



the evaluation partnership 

## *Evaluation of EU Centres*

# Final Report

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**FRAMEWORK CONTRACT ON EVALUATION AND EVALUATION-RELATED SERVICES (BUDG 06/PO/01/Lot 3/ABAC 101902)**

*Lot 3: Provision of external evaluation studies of an interim and ex post nature*

*EU Centres webpage: [http://eeas.europa.eu/eu-centres/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/eu-centres/index_en.htm)*

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### Report authors

Mr Ben Ward (The Evaluation Partnership)

Ms Myra Howze Shiplett (External Expert)

Dr Watson Scott Swail (External Expert)

Professor Norman Graham (External Expert)

Mr David Hogan (External Expert)

Mr Akiyoshi Yonezawa (External Expert)

Mr Francis O'Neill (External Expert)

Ms Andrea Kobilsky (The Evaluation Partnership)

Ms Vanessa Ludden (The Evaluation Partnership)

Ms Mirja Gutheil (The Evaluation Partnership)

Ms Macarena Davies (The Evaluation Partnership)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 0.1 Background, objectives and approach

The **EU Centres programme (the “Initiative”)** forms part of the Commission’s public diplomacy strategy to promote awareness and understanding of the EU beyond its borders. The first European Centres were established in the United States and Canada in 1998 to assist the Commission in this strategy. Building on the success of the pilot projects, the Initiative continued growing, and it currently comprises 26 Centres worldwide. The Centres are based at Universities in eight industrialised countries, spanning three continents: ten in the US, five in Canada, two in Korea, three in Japan, three in Australia, and one in each of New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan. Activities encouraged within the programme focus on teaching, research, outreach, and networking.

Today, the Initiative receives over three million Euros per year from the European Commission. The US and Canada still host the bulk of the EU Centres (58% of all EU-funded Centres), however the balance is shifting towards Asia, Australia and New Zealand where 13 EU-funded Centres have been established over the past few years, although two of them no longer receive funding from Brussels.

The evaluation fulfils the specific legal requirements of Council Regulation 1934/2006 which stipulates, under Article 13, that the Commission regularly evaluates the actions and programmes financed under this Regulation, where appropriate by means of independent external evaluations, in order to ascertain whether the objectives have been met and enable it to formulate recommendations with a view to improving future operations.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the **relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability** of the Initiative, based on an analysis of the EU Centres programme at the following three levels:

- The **Centre level**, the analysis focussed on how the funds allocated to the Centres are being transformed into specific activities, the results that these have achieved, the contribution and impacts delivered, and their sustainability in the longer term.
- The **Network level**, the assessment focussed on how the contributions of the different Centres are designed to maximise the contributions of the network as a whole (in the US and Canada) with a view to their supporting the attainment of the wider general objectives through the delivery of networking synergies and impacts (e.g. good practice transfer, economies of scale, dissemination opportunities, exchanges, etc.).
- The **Initiative level**, the focus was on how the combination of individual Centre achievements and the leverage added through networking support the attainment of the general objectives of the programme.

The following tools were employed to gather evidence in this evaluation:

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<sup>1</sup> COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 1934/2006 of 21 December 2006 establishing a financing instrument for cooperation with industrialised and other high-income countries and territories. See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:405:0041:0059:EN:PDF>



- a comprehensive analysis of all DG RELEX documentation relating to the EU Centres Initiative (ranging from the Legal basis to the calls for proposals and the Centres' reports);
- face-to-face interviews with officials in DG RELEX and at the Delegations to the European Union in all of the countries involved;<sup>2</sup>
- face-to-face interviews with officials in DG Education and Culture and the Education and Executive Agency;
- field visits to 26 current and 6 former EU Centres (to conduct interviews with Centre management and staff, students and university senior management). Additionally, interviews were carried out with external stakeholders from government, the media, business groups, the diplomatic community, NGOs, high schools);
- pre/post-discussion questionnaires completed by the Centres providing quantitative data on their outputs;
- an online survey with students and beneficiaries of the EU Centres (receiving over 800 responses)

## 0.2 Key conclusions and Recommendations

### 0.2.1 Conclusions on relevance

- The EU Centres Initiative is **growing in all of the right ways**. The performance of established Centres, those that have completed at least two funding cycles, is a clear indicator of the Initiative's potential to achieve a solid and enduring impact across all three pillars of the Initiative but particularly in the research and teaching elements.
- Higher education institutions are deemed the most appropriate host entities for EU Centres taking into account the current objectives of the Initiative.
- The current **geographical distribution** of EU Centres across the world is about right considering the length of time the Initiative has been around and the levels of resources dedicated to it. The recent enlargement to additional countries and territories in Asia has reflected an important strategic move towards a region with growing importance on the world stage.
- It is envisaged that in the years to come the expansion of the EU Centres programme is likely to be shaped by the human and financial resources available and by the strategic and political priorities of the Commission. Any expansion of the Initiative to new countries should not divert the focus of attention on the consolidation of the EU Centres that are currently in operation, in particular those Centres in the countries that have joined more recently.
- The current **number of Centres** in the countries that are part of the Initiative is considered to be appropriate. The capacity of the Commission and the Delegations in the US and Japan to manage this number of Centres does not seem to be an issue. In the US, Canada and Australia, the geographical distribution of EU Centres could be more widespread. However, location should not be put above the quality and excellence of proposals in future calls for proposals.
- In terms of the **range of academic disciplines**, there is a tendency for Centres to move towards a more multidisciplinary offering as they become more established and gain visibility and support within their host Universities. This was judged by many Centres as a very positive evolution.

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of Taiwan, a telephone interview was conducted with the Taiwan Economic and Trade Office.

- The EU Centres promote **interdepartmental/ faculty synergies**, which result in academic staff working together on cross-disciplinary projects, when this would previously not have been the case. In many of the more established Centres, interdisciplinary cooperation has expanded lately to the professional schools, the Business Schools in particular, and to the hard sciences.
- In terms of the **range of activities covered** by the Centres, Universities across the board feel more comfortable with the teaching and research components of the Initiative, because this is considered their “core business”. The European Commission on the other hand places a certain emphasis on the outreach activities organised for the wider audiences beyond the academic community.
- The “**EU Centres of Excellence**” (**EUCE**) **brand** has had a beneficial effect in the United States and Canada, in particular for promoting the Initiative to Universities’ administrations and other potential funding sources. The brand has not yet been particularly effective in reaching the beneficiaries of the Centres, as reflected by the low levels of awareness of survey respondents when consulted about the EUCE brand.

### 0.2.2 *Recommendations on relevance*

- It is recommended that **any expansion of the EU Centre’s Initiative to new countries does not divert the Commission’s focus from building on the success of the Initiative in the existing group of countries**. Consolidation of the current EU Centres could be achieved through a number of combined actions, including a more fluent interaction and regular exchanges between the Centres and networks at country, regional and worldwide levels. Where possible, the Initiative would benefit from more involvement of Delegations in promoting the Initiative among Universities and the wider academic communities in each country.
- The Commission may wish to launch, through the relevant Delegations, a number of **preparatory promotional actions in countries that are potential candidates for joining the Initiative**. This could include running information sessions for potential host Universities in each country to introduce them to the Initiative. Additionally, liaising with the wider academic community would be a useful way to test the initial response to and the feasibility of launching the Initiative in new countries.
- An approach that could be included in subsequent calls for proposals to account for some geographical imbalances in a number of countries would be **encouraging candidates to build Consortia with Universities in specific regions or cities** that are underrepresented in the different countries.
- In cases where the establishment or the management of a Consortium is likely to be too complicated, **ad hoc partnerships between established EU Centres and Universities in underrepresented regions or cities could be encouraged** for the joint organisation of specific programmes, courses, seminars, workshops or events. These partnerships would allow the Initiative to gradually expand to specific cities or regions without the need for Centres to formally join forces as a Consortium from the outset.
- In Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, more promotional actions could be organised by the Commission through the Delegations/Economic and Trade Office with a view to increasing the awareness of the Initiative among Universities and the wider academic communities in these countries.
- It is recommended that **interdisciplinary research and teaching be encouraged in Centres across all countries involved in the initiative**. For example, by exploring collaboration opportunities with Business Schools and hard science departments. This might enable Centres to expand what they offer beyond the realms of those departments with which they are most typically associated namely, the Social Sciences, History and Languages.

- It is recommended that the **current menu of activities and programmes offered by the EU Centres worldwide be maintained**. The main issue moving forward is not so much linked to introducing alternative types of intervention or new types of activities, but strengthening the current offer by consolidating specific programmes or activities that work well (e.g. the academic courses on offer, the outreach to secondary schools, EU speakers, etc), improving aspects that have scope for further adjustments (e.g. relations with the media, collaboration with other Centres, etc), reaching out to different target groups both within and beyond the host Universities, and increasing the networking component at country, regional and worldwide levels.
- The Commission should consider **further enhancing the EU Centre's brand by continuing to build on the association with the European Union**. The grant programme is seen as having a non-financial benefit in that Universities awarded funding can be associated with the European Union brand. In general there is a particularly positive view of this association. The fact that the funding comes from the EU is perceived to raise the profile and credibility of the action. It is also considered prestigious for the organisation / institution. In this context the evaluation puts forward a couple of options for the Commission to help consolidate the Initiative worldwide by giving it a visual consistency that is currently not evident:
  - The first option would be **including the EU flag as a distinct visual component** in the websites and promotional material of each and every Centre.
  - The second option would be to **create a logo representing the EU Centres Initiative that all EU Centres could use on their websites and promotional material**. If this alternative were considered, it is recommended that the new logo contains the EU flag.<sup>3</sup>

### 0.2.3 *Conclusions on effectiveness*

- The overall perception of the majority of stakeholders is that the work of the EU Centres has been **very positive and valuable**. Currently, there are no consolidated outcome and impact indicators that allow for systematic **monitoring of objectives** in a comparative and aggregated fashion. Such a mechanism could facilitate the improved strategic management of the Initiative.
- The Initiative is perceived to be **new and innovative** from various angles.
  - The majority of beneficiaries (52%) responding to the survey claim that they would not have achieved similar outcomes if they had not been engaged with the Centres.
  - Host Universities see the Centres as cross-cutting players that positively complement the activities of the long established Departments and Schools.
  - The work of the Centres is also perceived to have added to the Delegations' public diplomacy work.
  - From the perspective of Centres, the EU Centres grant is unique as there are no other sources of funding available with the same goals.
- There are **complementarities** between the EU Centres Initiative and other similar Initiatives at EU level such as the Erasmus Mundus Partnerships and the Jean Monnet Actions that are not being sufficiently taken advantage of. The potential for joint promotion and communication of EU-funded Initiatives is not fully exploited.
- The **networks** in the different countries have not yet realised their full potential. In the US and Canada, there is a shared view that more could be done to take advantage of the networks. New technologies, which

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<sup>3</sup> Some of the recent research conducted by TEP for other services across the Commission has shown that consistency is key in branding; and that the EU flag is the EU's brand.

could increase the links between Centres in a cost-effective way through for example the sharing of conferences/speakers, are not being sufficiently exploited.

- **EU funding** below the current 50% co-financing threshold for Centres in the US and Canada would put the sustainability of the Initiative with its current objectives at risk. With decreased levels of funding from the EU, many Universities would not be sufficiently incentivised to be part of the EU Centres Initiative.
- Although the majority of Universities have found the **outreach component** most challenging to implement, outreach activities have been particularly effective when they are tailored to local audiences who have genuine interests in the topics and strong links to the host Universities or the management of the Centres. Outreach efforts with secondary schools have also been successful.

#### **0.2.4 Recommendations on effectiveness**

- It is recommended that the EU Centres Initiative be **more strongly promoted among officials in DG EAC, EACEA, and DG RTD running complementary EU cooperation programmes**. Promotion of the Initiative among these officials might bring with it further opportunities for collaboration and interaction; particularly in terms of cross promotion of the EU's various programmes in the different countries.
- It is recommended that a **further impetus be given to the networking component in the different countries and regions**. The advancement of new technologies and the possibility to share a broader menu of activities (i.e. conferences, workshops, lectures) at relatively low costs suggests that there are huge opportunities for collaboration that are not being taken advantage of. Ideas that Centres could explore in this field, such as network websites incorporating more content and material, the promotion of the main elements of the work programmes of the Centres, the publication of the Annual Reports (or parts of the reports) of the Centres, are further developed in the evaluation report.
- If the networks at country (and potentially regional) level are to be further developed, it is recommended that the **roles and expected tasks/responsibilities of the network coordinators** in each country be described in more detail in the calls for proposals. In parallel, additional resources may be necessary for the network coordinators if they are to take a more active role in consolidating the networks.
- It is recommended that the networks be encouraged to expand at the level of students who participate in the activities of the Centres. Developing **social networks for students of EU Centres** in the different countries/worldwide would allow the Initiative to spontaneously grow this very relevant audience group. Centres would have a minor role to play in promoting this Initiative at the outset by for example starting a Facebook page of the EU Centres Initiative, but the content would be generated by the users of these networks.
- **Good practice** across the worldwide network could be captured and codified and made available and accessible on a global basis to all involved parties. For example, a manual of good practices could be compiled and distributed to the Centres after each world meeting capturing successful ideas and methods and making reference to those Centres that could be approached as "referents" for the different activities. The manual could cover good practices both on the administrative front but also on the actual work of EU Centres in terms of teaching, research and outreach.
- It is recommended that a **50% cap on the maximum level of co-financing required (i.e. at least 50% from EC) remains in place for EU Centres in the US**. There are concerns among the majority of the established Centres that declines in EU funding below the 50% threshold would put the sustainability of the

Initiative at risk as many of the host Universities that provide the matching funds would not be in a position to renew their commitments.

