European Commission and of the ACP Secretariat. The event was targeted at European Commission Officers, representatives of the Caribbean Embassies in Brussels, other EU and national decision makers, higher education associations, universities and students’ representatives.

The Seminar had three main objectives:

- Information sharing: to present excellence cases of academic research results from the Caribbean region and highlight data on EU-Caribbean cooperation in the field of higher education in terms of achievements and future challenges, including the findings of the CaribErasmus Project and the mobility opportunities offered to Caribbean students and researchers by the Erasmus for All programme;
- Knowledge exchange: invite participants, who are active in projects and platforms supporting academic internationalisation and international cooperation, to share their concerns and future plans;
- Roadmapping: to debate and fine-tune, in the context of a high level roundtable, a set of future-oriented actions that shall be taken to improve cooperation among the two regions, starting from the CaribErasmus Green Paper on EU-Caribbean Higher Education Cooperation, which proposes a set of future-oriented actions to improve cooperation among the two regions.

58 participants, representing different stakeholders groups took part in the Seminar (see a full list of participant in annex to this report).

All the presentations used during the Seminar are available for download at the site www.cariberasmus.eu.



2. EVENT REPORT

2.1 Welcome and overview of Caribbean Higher Education excellence

The seminar was opened by **John Kakule** from the ACP Secretariat who conveyed the welcome by Mrs Michele Dominique Raymond, Assistant Secretary General for the Political Affairs and Human Development Department of the ACP Secretariat. From the perspective of the ACP Secretariat, the seminar represents an important contribution to the EU-ACP cooperation process in the field of Higher Education and knowledge economy, and to the objectives of fostering capacity building and regional integration through institutional networking, as well as of supporting HE systems that are of quality, efficient and relevant to the needs of the labour market and consistent to the socio-economic priorities of the Caribbean countries.



Image 1 - The Seminar opening session

Being knowledge-sharing one of the pillars of the Caribbean HE strategy, mobility of students, scholars and academic staff are essential, and the support of European Union programmes such as Erasmus Mundus and the intra ACP academic mobility scheme are essential as they contributed to the capacity building of young talented people, who can have access to better education in Europe and within the Caribbean region. It was commented that it is crucial to create a critical mass of qualified human resources able to support and sustain the needed economic growth in the Caribbean. To this end, the ACP Secretariat will keep supporting innovation in HE and encouraging the Caribbean HE community to continue in the cooperation efforts and respond to the call for proposals for the mobility schemes.



In his introductory remarks, **Joachim Fronia**, Head of Unit of the EACEA in charge of Erasmus Mundus and External Cooperation, briefly explained the context in which the seminar and the CaribErasmus project are framed, which is the Erasmus Mundus programme and its Action 3, with its specific main objective of promoting and raising awareness among third countries about the European higher education sector, its relevant cooperation programmes and funding schemes, and encouraging access to them. He mentioned that the reflection proposed by CaribErasmus is especially timely and important since the European Commission is at the verge of preparing the new programme for education, called Erasmus for All, which will keep on giving importance to mobility and cooperation with non-European regions, including the Caribbean.

The seminar then entered its information session, with a briefing on the higher education panorama in the Caribbean region given by **Carlton Samuels**, who underlined the complexity and diversity of the area at many levels - population, culture, higher education systems, public expenditure in higher education - and the special situation of Cuba, for its geo/demographic dimensions and its enrolment rates (40% of students in Caribbean higher education).

He pointed out the growing demand for tertiary education in the region and gave a review of the excellence of the academic research carried out in the Caribbean by illustrating its many achievements, especially in some traditional fields such as agriculture, marine ecology, musical instruments and machinery for sugar processing as well as more recently in science and innovation, referring to fields like biomedicine, nutrition and health, diabetes, medicinal plants and pharmacopeia, cardiac surgery, computing technologies, alternative energy systems, etc. As a confirmation to that, he mentioned the three Caribbean Nobel prizes gained in literature, economics and peace between the late '60 and 2007, whose different holders' careers are all somehow related to the regional main academic actor, which is the University of the West Indies.