- It is recommended that the **outreach not be tied to a “one size fits all” approach but be linked to the strengths of the host Universities**, as is the case of the Washington DC Consortium. This EU Centre of Excellence is substantially aided by its physical presence in Washington DC, which is the seat of the US national government. The location provides access to a broad range of national political figures from all over the world, and particular access to European Union (EU) leadership as well as the leadership of the 27 Member States that make up the EU.
- Centres should be **encouraged to think local, both in terms of the audiences that they could more easily approach and in terms of the topics** that are of interest to these audiences. In countries such as the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand where the Initiative is more established, links with external audiences work better where there is a local component that promotes the interaction (e.g. the Washington DC environment supports the fluent interaction between the John Hopkins Consortium and government stakeholders, in the same way as it works for Carleton in Canada).

### 0.2.5 Conclusions on impact

- The main contribution of the Initiative to **furthering the goals of cooperation** with the partner countries through enhanced “people-to-people links” is that it has fostered a genuine interest among students, researchers and faculty to interact and network with people and institutions in the EU.
- The impact of the Initiative has been significant on the **development of curricula on EU studies**, especially in mature Centres in the countries that have been part of the Initiative for longer. Links with equivalent **academic bodies within the European Union** are gradually growing in number, with more exchange programmes, internships and invited EU speakers and visitors being organised by the Centres in the different countries.
- The Initiative’s contribution to furthering the goals of cooperation between the EU and the **wider community** has been more limited. With a few exceptions, the majority of established Centres find the development of outreach activities the most challenging element of the initiative.
- The level of interest in the relationship with the EU is being challenged by **other growing bilateral relationships**. This is particularly the case in the US, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan where there is a strong interest in the relationship with China. In Australia and New Zealand, there is also currently far more emphasis placed on the Asian region.
- In terms of reaching a **critical mass of activity** across all three pillars with the resources allocated to the Initiative, the number of years (or cycles) Centres have been operating greatly influences the number and range of activities the Centres are in a position to develop and maintain. Mature Centres have been the most successful in reaching a critical mass of activity that can ensure visibility, added value, and innovation.

### 0.2.6 Recommendations on impact

- It is recommended that Centres be encouraged to continue expanding their **personal and institutional contacts with people and organisations in the EU**. These links should be utilised as fully as possible to create further opportunities for joint research projects, expand exchange programmes for students, faculty

and researchers (both from partner countries to the EU and from the EU to partner countries), establish co-taught programmes (which have been hardly implemented so far), and increasing the number of visiting EU speakers, scholars and practitioners.

- In their **outreach work to wider audiences** beyond the academic community, Centres should be encouraged to focus on one or two audience groups where they think they can make a difference and where they see there are already existing links that can facilitate their access to them. High school teachers and students have proved to be one of these audiences where Centres have been more successful.
- It is recommended that a greater number of activities targeted at **journalists and opinion formers** as well as a more regular and proactive flow of information (e.g. through opinion pieces, articles, briefing sessions, press conferences etc.) from Centres to the media could help to enhance the impact of the Initiative on the general public. Encouraging links to local media (i.e. local radio or TV stations, local newspapers) could ease the burden on the Centres as local media are in general perceived to be more accessible than national media.

### 0.2.7 *Conclusions on sustainability*

- The main factors that can ensure the **sustainability of an EU Centre** are building a solid base of support from the host University and maintaining it, ensuring enthusiastic and committed EU Centre Directors and staff, and maintaining the Commission's support.
- **Support from the Commission** remains essential to ensuring the sustainability of an EU Centre, even in the cases of well-established and successful Centres. Attracting alternative sources of funding for the EU Centres initiative as it current stands is not impossible but certainly not widely available.

### 0.2.8 *Recommendations on sustainability*

- It is recommended that the Commission continues to fund the EU Centres Initiative. If the Initiative wants to maintain its current objectives and build on its achievements to date, it is not realistic to expect EU Centres to become fully sustainable. There is an inherent risk that the Centres could lose their focus on the EU and cease outreach and public diplomacy activities, in the quest to become sustainable.
- If the Commission takes the decision to maintain the current co-funding levels for the Centres, it will be important to **communicate this strategic decision to the Centres**. This could be done by way of a letter sent by DG RELEX Headquarters to all Centres communicating the results of the evaluation and thanking the Centres for the ongoing support provided all throughout the evaluation process. The main results of the evaluation could be also made available on DG RELEX's website.
- Commission funding apart, it is recommended that emphasis be put on the **need for the Centres to consolidate the other equally critical factors** for achieving sustainability, namely University support and committed leadership and staff. Institutionalisation of the Centres is a factor that the Commission should be very insistent about in the regular and informal exchanges with the Centres.

### 0.2.9 *Conclusions on efficiency*

- There is enough evidence to suggest that the European Commission is getting a good return on its investment for the EU Centres Initiative in terms of enhancing awareness and knowledge of the EU in partner countries, and most notably among the academic community. There is a shared perception among

the vast majority of stakeholders consulted that the **Centres are adding real value** and that **the Commission benefits from the Initiative to a great extent**. Many Centres have demonstrated that they go beyond the realms of business as usual which translates into a wider and deeper impact on teaching, research and outreach activities and, in crude terms, represents more value for the Commission.

- Mature Centres in the countries that have been part of the Initiative for a longer period of time appear to be the most **cost effective** in achieving visibility, awareness and satisfaction of the stakeholders. Having built up their Centres some are now in a position to leverage additional funding from elsewhere to support their activities further. It takes time for Centres to reach this stage of development, as well as strong University support and constant dedication and commitment from Centres' management and staff.
- The **fluctuating exchange rate** between the Euro and national currencies is perceived as a "financial management challenge" for EU Centres. Fluctuating exchange rates can have a negative effect on EU Centres' budgets in that they cannot be anticipated and Universities are not in a position to cover the exposure to such fluctuations.
- In terms of the **duration of the grant**, there seems to be a dividing line between the views of new Centres and those of mature Centres. The majority of new Centres in countries that have joined the Initiative recently are more supportive of a four year funding cycle as it would provide more stability to the projects. Mature Centres in the US and Australia on the other hand are comfortable with the three year cycles they have. The exception to this are mature Centres in Canada, all of which favour a four year cycle that would allow aligning the activities of the Centres with the academic cycles in the country.
- As a general rule, the outreach tends to be more efficient when it flows from the Centres themselves. Centres need to find the **outreach formula** that best adapts to their host Universities and their communities. Focusing efforts on specific audiences or specific issues of relevance linked to local interests would more likely generate greater impact than implementing pre-established activities that may not be the most adequate to the specific contexts and circumstances. Universities that already have close links with their local communities (e.g. the Washington DC Consortium and the political community based in Washington, the Miami-Florida Centre and the business and diplomatic communities in Florida) generally perform better at the outreach. In future calls for proposals, the Commission might want to consider asking applicants to demonstrate their level of interaction with the local / regional community.
- With regard to the **selection process**, Centres would appreciate more detailed feedback from Headquarters or Delegations on the grounds of selection or rejection of their proposals. While the duration of the selection process has decreased there are still gaps in between funding cycles which for those Centres keen to continue their EU Centre activities can be a challenge - having to put in measures to keep the Centre going while they learn the outcome of their grant application.
- The **deconcentration policy** that took place in the US and Japan and which resulted in placing responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Initiative in the hands of the respective Delegations has been viewed positively by EU Centres in both countries.
- **Reporting** is considered to be particularly burdensome for many Centres; in particular for Centres that are transiting their first funding cycle. Mature Centres have become more used to reporting requirements and are hence less troubled by the narrative and financial reports.

### 0.2.10 Recommendations on efficiency

- There is no need to modify the current duration of funding in different regions as EU Centres are generally satisfied with their respective grant periods. In the longer term, the Commission might consider moving towards **three year funding cycles** as the Initiative becomes more consolidated and Centres become more mature and familiar with reporting requirements.
- It is recommended that the Commission reduce (or eliminate) any time between one grant period ending and the next one commencing. For Centres re-applying for funding this would help in the context of continuity if they are able to secure a subsequent cycle of funding.
- There is scope to **more clearly communicate the administrative and financial requirements** that Universities are required to go through in applying for EU funding, in particular in relation to the category of indirect costs, the level of flexibility to make adjustments in programming or to reallocate funding across different categories of activities, and the situation with the fluctuating exchange rates.
- It is recommended that the Commission consider a **peer review element** in evaluating EU Centre proposals. If feasible, the system could be first tested in the country where the next call for proposals is launched to see how it works and if it is possible to further expand it to other countries.
- **Further feedback on proposals** (for successful and unsuccessful applicants) and annual reports would be useful.
- It is recommended that the Commission examine the possibility of administering and managing the EU Centre grants electronically (this could include the submission of proposals and annual reports). While there appears to be no immediate requirement of this sort, it is likely that such an approach would result in efficiency gains. Additionally, the possibility of submitting electronic receipts instead of paper originals would also improve administrative efficiency as many Universities already operate such practices.

## 0.3 Attributes of a successful EU Centre

The diagram below captures what the evaluation team understands are the key attributes of running a successful EU Centre.

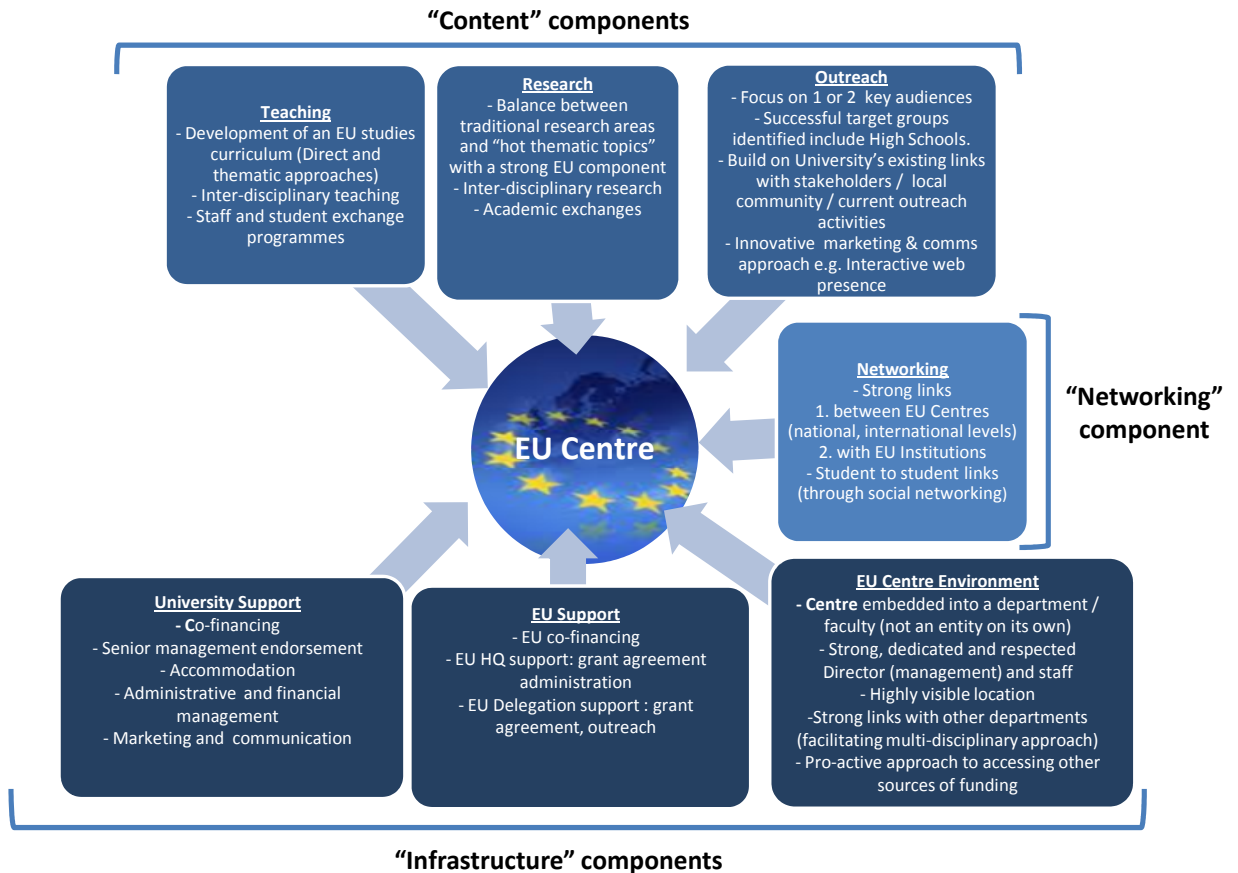
The three boxes at the bottom of the diagram represent the “infrastructure” components, namely University support, EU support and aspects related to the environment in which each EU Centre operates.