Finally, he outlined the emerging of substantial opportunities offered by the Caribbean Higher Education in fields such as food security, medicals production, alternative energy, applied chemistry. It was stated that in order to catch these opportunities investments in Caribbean science and technology institutions must be encouraged, together with the promotion of capacity building in schools and communities, the set up of an e-infrastructure (for instance based on communities of practices for information sharing with EU counterparts) and the creation of a shared database of researchers and research interests based on an Open Access paradigm. The Initiative of the Caribbean Academy of Science (CAS) was mentioned, which hinges on the very concept of openness, which is the only way to allow more opportunities for the region to stem out.



2.2 The CaribErasmus project results

Fabio Nascimbeni (MENON) presented an overview of the project results:

- the Survey on Caribbean students and researchers' perceptions about studying in Europe
- four partnership-building seminars in Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Trinidad, Haiti
- the Study Choice Portal specifically addressing Caribbean students
- the Promotional Kit on Caribbean HE offer
- the Consultation Process on the policy dimension and the Green Paper.

He underlined the high interest always detected among Caribbean HE stakeholders for the CaribErasmus goals and approach and their positive feedback, expressed both when in the region and when directly talking to them, and through virtual or distance contacts. This encourages the project partnership to keep supporting cooperation between the two regions, taking advantage of the channels for possible future stable collaboration that have been opened up but taking into account that local support is key to ensure success and that there different levels of institutional capacity to be considered as well as the need to not underestimate complexity.

Matteo Sgarzi (AlmaLaurea) presented the results from the CaribErasmus survey, highlighting that, although the nature of the survey itself was biased towards respondents with a positive attitude towards mobility and international studying, the results nonetheless confirmed that a good majority of Caribbean students and researchers are willing to undertake an experience abroad and that Europe is a rather preferred destination. On the other hand, there are some major constraints limiting such phenomenon, above all related to family ties, which paves the way for alternative ways of cooperation and international study, such as those offered by the virtual mobility, joint curricula etc. The full Survey Report is available at www.cariberasmus.eu.

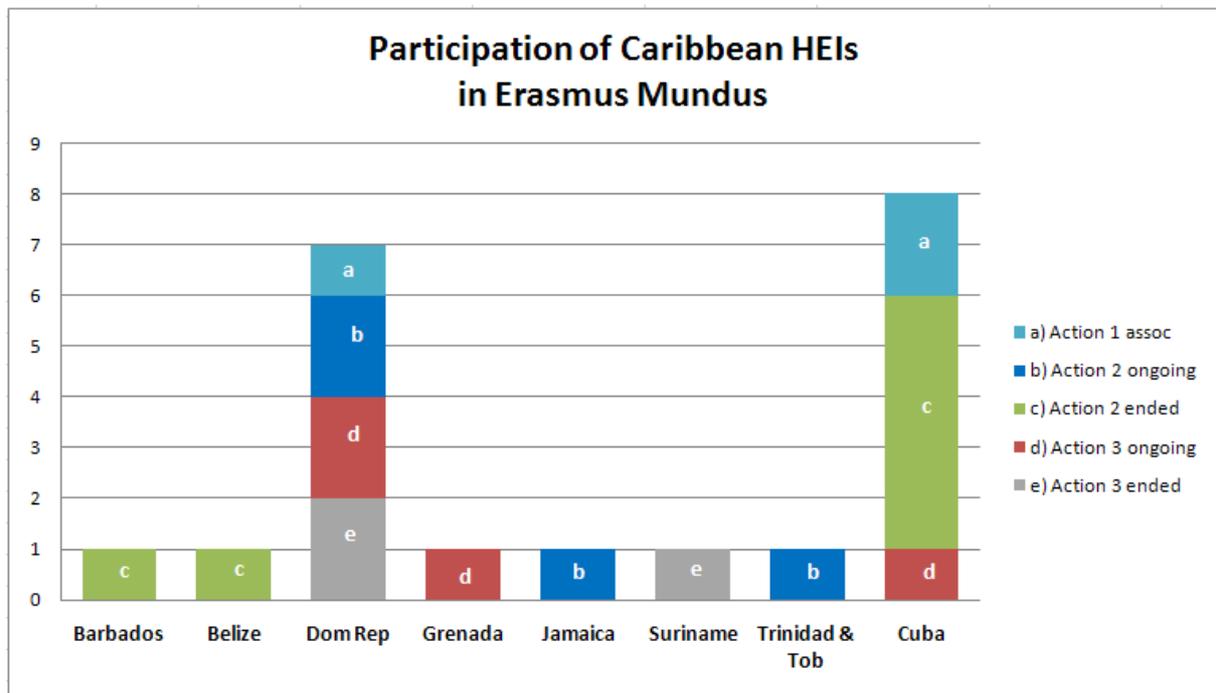
Joran Van Aart (StudyPortals) illustrated the study portal addressing the Caribbean students and highlighted how it obtained great success, being accessed by thousands of Caribbean visitors monthly, not only interested in finding information about study possibilities in Europe, but also in browsing the testimonials from peers, which have been made available there through videos and spontaneously collected written texts. The portal is also able to provide some interesting statistics indicating student interest compared to other regions of the world, such as the level of study mostly researched, which is the master degree, the preferred countries (the UK, the Netherlands, Spain and France are generally more popular among Caribbean students), the academic field, etc. The portal can be accessed www.studyportals.eu/caribbean.