The three boxes at the top of the diagram represent the “content” components or the three pillars of each EU Centre, namely research, teaching and outreach.

The remaining box at the right end of the diagram represents the “networking” component, which is an important aspect of the Initiative and which makes reference to links developed by the Centres at different levels.



**Diagram 1 Attributes of a Successful EU Centre**



## INTRODUCTION

This is the final deliverable submitted by The Evaluation Partnership (TEP) to the Directorate-General for External Relations (DG RELEX) on behalf of The European Evaluation Consortium 2007 (TEEC 2007) in the context of the evaluation of EU Centres. The purpose of this final report is to present the findings and the conclusions of the evaluation which have been drawn through a triangulation process by analysing the findings derived from each of the following tools: interviews with Commission officials at DG RELEX Headquarters; interviews with Commission staff at Delegations and the Taiwan Economic and Trade Office; interviews and discussions stemming from the visits to the Centres: these include management and staff of the Centres, faculty, students, University authorities and informed external stakeholders; pre/post-discussion questionnaires completed by the Centres; online survey with students and beneficiaries of the Centres; analysis of documentation on the Initiative provided by Headquarters; and interviews with officials at DG EAC and EACEA and the analysis of comparable Initiatives. In turn, the recommendations have been derived from this process of triangulation. For ease of reading and identification, the findings are presented by evaluation question in section 4, and the conclusions and recommendations are grouped by evaluation area in section 5.

The final report consists of the following main sections:

- **Section 0** features the Executive Summary, highlighting the main conclusions and recommendations stemming from the evaluation.
- **Section 1** summarises the background, objectives and approach to the evaluation, and presents an overview of the evaluation team and the work undertaken.
- **Section 2** provides an overview of the evaluation methodology and tools that were used in the former phases of the study for answering the evaluation questions.
- **Section 3** presents the key challenges and limitations of the evaluation, and some of the mitigation strategies that the evaluation team took to overcome these.
- **Section 4** includes the findings for each evaluation question.
- **Section 5** is an overarching chapter which brings together the main conclusions grouped under evaluation area and presents both strategic and operational recommendations.

The Annexes are presented in separate documents as follows:

- **Annex 1** presents the reports for each country, Delegation and Centre visited and covered by this evaluation.
- **Annex 2** presents the results of the online survey with beneficiaries of the Initiative.

- **Annex 3** provides the updated findings of the discussions with DG RELEX Headquarters and the analysis of comparable Initiatives.

## BACKGROUND

This section summarises the background, objectives and approach to the evaluation, and presents an overview of the evaluation team and the work undertaken.

### 1.1 The background to the Initiative

The **EU Centres programme (the “Initiative”)** forms part of the Commission’s public diplomacy strategy to promote awareness and understanding of the EU beyond its borders. This is of particular importance as, despite being a key player both in the political and economic spheres, levels of awareness, understanding and favourable opinion of the EU vary outside its borders. In 2004, only one in five Americans professed to knowing a great deal about the EU, and three-quarters admitted to knowing little to nothing. In a similar vein, a more recent poll suggests that in 2009, 23% of Americans had an unfavourable view of the EU, while 21% said the same in Japan, and 14% in South Korea, and 12% in Canada.

The first European Centres were established in the United States and Canada in 1998 to assist the Commission in this strategy. Building on the success of the pilot project, the Initiative continued growing, and it currently comprises 26 Centres worldwide. The Centres are based in eight industrialised countries, spanning three continents: ten in the US, five in Canada, two in Korea, three in Japan, three in Australia, and one in each of New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan. All Centres are based at universities recognised for the quality, variety and depth of their academic activities. Activities encouraged within the programme focus on teaching, research, outreach, and networking.

Today, the Initiative receives over 3 million Euros per year from the European Commission. According to available statistics, the Centres have created so far over 260 new EU certificate and courses and enabled over 42,000 graduates to build up their knowledge of the EU. Moreover, Centres have managed to reach audiences beyond the academic circle e.g. local organisations and businesses, government officials and the media. EU Centres also offer a platform for high-level EU representatives to reach out to a wider audience when visiting their campuses.<sup>4</sup>

The US and Canada still host the bulk of the EU Centres (58% of all EU-funded Centres), however the balance is shifting towards Asia, Australia and New Zealand where 13 EU-funded Centres have been established over the past few years, although two of them no longer receive funding from Brussels.

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<sup>4</sup> EU Centres in the World Meeting, Networking Conference, Madrid, 11-13 April 2010. Brochure available at: [http://eeas.europa.eu/eu-centres/eu-centres\\_brochure\\_2010\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/eu-centres/eu-centres_brochure_2010_en.pdf)

The Centres in the US and Canada have since 2005/2006 been branded 'EU Centres of Excellence' (EUCE), while the Centres located in the other six countries use a variety of 'brand' names beginning with 'EU Centre' (this is the case for the majority), 'EU Institute', and 'EU Studies Institute'.

## 1.2 The background to the evaluation

The evaluation concerns the **assessment of the EU Centres Programme** covering the activities of the Centres in the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan. The Centres are intended to promote knowledge and understanding of the EU in the partner countries. EU funds for individual actions of the Centres have been provided to create and develop these EU Centres.

Since the Initiative was first launched in the US in 1998 some 20 American universities or consortia of universities have participated, of which 10 are currently supported by the EU. In Canada, the programme was expanded from four universities in 2000 following a successful pilot in 1998/1999 and further expanded to five in 2003. In 2001, the Initiative was extended to Australia and New Zealand. Japan was next country to be appointed as part of the Initiative, and is currently transiting the third funding cycle with 3 EU Institutes. Singapore and Taiwan both joined more recently, with one EU Centre each undergoing their first cycle.

The evaluation is driven primarily by a need to assess the continued relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Initiative at its different levels, to determine whether the Initiative has met its objectives in a cost-effective way, to assess whether the outcomes of the Initiative are sustainable in the longer term, and to identify any possible need for re-orientation with the next phase in view. It fulfils the specific legal requirements of Council Regulation 1934/2006 of 21 December 2006 which stipulates, under Article 13, that the Commission regularly evaluates the actions and programmes financed under this Regulation, where appropriate by means of independent external evaluations, in order to ascertain whether the objectives have been met and enable it to formulate recommendations with a view to improving future operations.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.3 The objectives of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the **relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability** of the programme, based on an analysis of the EU Centres programme at Centre and Initiative level in all participating countries and at network level in the US and Canada.

The following specific objectives were sought after:

- Measure and compare the performance of individual Centres (in the eight partner countries), the national networks (in US and Canada), and the Initiative as a whole, indicating the extent to which the general and specific objectives remain valid and have been achieved.

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<sup>5</sup> COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 1934/2006 of 21 December 2006 establishing a financing instrument for cooperation with industrialised and other high-income countries and territories. See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:405:0041:0059:EN:PDF>

- Explore unforeseen results and outcomes.
- Assess and compare the interaction (e.g. synergies, overlap) of the Initiative with other similar activities engaged in by the EU or its Member States in terms of a) EU programmes (e.g. Jean Monnet, Erasmus Mundus, etc); b) bilateral activities; c) activities with other non-member countries will also be examined.
- Indicate desirability/feasibility of continuing the Initiative.
- Make recommendations for possible revision of the format including geographical spread and number of Centres in the network, type of measures, and improvements in the management and financial framework.

#### 1.4 The approach to the evaluation

Based on the objectives above, the analysis was built upwards on 3 levels:

- At **Centre level**, the analysis focussed on how the funds allocated to the individual Centres are being transformed into specific activities, the results that these have achieved, the contribution and impacts delivered in support of the specific objectives for the EU Centres, and their sustainability in the longer term.
- At **Network level**, the assessment focussed on how the contributions of the different Centres are designed to maximise the contributions of the network as a whole (in the US and Canada) with a view to their supporting the attainment of the wider general objectives through the delivery of networking synergies and impacts (e.g. good practice transfer, economies of scale, dissemination opportunities, exchanges, etc.).
- At **Initiative level**, the focus was on how the combination of individual Centre achievements and the leverage added through networking support the attainment of the general objectives of the programme.

In parallel, evaluation questions have been answered addressing the following 5 evaluation areas:

- **Relevance:** the evaluation sought to establish the continued relevance of the Initiative, its objectives and instruments. It also aimed to determine whether it is targeting the real needs and problems it was meant to target at the outset.
- **Effectiveness:** the evaluation aimed to assess various aspects of effectiveness, establishing whether the Initiative has met its general and specific objectives and what the successes and failures in achieving the programme objectives were.
- **Impact:** the study examined various aspects of impact, drawing on the evaluative questions. Due to constraints in resources and time, the evaluation focussed on several key areas that are likely to lead to a longer term impact.

- **Sustainability:** the overall objective of this evaluative area was to examine whether the flow of benefits to the beneficiaries, i.e. the Centres, and to society generally, is likely to continue following the end of EU funding, and why.
- **Efficiency:** the team will examine whether the level and type of financial support provided by the Commission for the Initiative is appropriate and sufficient to achieve Initiative objectives.

In this context, the evaluation reports on the implementation and achievements of the Initiative, provides feedback for its continuation, and draws lessons for similar future programmes.

In addition, having conducted the last evaluation of the EU Centres Initiative in 2004, the evaluation team has built upon its results, seeking to update existing data and produce conclusions as to the present situation.

### **1.5 The study team and the work undertaken**

A team of eleven professionals was summoned to work on this evaluation, combining the expertise of five core evaluation consultants with cross-cutting experience across the Commission with that of six local experts in the field of education with experience and knowledge of the countries/systems under evaluation.

Given the amount of field work involved and the broad scope of countries that were covered by this evaluation, regular co-ordination and communication between the team were key to achieving a smooth functioning of the evaluation project.

Of particular importance was the management of the work of local experts and in particular the provision of clear guidelines and questionnaire/interview templates to steer them through the field work, in addition to specific analysis and reporting instructions. Core members of the evaluation team travelled to the different regions/countries to jointly undertake part of the field work with the appointed local experts. Half of the Centres were visited by teams of two and the other half were visited on an individual basis.

In addition, some of the local experts appointed in the team had participated in the previous evaluation of the EU Centres or in other related evaluations for DG RELEX, so they were familiar with the evaluation as well as with the team.

The final timetable of the evaluation took the following shape:

Table 1 Timetable

MAIN ACTIVITIES	Week commencing																																										
	15-Mar	22-Mar	29-Mar	05-Apr	12-Apr	19-Apr	26-Apr	03-May	10-May	17-May	24-May	31-May	07-Jun	14-Jun	21-Jun	28-Jun	05-Jul	12-Jul	19-Jul	26-Jul	02-Aug	09-Aug	16-Aug	23-Aug	30-Aug	06-Sep	13-Sep	20-Sep	27-Sep	04-Oct	11-Oct	18-Oct	25-Oct	01-Nov	08-Nov	15-Nov	22-Nov	29-Nov	06-Dec	13-Dec			
<b>INCEPTION/DESK PHASE</b>																																											
1.1 Project kick-off	█																																										
1.2 World meeting in Spain				█	█																																						
1.3 Short Inception Report						█																																					
1.4 Interviews w/RELEX HQ, DG EAC, EACEA							█	█																																			
1.5 Desk review			█	█	█																																						
1.6 Intermediate Report - preparation & submission													█	█																													
1.6 Intermediate Report - meeting with Commission																	█																										
<b>FIELD RESEARCH</b>																																											
2.1 Preparation for field work		█	█	█	█																																						
2.2 Field work in the US/Canada							█	█	█	█	█	█													█	█	█	█	█														
2.3 Field work in Australia/New Zealand/Singapore																									█	█	█	█	█	█													
2.4 Field work in Japan/Korea													█	█																													
2.5 Remote field work (EU-based) on Taiwan					█																																						
2.6 Online survey with students/beneficiaries																												█	█	█	█	█	█										
2.7 Field Report - preparation and submission																																											
2.7 Field Report - meeting with Commission																																											
<b>JUDGEMENT AND FINAL REPORTING</b>																																											
3.1 Draft Final Report - preparation and submission																																											
3.2 Presentation of results - meeting w/Commission																																											
3.3 Final Report - preparation and submission																																											



## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS

This section provides an overview of the evaluation methodology and tools that were used in the former phases of the study for answering the evaluation questions.

### 2.1 The Inception Phase

The first phase of the evaluation (inception phase) formally began with the contract signature in March, and ended with the formal acceptance of the intermediate report in end July. Broadly speaking, the inception phase was dedicated to fine-tuning the methodology and developing the necessary tools for the data collection and analysis. This phase also provided the opportunity for the evaluation team to attend the second world meeting of EU Centres that took place in Spain in order to introduce the objectives of the assessment to EU Centres participants and to plan the logistics of the field work. During the inception phase, the evaluation team carried out the following main activities:

#### 2.1.1 *Project kick-off*

The evaluation kick-off meeting took place in Brussels on 18 March 2010. It was an opportunity for DG RELEX and the evaluation team to present their respective approaches, requirements and ideas, to jointly discuss the evaluation approach, and to agree on some key parameters and milestones.

#### 2.1.2 *Desk review*

The evaluators developed a bibliography list to track all sources of data consulted and to provide an ongoing record of secondary qualitative and quantitative data sources that can be made available to members of the team through the interaction with key relevant stakeholders (i.e. Headquarters, Delegations, EU Centres).

In the inception phase, the evaluation team did an initial review of 8 comparable schemes<sup>6</sup>, in order to collect relevant information on objectives, characteristics, range of activities and audiences covered, and to decide on the final list that was to be covered in detail.

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6 The list of 5 programmes in the proposal included: (1) The Jean Monnet Action support for University-level projects on European integration; (2) Erasmus Mundus; (3) The ATLANTIS Programme for EU-US Cooperation in HE and Vocational Training; (4) The UK Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI2); (5) The EUforAsia programme. In addition, the evaluation team looked at the following 3 schemes: (6) Marie Curie actions; (7) bilateral programmes with Canada (the TEP) run by DG EAC; (8) bilateral programmes with Australia, NZ, Japan and Korea under the ICI Education Cooperation run by DG RELEX.

The reduced list included: The Jean Monnet Action; Erasmus Mundus; The Marie Curie Actions; The ATLANTIS/TEP programmes; and DG EAC’s cooperation in education and training with Australia.

Relevant information on the objectives, characteristics, range of activities and audiences covered, financial and operational aspects, challenges, and innovative/best practices identified for each of the selected schemes was collected and analysed.

### **2.1.3 World meeting in Spain**

Two senior members of the evaluation team attended the second World meeting of EU Centres, which took place in Madrid, Spain between 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> April. At the meeting, an overview of the evaluation was presented to all participants. Informal exchanges with representatives from the Centres also helped to prepare the ground and set up the logistics for the field work.

The Madrid conference was also an opportunity to meet with four representatives from the newly inaugurated EU Centre in Taiwan to discuss their experiences to date as no field work was conducted for this Centre.

### **2.1.4 Evaluation questions and methodology**

The inception phase allowed the evaluation team to work on an updated evaluation questions matrix and to develop a number of methodological tools, namely: interview guides and/or self-completion questionnaires for officers at DG RELEX, DG EAC and EACEA; key staff at the relevant Delegations/ EU Economic and Trade Office; key management at current and former EU Centres; informed external parties that are familiar with the activities of the Centres in the different countries. A survey questionnaire for current and former students and beneficiaries of the Centres was also developed at this early stage.

### **2.1.5 Organising the field work**

The evaluation team was active in organising the field work during this initial phase, including scheduling visits to Brussels and the different countries covered by the Initiative. Field work commenced in early May with an initial visit to the US and interviews in Brussels, and finalised in early September with the last visits to the US and Canada.

### **2.1.6 Interviews with DG RELEX HQ, DG EAC and EACEA**

Familiarisation interviews with officials from DG RELEX, DG Education and Culture (EAC) and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) were carried out in Brussels during the first week of May. As part of this first round, the evaluators conducted interviews with:

**Table 2 List of Interviewees at DG RELEX, DG EAC and EACEA**

DG	Interviewees
RELEX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alan Seatter, Director of RELEX C</li> <li>- Michel Martino, HoS, Cooperation with Industrialised Countries in Unit C2</li> </ul>

DG	Interviewees
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rainer Schierhorst, Singapore and Taiwan</li> <li>- Reginald Soenen, financial officer in Unit C2</li> <li>- Vitor Veiga Lima, financial officer in Unit C1</li> <li>- Yasmina Sioud, desk officer for the United States and Canada in Unit C1</li> <li>- Laura Fiore, programme manager in Unit C2</li> </ul>
EAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bodo Richter for US, Canada, Australia and NZ bilateral agreements</li> <li>- William Aitchison for Japan and Korea</li> <li>- Youri Devuyt for Jean Monnet actions</li> <li>- Vito Borrelli for Erasmus Mundus</li> </ul>
EACEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adrian Veale on behalf of Joachim Fronia, Erasmus Mundus and External Cooperation Unit</li> <li>- Rea Brunila on behalf of Klaus Haupt, Unit for bilateral cooperation with ICI countries</li> </ul>

### **2.1.7 Initial Field work in the US, Japan and Korea**

An initial field trip to the US was undertaken in May to visit the Delegation in Washington and to carry out a reduced number of visits to/speak with EU Centres which had expressed their availability for an early assessment.

Field work in South Korea and Japan was completed in late June.

The list of topics and questions were sent in advance to the Delegations and the Centres after the questionnaires had been reviewed and approved by DG RELEX. Interviews and discussions with beneficiaries, faculty members and informed external stakeholders were scheduled with assistance from the Centres.

### **2.1.8 Reporting**

An Inception and an Intermediate report were developed and submitted to the Commission during the Inception phase to summarise progress made, and describe the approaches, methods and tools to be used in the ensuing phases of the evaluation.

## **2.2 The Field Work Phase**

During the field work phase the team engaged with EU Centres and key stakeholders in the different countries concerned (e.g. EU Delegations, current and former EU Centres, informed external parties, and the wider community of EU Centres' current, former and target beneficiaries) to collect their perceptions and views on the Initiative's functioning and achievements, the work of the different Centres, and the main impacts observed so far. This data was collected through a mix of in-depth, group interviews and briefings with stakeholder groups, a self-completion questionnaire distributed to all Centres (current and former), and an online survey with students and beneficiaries. The field phase involved the following tasks:

### **2.2.1 Field work in the different countries/regions**

Team organisation/logistics: This task involved setting the agendas for each country visit – including scheduling meetings and interviews with stakeholders at Delegations, EU Centres and other institutions. A designated member of the team was responsible for keeping the country/regional agendas up-to-date and for informing the other evaluators of any changes.

Team briefings in EU Delegations: The EU delegations marked the starting point of the visits to the different countries. The field work generally commenced with a briefing meeting with the Delegation teams to review the confirmed methodology, approach and samples and to gather and map additional available background documentation of relevance.

Visits to current and former EU Centres: One-day visits were organised to the current and former EU Centres in the different countries. The contractors undertook a series of in-depth interviews in each visit with: EU Centres directors, administrators and staff. In most visits, discussions were also held with University faculty, staff and authorities, students and beneficiaries, and informed external stakeholders.

Follow up interviews/meetings with EU Centres' key staff and/or informed external parties: Where interviews/meetings with key staff at the Centres or with informed independents were not scheduled as part of the visits to the EU Centres, a reduced number of follow up telephone discussions were scheduled with stakeholders to collect their views on the Centres they worked for/interacted with and the Initiative as a whole.

Pre/post-visit questionnaires: Pre/post-visit questionnaires were distributed to the EU Centres for completion. Different versions of the questionnaire were distributed amongst new Centres; Centres with more than one funding cycle; and former Centres. These questionnaires aimed at collecting information of a quantitative nature that complemented the information assembled during the visits. As of the time of submitting this report, 27 questionnaires have been completed<sup>7</sup> and 2 former Centres have excused themselves from completing the exercise<sup>8</sup>.

Log and analyse results from field work: A high level analysis of the preliminary field work findings for the different countries/regions was undertaken by the assigned evaluation sub-teams.

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<sup>7</sup> The team has received 17 questionnaires from Centres with more than 1 funding cycle; 8 questionnaires from new Centres; and 2 questionnaires from former Centres.

<sup>8</sup> Texas A&M University argued that the questionnaire appeared to be asking for information they had already provided during the visit, and that they did not have any additional information to provide. La Trobe University highlighted that the questionnaire did not appropriately address the nature of their Centre, as it assumed that the students who had benefitted from the EU Centre are all located at La Trobe University: *“There have been over 1,000 students who have studied the Centre’s undergraduate course on the EU over the past four years but these are spread across six universities around Australia and so setting up the questionnaire only at La Trobe would be inappropriate. To arrange for this to be done in all our universities would be difficult and time consuming to arrange at this time, and even then setting it up at University level would be entirely inappropriate given the location of EU related teaching and activities.”*

Discussions with EU Delegations to present preliminary field work findings: In the context of the second part of the field work in the United States, the evaluation team met with the EU Delegation in Washington to present and discuss with them the preliminary findings of the field work in the US.

Field work schedule: The field work schedule in the different countries was launched in April at the second World meeting of EU Centres and was concluded in early October, as follows:

**Table 3 Field work schedule**

Country	Schedule	Team
Taiwan	- 12 Apr, National Taiwan University (at the Madrid conference) - 23 Jun, EU Economic and Trade Office, Taiwan (telephone)	AK MG
United States	- 3 May, Syracuse University - 10,11 May, EU Delegation in Washington (initial briefing) - 13 May, Johns Hopkins University - 14 May, University of Washington, Seattle - 17 May, Texas A&M University - 19 May, Georgia Institute of Technology - 27 May, University of Texas at Austin (telephone) - 11 Jun, FIU and Miami University - 7 Sep, Indiana University - 15 Sep, Univ. of Wisconsin Madison - 20 Sept, Univ. of North Carolina - 22 Sept, University of California - 23 Sept, University of Colorado - 29 Sept, EU Delegation in Washington (final wrap-up) - 30 Sept, Univ. of Pittsburgh - 1 Oct, Univ. of Michigan	MS MS & MD MS & MD MG & MD WSS & MG MS & MG AK MS NG NG MS & MG WSS & MG WSS & MG MS & AK MS & AK MS & AK
South Korea	- 8 June, EU Delegation in Korea - 9 June, Seoul National University - 10 June, Yonsei University - 11 June, Pusan National University	DH DH DH DH
Japan	- 16-17 June, EU Delegation in Japan - 18 June, EUIJ Waseda - 22 June, EUSI Tokyo - 23 June, EUIJ Kansai	MG MG AH AH
New Zealand	- 20 July, University of Canterbury - 29 July, George Cunningham, EU Delegation in New Zealand	BW & FON FON
Australia	- 21 July, LaTrobe and RMIT - 22 July, Monash - 23 July, ANU and EU Delegation in Australia	BW & FON BW & FON BW & FON
Singapore	- 28 July, NUS-NTU - 29 July, EU Delegation in Singapore	BW BW
Canada	- 8 Sept, Univ. of Montreal - 9 Sept, EU Delegation in Canada - 13 Sept, Toronto University	VL VL VL

Country	Schedule	Team
	- 28 Sept, York University	WSS
	- 29 Sept, Carleton University	WSS
	- 1 Oct, Dalhousie University	WSS

AK = Andrea Kobilsky; MG = Mirja Gutheil; MS = Myra Shiplett; MD = Macarena Davies; WSS = Watson Scott Swail; NG = Norman Graham; DH = David Hogan; AH = Akiyoshi Honezawa; BW = Ben Ward; FON = Francis O'Neill; VL = Vanessa Ludden

## 2.2.2 Online survey with the wider community taking part in the Initiative

An online survey was designed and launched in early September (on the week commencing Sept 6<sup>th</sup>) to collect the feedback and assess the points of view of the wider community of current and former beneficiaries of the Centres. The Centres were asked for assistance in promoting the survey via e-mails to their available databases of stakeholders and by including a link to the survey on their websites.<sup>9</sup> The questionnaire remained online for a period of 6 weeks and **823 responses** were collected. This included 537 responses (67%) from beneficiaries of the eighteen **mature Centres** (i.e. Centres that have been functioning for one or more funding cycles)<sup>10</sup>, 226 responses (28%) from beneficiaries of the eight **new Centres** (i.e. Centres which have not yet completed their first funding cycle)<sup>11</sup>, and 33 responses (4%) from beneficiaries of the six **former Centres** (i.e. Centres that are currently not being funded by the Commission)<sup>12</sup>. In order to have an idea of the “universe” and response rates for the survey, all Centres were asked to provide the evaluation team with an approximate idea of the number of students/beneficiaries that they promoted the survey to. Unfortunately not all Centres provided details for this, so the overall universe cannot be calculated.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Some Centres went further by publicising the survey on their facebook pages.

<sup>10</sup> These are: Berkeley, Georgia Tech, Florida-Miami, Michigan, North Carolina, Pittsburgh, Washington DC, Washington Seattle, Wisconsin, Carleton, Dalhousie, Montreal, Toronto-Vancouver, Kansai (Kobe), Tokyo, Christchurch, Canberra, and Monash (Melbourne).

<sup>11</sup> These are: Colorado, York, Tokyo-Waseda, Melbourne, Seoul-Yonsei, Pusan, Singapore, and Taipei.

<sup>12</sup> These are: Indiana, Syracuse, Texas A&M, Texas Austin, LaTrobe (Melbourne), and Seoul National University.