The project results were enriched by a presentation by **Joachim Fronia (EACEA)** on the currently existing cooperation opportunities between the European Union and the Caribbean Countries.

He presented a number of interesting data on the actual participation of Caribbean institutions in collaboration activities funded by the European Union, and described the currently available possibility for EU-Caribbean higher education collaboration and mobility:

- EM Action 1: joint programmes at Masters and Doctoral level with scholarships
- EM Action 2: partnerships of EU and non-EU universities with mobility scholarships
- EM Action 3: international consortia to tackle higher education cooperation themes
- Intra-ACP academic mobility scheme: partnerships of ACP universities with mobility scholarships.

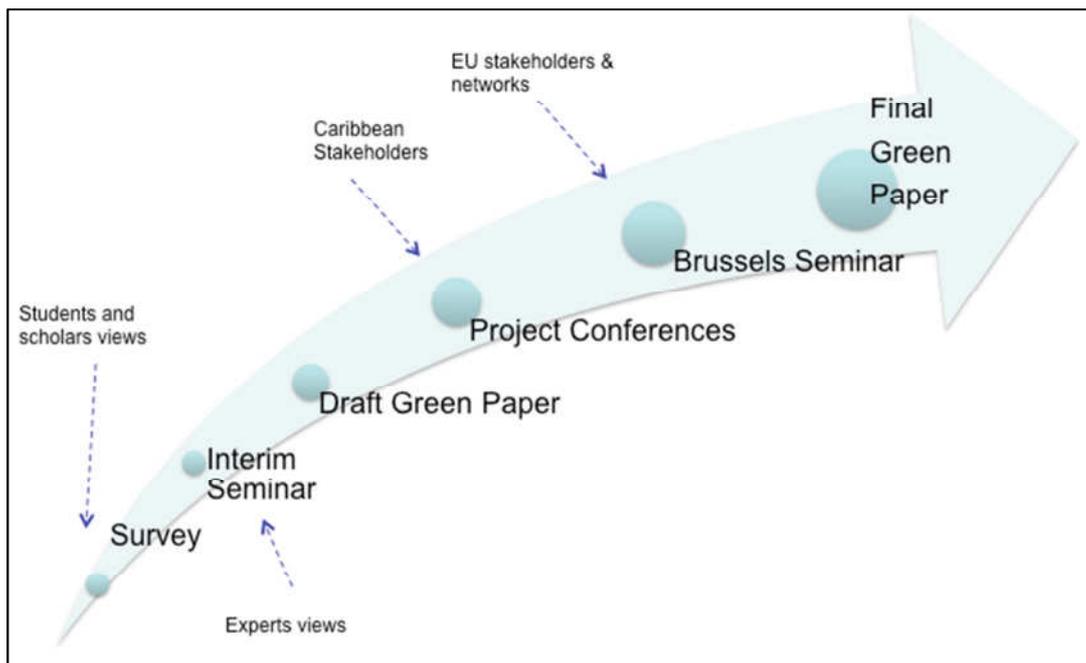


Graph 1 - Caribbean participation in Erasmus Mundus

He mentioned that the Intra-ACP Mobility programme is having a good level of success, and that the 2012 selection is now being finalized: 2M€ will be made available for one partnership for Caribbean & Pacific. Further, for 2013 a call will be published with an increased funding of around 6M€ for the Caribbean and Pacific area, to fund two projects from the region. The main challenges at the moment are to reach an increased number of applications from the region and to increase the participation of HEIs from Caribbean.



The CaribErasmus Green Paper was presented by **Fabio Nascimbeni**. The Green Paper exercise is aiming at stimulating consultation and reflection among relevant stakeholders and, in particular, decision and policy-makers from Europe and the Caribbean on **strategies to enhance cooperation** between the two regions in the field of Higher Education. Ultimately, the Green Paper should have **an impact on** reducing fragmentation, on the articulation between multilateral and bilateral level, on the capacity to monitor cooperation progresses, on the need for persistence/continuity/sustainability and should facilitate bench learning among Caribbean countries.



Graph 2 - The Green Paper consultation process

The vision proposed by CaribErasmus as well as the main challenges for EU-Caribbean higher education cooperation were presented, with a focus on the main recommendations for actions:

A. Smoothen the EU-Caribbean HE collaboration framework

- A.1 Coherence between political objectives and support tools should be increased