<sup>13</sup> Numbers are available for the following Centres: Berkeley (50); Seattle (216); Indiana (33); Wisconsin (65); Michigan (65); Georgia Tech (260); Colorado (25); Washington DC (20); Christchurch (42); Monash (3000); RMIT (2); Waseda (50); Pusan (200).

### **2.2.3 Reporting**

A field report was submitted to the Commission at the end of month 7 summarising the progress made, describing the approaches, methods and tools to be used for the final analysis and integration of the data, and providing the preliminary findings.

## **2.3 The Final Analysis Phase**

During the final phase of the evaluation, the contractor focussed on reviewing and analysing the data and information gathered through the various tools and methods, and bringing the results together so as to assess the relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and efficiency of the EU Centres Initiative. This is the final report containing the findings, conclusions and practical recommendations of the evaluation which is being submitted to the Commission.

### **2.3.1 Analysis**

Synthesise findings based on evaluation questions: the outcomes of the different components of the evaluation were synthesised and compared. This process entailed bringing together the outputs to form a coherent picture. In addition to the aggregated overall data on the Initiative, findings came out from the comparative analysis of data at network and centre levels.

Analysis and judgement: The evidence collected at the different levels was consolidated to produce a first set of preliminary findings. The consistency of the findings was ensured by an adequate triangulation of the sources used.

Conclusions and recommendations: The findings led to the formulation of specific conclusions. In addition, results from the analytical work provided the basis for the formulation of recommendations. These are presented in a clear and structured manner and were checked for their feasibility and realism, in order to ensure that they can be implemented and are likely to produce a genuine improvement over the current situation.

### **2.3.2 Reporting**

This is the final report to the evaluation, which includes the findings, analysis, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation team. The contractor has endeavoured to present findings and conclusions that are as far advanced as possible, so as to serve as a valid basis for the discussions with the Commission.

## CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The EU Centres Initiative is a multipart programme in that it involves many different key stakeholder groups in different countries, and its evaluation brought with it a number of specific challenges and limitations. The key challenges, and the strategies that the evaluation team took to overcome these, can be summarised as follows:

- Multiplicity of sources: Commission officials at Headquarters interact with the relevant Delegations and the Economic and Trade Office in the case of Taiwan. There are currently 26 Centres in operations, each of them with its own management and staffing, and embedded in a host University (in some cases in a Consortium comprising other partner Universities or institutions). Centres also have a variety of beneficiaries, namely students and faculty, but also politicians, business stakeholders, media players and others. In addition, there are former Centres that are no longer funded by the Commission whose opinions were collected, each of them with relatively similar operational structures and audiences as those described for current Centres. All of these sources took part in the evaluation and their opinions integrated at this final analysis phase.
- Important logistical efforts to undertake the fieldwork in all countries: The evaluation team was tasked with a significant logistical assignment to set up one-day visits to current and former Centres in the different countries. Academic calendars, availability of interviewees, coordination of schedules between the different Centres had to be sorted out on a case by case basis. The availability of local experts in the team, the support provided by some of the Delegations (in particular the Delegations to Australia and Japan) and the flexibility and willingness of Centres to collaborate with the assignment resulted in a successful allocation of visits and allowed the core evaluation team to cover many of the Centres in tandem with the local experts in the different countries/regions.
- Lack of quantitative indicators for monitoring results and impact: The fact that the Initiative has not regularly collected quantitative indicators on the performance of the EU Centres in an aggregated fashion throughout the years led the evaluation team to rely heavily on collecting qualitative feedback from Centres and other stakeholders. Whilst narrative and financial provided some elements for a more quantitative assessment, it was made difficult to measure the effectiveness or impact of the Initiative in quantitative terms. To account for this gap, it was decided to introduce an additional tool (the self-completion questionnaire for Centres). This meant that more resources were invested to elicit feedback from Centres than foreseen in the proposal. However, these additional resources were put to good use, as the changes to the approach significantly enhanced the quantity and quality of the data that was collected.
- Differences in interpretation and non-availability of data: As was the case with the previous assessment, the evaluation team found that in requesting that Centres provide data on their activities, their understanding of what was requested of them may have varied to some extent,



as well as their attitudes towards the provision of figures, thus leading to some discrepancies in the data. Consequently, activity data could not be said to be one hundred percent comparable or accurate. The current evaluation sought to limit such differences in interpretation as much as possible by providing clear guidance/definitions when asking for input from Centres all throughout the assessment and by highlighting the availability of the evaluation team to provide ad hoc support to all Centres. Perhaps more importantly is that there were some questions that were not completed by all the Centres, in particular those questions asking for details/numbers on the activities of the Centres for the different funding cycles. This seems to reflect that in the absence of a regular collection of data on the performance of the Centres, this information gets lost and is consequently very difficult to recreate on an ex-post basis.

- Non-responses to the self-completion questionnaires: After much following up on a case by case basis with the different Centres, responses were collected for the majority. However, there was still a small proportion of Centres (5 out of 32) that did not complete the questionnaire. The majority of non-respondents (4) were former Centres, two of whom gave reasons for not completing the questionnaire. There was also one non-respondent mature Centre. There were also some cases where questionnaires were not complete, which did not allow for a full comparison of results for all questions.
- Universe for the online survey: As the online survey was not modelled on an existing baseline of Centre users or on the general public in order to weigh responses accordingly, strictly speaking the results could only claim to represent the views of the Centre users that responded to the survey. To have a more accurate picture of the size of the universe for the survey, Centres were asked to provide the number of beneficiaries that they had promoted the survey to. Unfortunately not all Centres provided the requested figures so it was not possible to calculate the response rate and to contrast the size of the sample to that of the total population. In addition, there were significant variations in the number of respondents for the different Centres, with some Centres successfully achieving more than 100 responses, and others having more modest outcomes.
- Varying levels of 'development' of the Centres: The EU Centres evaluated have been in existence for longer or shorter periods; have received varying levels of funding from the Commission, depending on the length of time they've been in existence; have varying mandates; and have been established in different countries and contexts, making comparison of performance difficult. As a result, it was necessary to group certain Centres/countries relative to given criteria, such as whether mature, new and former Centres or Centres in the different countries.

## FINDINGS

The following chapter presents the findings and conclusions by evaluation area and question. For each area/question, information was drawn from the following tools:

- The interviews with Commission officials at DG RELEX Headquarters;
- The interviews with Commission staff at Delegations and the Taiwan Economic and Trade Office;
- The interviews and discussions stemming from the visits to the Centres: these include management and staff of the Centres, faculty, students, University authorities and informed external stakeholders;
- The pre/post-discussion questionnaires completed by the Centres;
- The online survey with students and beneficiaries of the Centres;
- The analysis of documentation on the Initiative provided by Headquarters; and
- The interviews with officials at DG EAC and EACEA and the analysis of comparable Initiatives.

**Please note that an overarching chapter drawing the key conclusions from these 39 evaluation questions together under relevant evaluation and thematic headings is included in the following section of this report. It also presents the evaluation team's recommendations.**

### 4.1 Questions on the RELEVANCE of the Initiative

The evaluation seeks to establish the continued relevance of the Initiative, its objectives and instruments. It also aims to determine whether it is targeting the real needs and problems it was meant to target. This will serve to guide the planning, design and implementation of current and future EU Centres, together with their monitoring and administration by the European Commission in Brussels, the relevant Commission's Delegations and Offices, and by the EU Centres themselves.

At the Initiative level, the team examines if the choice of having Universities as host institutions, together with the number and geographical distribution of the Centres, continues to be appropriate for the achievement of objectives. The relevance of the Initiative to the current state of EU-partner country relations is also assessed.

At the Network level, the team assesses the contributions of the network scheme in the US and Canada to the achievement of objectives.

At Centre level, the main focus is on assessing the relevance of the Centres to the Initiative's objectives as well as to the local context, users and clientele.

#### **4.1.1 Characteristics of the Initiative**

**Are the Initiative's characteristics, such as the sitting of Centres in Universities, the number of Centres, and, in some cases, the geographical distribution across the country, appropriate to achieve the objectives?**

##### **Universities as host institutions**

There is a shared view among all stakeholder groups interviewed as part of the evaluation that **Universities are the most appropriate places to sit EU Centres** because they are seen as the only institutions capable of building on the three pillars of the Initiative: teaching, research and outreach. Other potential options to host EU Centres, such as think tanks or NGOs, appear to be less appropriate given that they might not have the required infrastructures to address all of the Initiative's objectives.

The results of the online survey of beneficiaries support the above statement. Overall, nearly half of the Centres' beneficiaries who responded to the survey (45%) first heard about the EU Centre they were involved with at the University where this was hosted.

The experience in South Korea, where Universities have been encouraged by the Commission to partner with other institutions, has been very fruitful so far. Even when led by Universities, all three EU Centres have partnered with research institutions (e.g. KIEP, SERI, and the Busan Development Institute) or local public authorities (e.g. the Busan Metropolitan City). Partner institutions have all played key roles and have in particular strongly contributed to the funding of the Centres.

The major strengths of Universities as highlighted by respondents are their established teaching and research infrastructures and a reputation of neutrality and credibility. As put by an interviewee in Canada: "having the Initiative within an institutional context reaps recognition." The main limitations are the perceived weakness of Universities to conduct the outreach activities and that one is faced with the ivory tower effect, whereby Universities tend to be better at reaching out to the elite than the general public.

In particular in relation to the outreach, Commission officials argue that Universities are not equipped with the necessary staff to effectively develop outreach activities which by nature are perceived as "resource intensive". In addition, many of the Centres' staff are academics or have worked in an academic environment for a long time, so are naturally more inclined towards the teaching and research components and are less comfortable with the outreach component.

A strategy that has worked well in this context is the outreach to secondary school students and teachers. Unlike what happens with other stakeholders such as the media or the business community, Centres are familiar with this target audience and are thus more inclined towards building links with this group. The Centres in the US are particularly strong in this area with an interesting menu of programmes and activities and a growing number of participants. Centres in other countries

(e.g. Canada, Australia and New Zealand) are also moving towards this model of regular interaction with secondary schools.

### **Number of Centres and geographical distribution**

In overall terms the Commission is trying to achieve a better geographical coverage within the different countries involved, by for example having EU centres located in all main regions of a country rather than only in the capitals. This has been more complicated in countries such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, where the Initiative is relatively new and not many Universities outside the main cities are prepared to host an EU Centre.

The views on the number of Centres and their geographical distribution are analysed below on a country by country basis.

In the US, there seems to be consensus that the optimum number of EU Centres ranges between the current 10 and a maximum of 12 or 13. In view of the Delegation, having 10 to 11 Centres facilitates the management and branding of the programme, and also gives the sense of being an “*elite club*”. However, there were also very qualified applicants that were not chosen in the last calls because the resources available were limited. There were some isolated opinions who argued for reducing the number of Centres to a core group of 5 Centres in the country, and dividing the existing level of EU funding to the US Centres to this core group. In words of the supporters of this strategy: “*this would enable the core group to form a stronger network of coordinated activity and build on a solid foundation of expertise and commitment.*” The majority however is strongly supportive of maintaining (or slightly increasing) the current number of EU Centres in the country.

Having a geographical preference in the selection of Centres may cast against the idea that this Initiative is based on quality and excellence. However, there are particular cities like New York, Chicago, Boston, etc. that would be important to cover.

In Canada, the staff at the Centres tend to agree that the number and geographical distribution of the Centres is representative of the geography of Canada, with clusters located in its key cities, but also relevant in as much as Centres were located in all the high ranking universities in the country. The view of the Delegation somewhat differs to that of the Centres as it was argued that three to four more Centres were needed in the centre of Canada (the prairies) and the north in particular.<sup>14</sup>

The number of EU Centres and their geographical distribution in Japan were perceived as needing to be improved. In the 2008-round of the Initiative, the Delegation tried to incentivise the development of one institute outside the Tokyo area, but none of the applications provided a successful candidate. Tokyo is the political as well as international centre of the country. The Universities outside Tokyo have difficulties applying for the EC’s grant as they cannot provide outreach activities and hence cannot match the tendering requirements. In addition, at the Universities outside Tokyo there seems to be only little interest in and understanding of the European Union.

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<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that no proposals were received from up north or the prairies, which could be a reflection of the lack of established EU programmes in Universities in these two geographical areas.

The situation in South Korea is relatively similar to that of Japan in that there are limitations in trying to balance the geographical distribution of the Centres as the candidate Universities for the Initiative are located in the main cities in their majority. The number of Centres appears to be appropriate, even though it could be considered as excessive when compared with Japan. But taking into account that the levels of awareness of the EU seem to be particularly low in this country, the existence of more Centres could help to boost up understanding of the EU among the target audiences.

The Initiative in Taiwan is still brand new so the current existence of one EU Centre is strategically appropriate. The fact that the Centre is a Consortium of Universities from different regions is a strong point as it could help to broaden the impact across Taiwan.

There are currently three EU Centres in Australia - the National Europe Centre (NEC) at the Australian National University in Canberra, the Monash Europe and European Union Centre (MEEUC) at Monash University in Melbourne and a Centre based at RMIT also in Melbourne. In terms of the geographical coverage of EU Centres the fact that there is no presence in Sydney raises some concern as this is seen as a missed opportunity – being the most populous city in Australia and home to several of the country's top Universities. It would be a challenge to ensure a balanced geographical spread of EU Centres across the country, particularly when taking into account that 80% of the population resides in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. However, in this context a consortium or network made up of Universities from different parts of the country could assist in ensuring the EU Centre Initiative extends beyond the locations currently covered. During the period from 2006 to 2009 this was the approach adopted by the Innovative Universities EU (IUEU) Centre which was based on a consortium of seven universities, with La Trobe University as the lead institution and Flinders, Griffith, Macquarie, Murdoch, Newcastle and from 2008 Townsville as partner universities. The consortium was not awarded a second EU Centre's grant but still operates some activities targeted at undergraduates throughout the network of universities. The EU Centres Initiative in Australia has lost the extensive geographic coverage that this university network provided.

Led by the University of Canterbury's National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE), a New Zealand European Union Centres Network was established in 2006 with seven of the country's top involved. This set-up is proving to be a real success story and ticks many boxes - the Initiative is spread far and wide potentially impacting on a greater number of people, there are economies of scale benefits (e.g. a teaching module can be prepared and rolled out across all participating Universities or a module can be taught and broadcast across the other Universities) and another major advantage for all sides is that there is only one contract to administer.

The EU Centre in Singapore is jointly hosted by the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), two of the most highly regarded Universities in Singapore and in South East Asia as a whole. There is only one Centre in Singapore and, considering the size of the country, geographical spread is not an issue. However, a notable point made during the evaluation by interviewees was that having the Centre situated in Singapore means that it can potentially impact on other South East Asian countries. Many academics and students are attracted to Singapore from countries in the surrounding region.

#### 4.1.2 *Academic disciplines and activities*

**Are the academic disciplines and range of activities covered wide enough or too wide? Do the sectors of activity of the Centres contribute equally to fulfilling the objectives of the Initiative? Can the evaluator make recommendations regarding the selection of sectors and identify improvements?**

##### **Academic disciplines**

There is a tendency for EU Centres to focus on the academic activities that the host Universities are strong at and that the students and other local audiences are interested in. In other words, the Centres tend to offer activities and foci that build on the natural strengths of the Universities that host them and that mirror faculty, students' and local stakeholders' interests. For example, the EU Centre at Georgia Tech links its activities to technological issues and disciplines, whereas Centres that are located in capital cities are more likely to focus their activities on policy-related issues. Some Centres highlighted during the visits that it would be interesting to see what each EU Centre understands as "EU studies" through the exchange of their schedules and topics.

The academic disciplines that the Centres most naturally engage with are the Social Sciences in general, with Political Science as the main discipline and with International Relations, Sociology, Economics and Law as strong disciplines as well. History, Languages and Arts follow next. Disciplines like Business, Education, Journalism, Public Health, Geography and Anthropology are also part of the offering of the Centres. The offer of harder sciences has also grown, with disciplines like Engineering, Medical Sciences, Life Sciences, Technology increasingly being part of the activities of the Centres.

Mature Centres have a tendency towards widening the range of academic disciplines offered as they transit their second, third or fourth funding cycles. In general there is strong support to interdisciplinary research and teaching because it is believed to broaden the audiences and impact of the Centres. New Centres tend to start with a relatively compact offer but are willing to explore new disciplines by working together with more Schools and Departments as they move along.

The Pittsburgh example is interesting, as the offer of the EU Centre tended to broaden over the years due to a "conversion process" of faculty from different Schools and Departments that would not be traditionally linked to the Centre, such as the Graduate School of Public Health Department, the Graduate School of Business or the School of Information Sciences. The connections established with the less traditional Schools and Departments are judged today to have been highly successful and to have expanded the limits of the Centre beyond its traditional student and faculty clientele.

The results of the online survey and the meetings with students and faculty confirm the advantages of moving towards a multidisciplinary offer, always within the framework of what the Universities and the Centres can offer. There was a demand among respondents to the survey for the Centres to focus on specific issues of interest (e.g. immigration in the EU, recent EU-policy developments, climate change, EU-partner country relations, history of the EU, energy, the relationship between the NATO and the EU etc.). Survey respondents also called for increasing the diversity of the topics on offer (e.g. including areas other than political science, like economics, engineering, environmental issues, culture, history, music etc.).

## Range of activities covered

Centres are generally active in a broad number of activities cross-cutting the different activity sectors. In the **academic domain**, academic research conferences and applied EU research are top in the list of both mature and new Centres. Courses and materials on the EU and EU-partner country relations are also heavily offered. EU studies certificates, minor and major programmes are more rooted in the mature Centres. Doctoral students' dissertations on EU topics and textbooks, articles and briefing papers are slightly less covered in general.

In the **outreach field**, conferences, workshops and briefing sessions are offered by all the Centres that completed the questionnaire. Nearly all Centres have their dedicated websites, organise fora for prominent EU speakers, and publish newsletters, information kits and other information material. Training workshops and curriculum development exercises are also offered by many Centres. Outreach to secondary schools is still not yet fully widespread but is definitely growing as a field of activity of the Centres. Publication of articles in the media and specific activities targeting journalists and media stakeholders are two underdeveloped areas, both in mature and new Centres.

In terms of **academic exchanges with the EU**, visiting EU scholars are a fluent practice among Centres, and to a lesser extent trips to Brussels for US students and exchange programmes with Universities and institutions in the EU are also popular.

In terms of **networking with other Centres**, there are some interesting exchanges taking place, such as shared speakers, joint conferences, joint undergraduate programmes (e.g. Wisconsin and Seattle run one that is judged to be very competitive), joint workshops for students working on their dissertation, visiting scholars, exchange of best practices, etc. There is still scope to explore further in this field, in particular with the advancement of new technologies and the possibility to share a broader menu of activities at relatively low costs. The networks in the US and Canada should take the lead and become pioneers for the other Centres, especially those in the more recently incorporated countries like Japan or South Korea where the networking element is still weak.

As per the results of the online survey with beneficiaries, conferences, workshops, briefing sessions and other information activities targeted at the general public are at the top of the list of attendance, with 58% of respondents having participated in these. The dedicated websites of the Centres are also a popular tool among respondents, with 53% having visited or used these. Specialised conferences, courses, academic material and fora follow next with an average of four out of ten respondents having participated in these types of activities. Workshops or training sessions targeted to journalists and media stakeholders were among the least used services, though it was highlighted above that the offer in this field is rather limited.

The table below provides an overview of the activities and services that beneficiaries have attended or made use of, as per the results of the online survey.

**Table 4 - Activities and services that beneficiaries have attended or made use of<sup>15</sup>**

Answer Options	Response Percent
Conferences, workshops, briefing sessions, and other information activities targeted to the general public	58%
EU Centre's/Institute's website	53%
Research conferences for researchers, faculty and students	50%
Courses on the EU and/or the EU relations with my country	42%
Academic material on the EU and EU relations with my country (textbooks, articles, briefing papers)	40%
Fora attended by prominent speakers from EU institutions or EU Member States	38%
EU studies certificate, minor, and major programs	26%
Research grants on issues of applied public policies on EU issues and the EU relations with my country	22%
Exchange programs with universities in the EU and other EU institutions	21%
Information material on the EU and EU relations with my country (newsletters, info kits, DVDs, CD-ROMs)	18%
Training workshops, curriculum development exercises, and information materials for school teachers	14%
Travel grant for visiting EU scholars and practitioners	14%
Fellowship programs for EU affairs' specialists for tutoring academics and students in EU disciplines	9%
Information workshops and training modules targeted to journalists / media	7%
Other	6%
n=	3371

Source: Online survey with beneficiaries

#### **4.1.3 Contribution of the Centres to EU-partner countries' relations**

**To what extent do the actions continue to be necessary to the EU-partner countries' relations?  
To what extent do they correspond to the need?**

The Initiative and the actions carried out by the Centres are judged by the different stakeholder groups interviewed to be clearly necessary to EU-partner countries' relations. The Centres are said to have a positive contribution to the bilateral cooperation between the EU and the individual countries involved in the Initiative.

Commission officials at DG RELEX Headquarters perceive the Initiative and the work of the Centres as having a leverage effect on the actions carried out by the EU Delegations in the respective countries. According to stakeholders in this group, Delegations generally do not have the resources or time to carry out promotional activities for the European Union as part of their normal programmes. The EU Centres, in contrast, seem to be able to constitute a certain element of regularity in terms of organising regular EU-related events and meetings and functioning as a hub for different contacts.

But there are different ways in which the Initiative is relevant in the different countries.

<sup>15</sup> The percentage for each of the answer options in this table was calculated based on a total of 804 respondents. The n=3371 represents the total number of responses submitted; as respondents were asked to choose all the activities and services they had attended / made use of.



Currently transiting its fourth cycle, **the Initiative in the US** is strong and firmly established. With a growing interest from the US government, think tank, academic, and business communities in other competing regions (Asia and Latin America), the Initiative is perceived to be more necessary now than what it was at the outset. The challenge nowadays is about “*competing for attention*”.

The main concern for the majority of the Centres in the US is that, following the financial collapse of 2008-9 which hit US colleges and universities quite severely, a decline in EU funding to the Initiative would lose much of what the EU has gained from its programming to date. Curricular innovations would stay on the books, and the committed faculty currently on staff would likely continue to teach EU related courses regularly as part of their normal assignments, but some might stray into other academic topics from time to time if the incentives or “pressures” from their colleagues at the EU Centre are reduced. Outreach on EU issues and basics would likely disappear quickly, though some of the ties to the K-12 education community seem robust and are likely to endure for a time. The focus of this could easily shift from EU centred programming to wider European studies topics, though.

The **Initiative in Canada** is believed to have played a positive role in bringing visibility to the trade negotiations between the EU and Canada by organising talks and conferences and writing papers on the subject. The mature Centres in Canada are firmly rooted and play a relevant role in raising awareness of the EU and shaping the views regarding EU-Canada relations among local groups. The EU Centre at Montreal, for example, has over the years developed close links with the business community. The Centre has found that a key way to reach these audiences is to frame EU issues in relation to local issues to make them more relevant.

The Centres in Canada have also expressed deep concerns about a further decline in EU funding, and some have declared that additional cuts would lead the host Universities to reconsider and likely not go for a future competition.

There is a difference in the levels of familiarity with EU matters among the different countries involved in the Initiative. EU awareness in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore is low not only among the general public, but also among key audiences in the academic, business and political circles. The Initiative in these countries is thus important to raise the visibility of the EU at these two levels.

Currently transiting its third cycle, **the Initiative in Japan** is perceived as having helped to “re-launch” this relationship between the EU and Japan with a lot of new ideas and undertakings. However, it is believed that the scope of the Initiative is still limited and that there is potential for it to further expand for e.g. geographically outside the Tokyo area. In particular, there is still work to be done in making universities in Japan aware of the EU Centres Initiative as such and inform them about its purpose and content.

Currently transiting its second funding cycle and still at an early stage of development, the EU Centres Initiative is relevant to the strategic issues that **South Korea** is wrestling with at a national policy level and would need to continue working on in the future. In particular, global economic issues, regional economic integration, free trade agreements and climate change are major policy issues in the East Asian region. Europe’s experience in regional integration as well as in managing

economic growth, environmental sustainability and climate change is considered a key asset among relevant academic circles.

The **Initiative in Taiwan** remains relevant for the EU to extend its relations with Taiwan, especially in trade. Taiwan is an important trade partner of the EU. Therefore, it was seen as beneficial to increase the understanding of the EU in Taiwan. Universities and the academic community in general are the adequate instigators of an Initiative of these characteristics. It is believed that the consolidation of bigger academic circles focusing on EU studies will in turn attract the attention of other key players in Taiwan – including government officials and the business community.

In the context of the relationships between the EU and Australia/New Zealand the establishment of an EU Centres network is deemed both relevant and appropriate. EU Centres play a very relevant role in both countries in the context of their bilateral relations with the EU.

The **EU and New Zealand** are considered “like-minded” partners who share many common values and interests and take the same stance on many key international and global issues. While trade remains very important the wider political and economic relationship has broadened considerably in scope over the last years. Areas of cooperation and common concern include climate change, openness of world trade, security and development in the Asia and Pacific regions, and promotion of human rights. In all these areas, the EU and New Zealand endeavour to help reinforce one another’s positions at international meetings and fora. Co-operation and consultation take place at all levels, including regular Foreign Ministers’ consultations, annual Senior Officials meetings alternating between Brussels and Wellington and a whole range of sectoral dialogues; trade, agricultural trade, human rights, science and technology, etc.

The EU Centres Network plays a crucial role in conducting research, teaching and outreach to facilitate understanding of the impact and role of the EU in New Zealand and the Pacific Region. The Network is multidisciplinary, investigating the impact of the EU on the region in the broadest possible terms including: trade, economics, politics, security, science, technology and innovation, the environment, development, democratic values and peoples and cultures.