- A.2 Make sure that adequate funding for the region is deployed.

B. Transfer inter-regional cooperation capacity from Europe to the Caribbean

- B.1 Caribbean countries should be engaged in the Bologna Process
- B.2 Further support Caribbean regional academic networking
- B.3 EU mobility schemes should be used for Caribbean researchers working in Europe.

C) Work on the long-term perspective

- C.1 Cooperation should be monitored
- C.2 Internationalisation of Caribbean universities should be supported locally

The CaribErasmus Green Paper can be downloaded at www.cariberasmus.eu.



2.3 Knowledge sharing: how to improve EU-Caribbean HE cooperation

The representative of the European Commission, Direction General for Education Audiovisual and Culture, **Deirdre Lennan**, presented the upcoming *Erasmus for All* (E4All) programme and underlined its inner international dimensions. She invited the CaribErasmus partnership and the seminar participants to comment the E4All programme current version, and stated that the upcoming programme is rather in line with the recommendations proposed by the CaribErasmus work. She mentioned that the E4All programme is being designed in a flexible way that could accommodate the needs of stakeholders from diverse regions, including the Caribbean. The utility of the CaribErasmus green paper for the Higher Education unit at DG Education and Culture, especially in view of the future E4ALL programme, was appreciated.

Sharan Singh (University of the West Indies) pointed out the difficulty of reaching a common position in a region as complex as the Caribbean: a complexity that it is very much reflected in the same institution he represents, the regional University of the West Indies, funded by 16 different governments and subject to a decision making process involving all such 16 bodies. He nonetheless acknowledged the insightful and timely contribution of the CaribErasmus project, which, by gathering baseline information and basic data on the situation of the higher education in the Caribbean, is bringing in an external perspective that might help the insiders to extend their visions and also maybe accommodate their perspectives into a same adjustable common framework. He introduced the project MUNDUS ACP, consisting in a partnership of 20 Higher Education Institutions from the European Union and the ACP Countries, within the framework of the Action 2 of the Erasmus Mundus Programme (see www.acp-mundus.eu).