While it is still early days for the **EU Centre in Singapore** it is playing an important role in raising awareness and making the EU better understood in Singapore and the surrounding region. The EU is not widely understood nor is considered to be a high priority in Singapore or in South East Asia and the Centre is helping to change this situation.

#### **4.1.4 Extension of the EUCE brand**

**The “EU Centres of Excellence” branding has applied in the US and Canada since 2005/2006. Would it be effective to extend it to the other EU Centres in the world?**

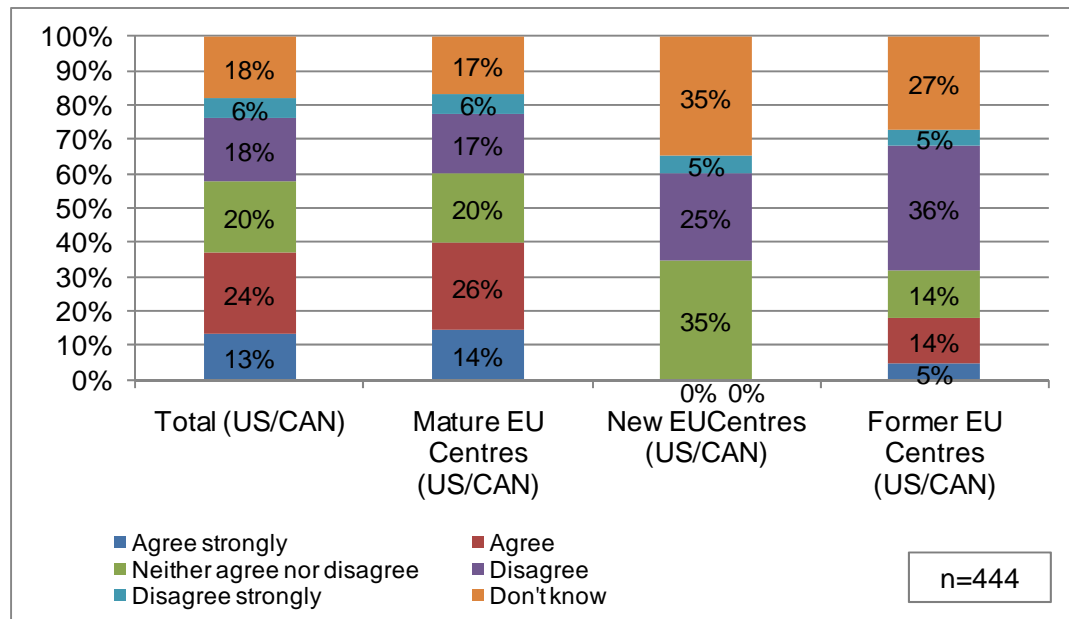
In the US and Canada, the brand “EU Centres of Excellence” is perceived by the Centres to have been beneficial in many ways. The EUCE brand has raised the profile of the Centres, which has helped them to persuade Universities’ administrators to provide matching contributions to fund the programme. The idea of “*quality and exclusiveness*” beneath the brand has also helped to bring prestige and credibility to their projects, engage the academic community and attract students, which are perceived by many as significant benefits. In addition, the brand acts as a useful identifier and

gives the sense that the Centres are involved in similar ways as, in the past, Centres all had different names.

The value of the brand to each institution individually is linked to the prestige of being among a select group of Centres which are designated as EUCEs. In effect, the brand works for the Centres as a “stamp of EU approval”. Former EUCes in the US all regret that they can no longer use the brand and they agree they have lost some access to audiences and also some doors the brand opened.

The results of the survey are not as conclusive on this particular issue. As shown in the graph below, only 37% of respondents to the survey in the US and Canada considered that the EUCE brand is well-known among students and the local community. The remaining majority were either in disagreement with the statement (24%), declared themselves neutral (20%) or did not know (18%). It should be highlighted that the brand was seen to have more visibility for respondents in the mature Centres as opposed to respondents in new and former Centres, which would support the idea that the brand needs time to consolidate.

**Graph 2 - Extent to which respondents from the US and Canada agreed the brand “EU Centres of Excellence” is well-known amongst the students and the local community**



Source: Online survey with beneficiaries. Number of respondents in mature EU Centres (US/CAN) = 402; Number of respondents in new EU Centres (US/CAN) = 20; Number of respondents in former EU Centres (US/CAN) = 22

Centres’ beneficiaries that were interviewed during the visits (e.g. students and professors) were divided on the branding issue. According to some people, more important than positioning the brand was communicating that there is support coming directly from the EU. For others, the brand was very positively seen as an element that opened doors to them.

In Canada, one of the challenges mentioned in relation to the branding was the slight degree of confusion it caused as some people were not sure if it was a research entity or a bureaucratic extension of the Delegation of the European Commission.

Using the brand in other countries would in theory only be useful in places where there are various EU Centres. In countries where there is only one Centre, the programme becomes exclusive by definition.

Japan and South Korea could be both considered as candidate countries to apply the branding. The Initiative in these two countries however is still not perceived as mature enough to capitalise on the EUCE branding.

In Japan, there is a shared feeling there is a need for universities across the country to become aware of the Initiative first in order to be able to successfully disseminate it to key target audiences and the public in general. The “EU Institutes” brand however does not help the Initiative in Japan in maintaining an identity with the worldwide network.

In South Korea, there has been little interaction and cooperation between the EU Centres so there is scope to further reinforce ties between Centres. As regards external audiences, EU awareness and visibility need to be built among key stakeholder groups. As defined by key staff at EU Centres, they have an important role to play in developing the linkages with the EU and increasing EU awareness and visibility, particularly amongst academics, policy-makers, businessmen and the media. This would imply increasing these audiences’ knowledge on European culture, policies and standards regarding e.g. environmental protection, trade law, labour law, etc.

Australia and New Zealand, on the other hand, would be in a position to start using the EUCE branding. There is already a core group of mature Centres – ANU and Canterbury have been part of the Initiative since 2001 and Monash was selected in 2005 – with a well established community of EU studies. The ANU officiates as the network coordinator for Australia and New Zealand, which means that establishing the branding would take the network a step further down the line.

Australian and NZ Universities awarded funding to establish an EU Centre believe there is real benefit in being associated with the European Union – in terms of credibility and kudos. The senior management at Universities and those who manage the EU Centres themselves have a particularly positive view of this association. The fact that the funding comes from the EU is perceived to raise the profile and credibility of the intervention. It is also considered prestigious for the university. The fact that universities take this view is a real strength and bodes well for the sustainability of the Initiative. Additionally, EU branding of the Centre provides a quality endorsement which is useful in attracting alternative funds from other sources such as Jean Monet Chairs and EU Framework Programmes.

While there is some interaction between many of the EU Centres in Australia and New Zealand there was a general feeling that there is scope for this to be enhanced. EU Centres believe that there could be some real benefits from further interaction within the network. This is an aspect that the current Australian and New Zealand Coordinator (ANU in Canberra) should consider carefully and work to address as soon as possible. A couple of EU Centres went further by saying that it would be beneficial for the Initiative as a whole for interaction to go beyond Australia and New Zealand and extend into the APAC region – Singapore, Taiwan, Korea and Japan.

## 4.2 Questions on the EFFECTIVENESS of the Initiative

The evaluation aims to assess various aspects of effectiveness, establishing whether the Initiative has met its general and specific objectives and what the successes and failures in achieving the objectives were. The analysis builds upwards from the Centre level to the Network (in the US and Canada) and Initiative levels.

At Centre level, key areas through which effectiveness is examined are the achievement of the objectives, effects of the principle of “degressivity”, outreach activities beyond the academic sector, development of curricula on EU studies, development of a ‘cadre’ of graduates, links with institutions in the EU, etc.

At Network level, the main focus is on the added value brought to the Initiative in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

At Initiative level, the analysis centres on the degree of cohesion of the programme, the visibility achieved by its branding, the programme’s strengths and weaknesses, and the areas for improvement.

### 4.2.1 Objectives of the Initiative

#### **To what extent do the objectives of the programme continue to be met?**

The EU Centres Initiative is part of the Commission’s public diplomacy strategy since 1998. The role of the EU Centres is to raise awareness about the EU in partner countries through EU studies and research; and outreach activities targeted at business and government circles, the media community and the general public.

The specific objectives of the programme and the expected outcomes to be achieved are as follows:

1. Academic Activities: Develop centres of academic excellence in EU studies with a view to broadening and deepening the base of European Union studies;
2. Outreach Activities: Promote greater understanding of the EU and EU-partner country’s relations among outreach constituencies beyond academic circles, such as opinion formers and leaders, business circles and organisations, think-tanks, government, school educators, the media, civil society including Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs);
3. Academic exchanges: While EU Centres are not expected to be primarily focused on student/faculty mobility, they should nonetheless seek to increase academic contacts and exchanges with EU Universities to better achieve their core objectives as regards EU studies and outreach.
4. Cooperation with other Centres: Consolidate and enhance the effectiveness of the network of EU Centres.

Mature Centres were asked to rate the extent to which they had achieved their objectives over the years. There was consensus amongst respondents that the three objectives that had been more successfully achieved were those linked to academic activities and exchanges. Building centres of academic excellence ranked first in the list, followed by contributing to strengthening academic cooperation and broadening/deepening the base of EU studies in the different countries. Cooperation with other Centres was judged to be relatively successful in average. Developing outreach activities beyond the academic circles was considered to have been the least successful objective, but still opinions on the levels of success of the outreach were positive (with half of the Centres highlighting that the outreach had been achieved “to a great extent” and the other half stating that the outreach had been attained “to some extent”). Mature Centres were also not overly positive on the objective of developing a cadre of graduates. This is certainly a longer term objective that demands more time.

The views of former Centres are in line with those of mature Centres in terms of objectives achieved, though former Centres who completed the questionnaire were in general more critical when assessing their success. It is interesting to note that former Centres were also asked to rate the degree to which they are being able to achieve the objectives without EU funding, and their responses reflect that they are facing clear difficulties in trying to sustain the Initiative.

The main idea behind the EU Centres Initiative was described by Commission officials at DG RELEX Headquarters as implementing a permanent infrastructure which will continuously increase the awareness of the European Union in the respective countries. The Centres are not only expected to undertake the “core business”, meaning the provision of lectures and seminars on the EU to their students, but they are also required to reach out to a much wider audience. For example, the Centres’ activities are envisaged to involve government circles to increase political cooperation or business circles in order to facilitate business development and cooperation between individual countries and the EU. Some DG RELEX officials questioned the impact of the Centres for the outreach activities. This task was seen as being resource intensive, and Universities were perceived as not being equipped with the necessary staff.

#### ***4.2.2 Uniqueness of the Initiative and comparison with similar schemes***

**To what extent is the Initiative new and innovative, not simply duplicating or extending existing activities? Can the results of the Initiative be compared with similar schemes and is it possible to identify models of good practice?**

The Initiative can be certainly catalogued as new and innovative. It is not only considered relevant from the perspective of EU-partner countries’ relations, but it is also considered to bring prestige to the Universities hosting the Centres, and to be of added value to the students and beneficiaries participating from the activities of the Centres.

More than half of the beneficiaries of the Centres who responded to the survey (52%) are of the opinion that they would personally not have achieved similar outcomes if they had not engaged with the EU Centres Initiative. This is more evident among beneficiaries of mature Centres in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and less manifest among beneficiaries of newer Centres in the Asian countries. In a similar vein, 58% of respondents to the survey consider that the EU Centres disseminate information on the EU and its policies which is “unique”.

Within Universities, EU Centres have a distinct role to play. In general, the activities of the Centres are said to be complementary to the work of the Universities' Schools and Departments with which the Centres interact. The generally established mode of cooperation is that the Centres feed from the faculty across Universities, and at the same time contribute to widening the offer of their programmes and activities.

## **EU Centres and Delegations**

Commission officials at DG RELEX Headquarters considered the Initiative in a positive light as having a leverage effect on the actions carried out by the EU Delegations in the respective countries. It was argued that Delegations generally do not have the resources or time to carry out promotional activities for the European Union as part of their normal programmes. The EU Centres, in contrast, seem to be able to constitute a certain element of regularity in terms of organising regular EU-related events and meetings and functioning as a hub for different contacts.

The Delegations in general are also in agreement that there is no duplication of activities with the EU Centres.

According to interviewees at the EU Delegation to the US, there is a “*win-win*” situation in the relationship between the Delegation and the EUCEs. The latter usually use the materials produced by the Delegation and take advantage of the EU visitors and speakers that the Delegation brings to the country. On the side of the Delegation, it is highly appreciated that, through Centres, there is access to a broad range of venues across the country that can host EU speakers and visits every year. On the other hand, Centres have also helped the Delegation to reach the national and local governments<sup>16</sup>.

In Canada, the Centres were seen to have added to the Delegation's public diplomacy work in a new and innovative way, but also to have filled a gap that the Delegation cannot due to resource constraints. Particular mention was made of the internet activities undertaken by certain Centres for outreach which were perceived as new and innovative. Furthermore, the Delegation does not produce papers on relevant issues and does not have the resources to organise high-level conferences on specific topics.