Stefan Delplace (EURASHE) mentioned that the way in which CaribErasmus could have an impact on the Bologna process is through the Bologna policy forum, an event organised biannually where discussions on how to open the Bologna process internationally are held. In parallel to this, we need to stimulate the organization of regional or thematic focus events. He invited the Caribbean HE stakeholders to propose to hold a meeting of this kind in the Caribbean region, and offered the intermediation of EURASHE to reach European decision makers. This could stimulate the European Commission to support such meetings. He also mentioned the need for peer learning among academic networks, and the centrality of the issues of the quality assurance and recognition, also in line with the Global Recognition Framework that the UNESCO and the European Council are envisaging for 2020.

Claudio Dondi (Scienter) provided an input from another academic cooperation project called VertebrALCUE, funded within the framework of the ALFA programme, which recently produced a number of policy recommendations mostly pointing to the need for reaching integration at various levels (institutional, political, social...), within each region and between the concerned regions. He illustrated the relevance of creating operational units (namely ALCUE Units¹) within the academic institutions, which are explicitly dedicated to foster both

¹ ALCUE Unit refers to the ALCUE process, related to the bi-regional cooperation between Latin America and Caribe and the European Union (see vertebralcue.org to download the VertebrALCUE Green Paper).



such integration (inside the institution itself as well as within the national HE system) and cooperation with its socio-economic surrounding and between the two regions.



Image 2 – Debate during the Panel Discussion.

Several questions and comments from the audience reinforced the idea, also expressed by the panelists, that a project such as CaribErasmus was very much needed and that more space for dialogue, specifically addressing the EU-Caribbean relation is required in order to foster better cooperation and mutual understanding between the two regions.

The threat of marginalization of the Caribbean within the macro ALCUE and ACP processes was underlined, and it was stated that we should invest in actions like CaribErasmus, not to lose the momentum gained in terms of attention, interest, opportunities to be caught, etc.

It was also stressed that the indicators for success of higher education that we should apply in the Caribbean must be different from the one for Latin America, and that these must be customized to the Caribbean specificity.

It was also stated that the current “brain drain” from the Caribbean should not be forgotten but, through some of the actions proposed in the CaribErasmus Green Paper, it should be transformed into a “brain gain” dynamic.

Finally, it was suggested that the opportunity for dialogue opened up by CaribErasmus should be kept going and that possibly future meetings could take place in the Caribbean region as that would make it easier to gather there all concerned regional stakeholders.



Annex 1: Agenda

9:00 Welcome addresses

- Michèle Dominique Raymond, Assistant Secretary General for the Political Affairs and Human Development Department, ACP Secretariat
- Joachim Fronia, Head of Unit, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

9:15 The Caribbean academic panorama: overview of excellences and opportunities

- Carlton Samuels, CaribErasmus project, Jamaica

9:45 Perspectives on EU-Caribbean Higher Education cooperation: the CaribErasmus final results

- *The Caribbean seen with European eyes: lessons learnt within CaribErasmus*, Fabio Nascimbeni, MENON
- *The perception of Caribbean students and researchers on European HE*, Matteo Sgarzi, Almalaurea
- *What do Caribbean students look for? The project webportal*, Joran van Aart, StudyPortals

10:45 The EM achievements and the cooperation opportunities between the European Union and the Caribbean Countries

Joachim Fronia, Head of Unit, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

11:00 Coffee break

11:30 The CaribErasmus Green Paper on EU-Caribbean higher education cooperation

Fabio Nascimbeni, MENON

11.45 Knowledge sharing session: ideas on how to improve EU-Caribbean cooperation in higher education

Moderator: Claudio Dondi, MENON

- *Future international cooperation: the EC perspective*, Deirdre Lennan, International cooperation and programmes, DG EAC, European Commission
- *The MUNDUS ACP project*, Sharan Singh, University of the West Indies
- *An input to EU-LAC Higher Education cooperation: the VertebralCUE Green Paper*, Claudio Dondi, Scierer
- *The Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network*, Ken Sylvester, CEO, Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network
- *The Bologna process looking at the Caribbean; a new partnership?* Stefan Delplace, Secretary General, EURASHE

13:15 Conclusions

13:30 Closing Lunch



Annex 2: Participants list

Name	Surname	Institution	Country
Nela	Avila Maya	K.U.Leuven International Office	Belgium
Sylla	Aikaterini	EMF-The Forum of e-Excellence	Belgium
Jean Huc	Allard	UAG	Guadeloupe
Maximiliano	Alonso	CEO CONEXX - EUROPE	Belgium
Joseph	Antoine	Haiti Embassy in Brussels	Belgium
Frank	Antonisse	Aon Hewitt Consulting	Netherlands
Jimena	Arango	MENON	Belgium
Nathalie	Barendswaard	Placement/Internship Coordinator Coordinator Student Affairs	Netherlands
Symone	Betton	Embassy of Jamaica	Belgium
Cristina	Brecciaroli	Scienter	Italy
Giordana	Bruno	EACEA	Belgium
Christiane	Daems	IRELAC	Belgium
Isabell	Dahms	Europabüro der bayerischen Kommunen	Belgium
Françoise	De Cupere	VUB	Belgium
Stefan	Delplace	EURASHE	Belgium
Bianca	Diban	European Projects association	Belgium
Claudio	Dondi	Scienter	Italy
Alea	Fairchild	HUB	Belgium
Marek	Frankowicz	EURASHE	Belgium
Mark	Frederiks	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders	Netherlands
Olivier	Fromont	ETS Global	France
Joachim	Fronia	EACEA	Belgium
Joyce	Grazette	Embassy of Barbados	Barbados
Renaud	Guillonet	AL Invest IV	Belgium
Paula Bauwens	Hippolyte	Eastern Caribbean Embassies	St Lucia
John	Kakule	ACP secretariat	Belgium
Margaret	King-Rousseau	Embassy of Trinidad & Tobago	Belgium
Marcin	Krasnodębski	EURASHE	Belgium
Bertrand	Laborde	Studyportals	Netherlands
Ulrike	Lang	ESMU aisbl	Belgium
Bénédicte	Ledent	University of Liège	Belgium
Deirdre	Lennan	DG Education & Culture	Belgium
André	Loechel	Fondation des Territoires de Demain	France



Name	Surname	Institution	Country
Renald	Luberice	Haiti Embassy in Brussels	Belgium
Lisa	Marmorato	MENON	Belgium
Jiri	Matousek	ESN Czech Republic	Belgium
Bevone Rodline	Mc Donald	Embassy of the Republic of Guyana	Guyana
Fabio	Nascimbeni	MENON	Belgium
Sherwyn	Naughton	Embassy of Guyana	Belgium
Beatrice	Niyibigira	MENON	Belgium
Aline	Palige	Centre international de formation européenne CIFE	Germany
Livia	Raccanello	EuropeAid	Belgium
Tracey	Ramsubagh	Embassy of Trinidad & Tobago	Belgium
Michèle Dominique	Raymond	ACP - Assistant Secretary General	Belgium
Altagracia	Reyes	Embassy of Dominican Republic	Belgium
Hutchinson	Roxie	Embassy of Grenada	Belgium
Carlton	Samuels	Consultant	Jamaica
Matteo	Sgarzi	Almalaurea	Italy
Sharan	Singh	UWI	Trinidad
Edison	Spina	University of São Paulo	Brazil
Gisela	Spreitzhofer	DEVCO C/2	Belgium
Viktor	Sukup	DG DEVCO	Belgium
Ken	Sylvester	CKLN	Grenada
Joran	Van Aart	Studyportals	Netherlands
Ann	Van Hauwaert	U. Gent	Belgium
Iva	Voldanova	EURASHE	Belgium
Eustace	Wallace	Eastern Caribbean States	Belgium
Marta	Zuiba	Permanent representation of Poland to the EU	Belgium