The situation in Japan appears to be different from that of the other countries in that the Centres in Japan rely on the Delegation in terms of their outreach activities, and it seems difficult not to mix up the responsibilities and bodies involved. It was felt that a clear line needs to be established on what exactly the EU Centres Initiative is and in how far the EC can interfere in the programme of the Centres. In the current context, it is the view of the Delegation that while there is a certain additional capacity provided by the EU Centres, it is too simplistic to think that the EU Centres would do activities for which the Delegation does not have the time/capacity.

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<sup>16</sup> The EUCE in Berkeley hosted the Ambassador and arranged a meeting with the local government and a lecture at the Californian State Senate. The EUCE in Washington DC has organised several events in Capitol Hill with EU funds which have resulted in a considerable increase of the EU's visibility within the US government.

South Korea and Taiwan are still relatively new countries, and as the Initiative's management is centralised in both cases, the Delegation/Economic and Trade Office do not have an active role to play. Activities of the Centres in South Korea and Taiwan do not seem to duplicate those of the Commission representatives.

With regard to Australia and New Zealand it became clear during the fieldwork that the EU Centres Initiative is not duplicating other EU efforts in the region. Examining other EU interventions in Australia and New Zealand it seems that the EU Centres Initiative is a complement to these. For example, the outreach activities carried out by the EU Delegation or the award of a Jean Monnet Chair at a university of an EU Centre.

There is not a substantial amount of activity around the EU in Singapore. However, anything going on almost certainly complements the work of the EU Centre there. It should be noted that the EU Centre and the Delegation in Singapore have a good level of cooperation particularly in the area of outreach.

### **Comparison with other similar schemes**

The EU Centres Initiative is also unique from the perspective of other similar schemes ran by the EU. The materialisation of the objectives in EU Centres is a distinctive feature, as is the focus of the Initiative in policy topics and the fact that it aims to go beyond the academic community to wider audiences. Whilst some of the mature Centres are or have been engaged with other similar Initiatives – in particular Initiatives with equivalent academic bodies or with specific Member States in the EU – the EU Centres Initiative is considered to be complementary, both in terms of programming and activities and in terms of funding.

As explained by Commission staff at DG RELEX Headquarters, most bilateral programmes are targeted at short-term mobility of students, but not so much on informing students about European Union issues. In contrast, the EU Centres are tasked to develop lectures about the EU in different ways, including courses that can be picked up by students from different disciplines, as well as undertaking research about European Union topics. Moreover, none of the other EU programmes are engaged in outreach activities like the EU Centres Initiative.

Interviews with DG EAC and EACEA officials running complementary programmes reflected that there is very low awareness among officials dealing with other EU cooperation programmes of what the EU Centres actually do. In this sense, there is a need for some promotion of the Initiative in this group in order to create further opportunities of collaboration and interaction, particularly in terms of cross promotion in the different countries (currently this is viewed as a missed opportunity for what EU Centres could do for other programmes and vice versa).

The EU Delegation to Japan is doing a good cross promotion job, using the EU Centres as a building block to promote the Erasmus Mundus programme and vice versa. For example, one staff member in the Delegation does presentations in Universities about Erasmus Mundus, and at the same time promotes the EU Centres as well. In this way the Delegation tries to attract Universities to apply for the EU Centres Initiative in Japan. The Delegation also sends out emails to all networks of the Erasmus Mundus programme in order to promote the EU Centres Initiative.



### **4.2.3 Overall coherence of the programme**

**Taking into account the different context in each partner country, to what extent can the programme be given a more coherent approach worldwide? How can harmonization of all EU Centres be improved?**

There is some scope for the programme to move towards a more coherent approach worldwide, but deepening links at both country and regional levels would be more feasible at the current stage of development of the Initiative with a view to intensifying links at worldwide level in the longer term. In addition to the particular cultural, political and economic contexts in each country, the Initiative is at different stages of development, with the US and Canada (and to some degree Australia and New Zealand) in the more mature extreme, and Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan transiting early development phases.

At worldwide level, the two world meetings that have taken place to date have been viewed as highly beneficial for the majority of the Centres. The newer Centres have found the presentations to be very useful, and in general these meetings have provided the opportunity to do networking and to strengthen links. Feedback from Centres in Australia and New Zealand suggested that in the future it might be beneficial to organise more workshops with specific themes. For example, some focused on the administrative and managerial aspects of the EU Centres: contract and financial management, communication and marketing, websites and some focused more on the actual work of EU Centres: curricula development, research ideas, researcher mobility etc. Feedback from some Centres in the US suggested that one student per Centre could be invited to the next world meeting with a view to encouraging more interaction at this level.

The exchange of best practices on a more regular basis would also allow the Initiative to move towards a more harmonised approach. This exchange should ideally flow from the mature to the new Centres (e.g. by providing guidelines for the organisation of specific events or programmes such as those with secondary students), but it could also flow the other way where new Centres develop an interesting niche (e.g. activities with the business community). There could also be specific Centres selected to prepare presentations on their work on specific areas (e.g. Miami-Florida would be an interesting example of outreach).

Visiting scholars, shared speakers, joint conferences, programmes or workshops, all take place to some extent. It is more likely that interaction is more fluent at country or regional level, but there have been exchanges beyond the country/regional levels as well.

At regional level, there is scope for the US and Canadian networks to do more things together. However there is also a need to consolidate the individual country networks in the first place, and it could be argued that diversifying the objectives could attempt against consolidation of the networks at country level. In the US in particular, and to a lesser extent in Canada, there is a shared view among the management of the different Centres that the respective networks are not sufficiently taken advantage of. Some Centres in the US agree that the national coordinator role has the potential to develop more fully, promoting real cooperation and interaction amongst Centres, sharing of information or planning of common activities. The current lack of cooperation and interaction happens

especially in relation to research and teaching, as there are some examples of outreach activities that have been organised in the framework of the network (e.g. video-conference with President Barroso).

There is also scope for Australia and New Zealand to lead specific actions with a view to strengthening links and harmonising approaches with the other countries in the Asia Pacific region. Some of the Centres in Australia and New Zealand have explicitly raised this point during the visits, but also many of the Centres across the region have expressed the need for more regular cooperation with their counterparts in other countries in line with the objectives in the Commission's calls for proposals for the region.

Again it should be noted that the approach towards harmonisation should be gradual and focused on specific elements of best practice, and should not deter the Centres from forging stronger links with their counterparts at country level. In particular, in Japan and South Korea there is still work to be done in building stronger synergies between Centres at country level. In other words, harmonisation should begin at a country level and then build upwards at regional and worldwide levels.

#### **Do the activities of individual Centres contribute to an overall coherent programme?**

The activities of individual Centres do contribute to an overall coherent programme. The different activities undertaken by each Centre are aligned under the overall objectives of the Initiative. The specific objectives may have slight variations for the different countries and calls but the strategic direction is the same worldwide.

Not all Centres contribute equally to the Initiative, and there are Centres that are more active than others. In a similar line, some Centres are stronger from an academic perspective, whilst others have more of a focus on outreach. But the three pillars of the Initiative – teaching, outreach and research – are present in the programmes of each individual Centre. The fact that the Initiative has the necessary flexibility to target the Centres' activities to the needs of the individual countries and the target audiences involved is what makes it relevant in each case. It is the Commission's view that the Initiative's added value resides in implementing a tailored approach under a common umbrella that in some countries already works as an established brand in the academic community and the likes.

A note should be made in relation to the lack of benchmarking on the activities of the individual Centres. This is further developed below under the efficiency section, but the systematic collection of relevant numbers on the Centres' activities would certainly be of great benefit for the Initiative in the future.

#### **4.2.4 Principle of “degressivity”**

**Should the principle of “degressivity” (gradually reducing grants over time), currently applied in the case of US and Canadian EUCE, be maintained? Isn't 35% as foreseen in a subsequent grant cycle too low to maintain university support, or is it likely to be acceptable? (35% should not be applied to Network coordinator role)**

EU Centres across the board are categorical in that the principle of “degressivity” would attempt against the sustainability of the Initiative in the longer term.

In the US and Canada, where EU funding covers 50% of the expenditure of the mature Centres, there is strong concern that a further decline in funding to the Centres would lose much of what the EU has gained from its programming to date. If the Commission's contribution was reduced below the 50% threshold it would be extremely difficult to convince Universities to do a contribution above their current share. In other words, there is unanimity that EU funding below the 50% threshold would put the Initiative in serious risk, as it would not count with support from host Universities and it would make the programme less attractive for new applicants. The shared view is that outreach on EU issues and basics would likely disappear quickly (which according to DG RELEX staff would certainly not be in the interest of the Commission), and that academic and research activities would continue with a weaker EU focus (i.e. the focus of the Centres could easily shift from EU centred programming to wider European topics).

The concern in these two countries is aggravated by the respective financial crises and the depreciation of the Euro vis-à-vis the local currencies, both factors that have weighed heavily on the host Universities and the Centres. In particular, economic difficulties in these two countries have translated into fewer funds from the Federal and State governments and more competition across Universities to obtain the smaller amounts of funds available.

Other potential sources of funding as could be those of the private sector do not appear as a feasible option for the long term either. When the Initiative first began in the US, the Delegation organised meetings and lunches with private stakeholders in New York to facilitate the interaction with Centres' Directors. Even though the meetings resulted in some support for Centres coming from a couple of firms, the interest has been usually "vague". For long term funding, the Initiative would have to fit the companies' strategic objectives or local community interests. There are a few exceptions, such as the additional funds secured by the Boulder EUCE from Western Union, which have been used to augment their programming and operations.

On a related note, the EU Delegation to Canada, with an annual budget of approximately CAN \$100,000 for press and information, relies heavily on the Centres for outreach/public diplomacy. For example, the Delegation would struggle to finance visits of high-level speakers from the EU (i.e. through room and audiovisual equipment rentals), such as the visit of the EP President to Carleton University to give a speech in September 2010.

In Japan, 75% of funding for the EU Centres is provided by the EC and 25% of funding is provided by the Universities. The exception to this is the University of Waseda which contributes to its EU Centre with 42%, due to the fact that the University has more financial means than other Universities in Japan. There are no third (external) parties contributing to the funding of the Centres and it seems very difficult for Universities to secure external money. The EU Delegation to Japan believes that the Initiative provides good value for money. The funding amounts to 1 million Euros for four years per EU Centre in Japan, but the EC benefits tremendously from the Initiative in terms of contacts, research activities and events. The principle of "degressivity" would not work in Japan either, as Universities would not have enough incentives to be part of the EU Centres Initiative.

Alternative sources of funding in South Korea appear to be more easily available than is the case in other countries but there is concern that funding from local players would demand changes in the objectives and activities of the Centres to further benefit the interests of the other funding bodies.

Over the past two funding cycles, Commission funding has averaged 64% and ranged from 48% to 74% for EU Centres in Australia. From the 2006 funding cycle to the most recent one the average proportion of Commission co-financing across the three EU Centres in Australia has increased from 59% to 69%. Based on these trends and insight from those consulted in Australia it seems that, while co-financing can be secured, the EU Centres Initiative would find it challenging if EC funding were reduced from the levels seen over the last two cycles. Aside from the partner Universities there are currently no other significant sources of funding that the Australian EU Centres feel that they could call upon.

In New Zealand, the EC contributes 70% of the funding in the current cycle. The fact that the Initiative in New Zealand has scaled up considerably, establishing itself as an effective network of seven Universities across the country has brought with it the need for this level of financial support. One crucial development for the EUCN from 2010 to 2014 is that all University partners will make a contribution to the 25% minimum co-funding required by the DG RELEX. In the 2006 to 2009 grant these contributions came exclusively from NRCE. The introduction of this requirement has achieved explicit buy-in from the network partners and demonstrates their commitment to the Initiative. It should also be noted that while the DG RELEX has been part funding the Initiative since 2002, NRCE has successfully bid for over a dozen grants worth over two million Euros.

In Singapore, the Commission funds 75% of the Initiative with the two Universities NUS and NTU putting in 12.5% each. According to those consulted the overriding message is that the Centre would not be able to survive without an EC grant the way things currently stand. Looking ahead, if the current EU Centre was to apply and be awarded EC funding again, it might be able to manage with slightly less than 75% but this is somewhat dependent on its success over the final years of the first funding cycle.

#### **4.2.5 Outreach activities**

##### **How effective have the Centres been in their outreach activities in the wider community beyond the University (both geographically and sectorally) and academic environment?**

The outreach component of the Initiative is the one that has been the most difficult to implement to date. In general, Centres are often not sure how to fulfil this mandate; some are not too sure what the standard is and what the measurement used is. Universities are naturally more inclined towards the teaching and research components of the Initiative and the management of the Centres are in their majority academics with little or no experience in conducting outreach activities. In addition, the fact that outreach activities are resource intensive, coupled with the low amounts of funding available and that there is no profit to be made of it are also seen as limitations.

That said, the outreach has been particularly effective in places where Centres have succeeded in focusing on the needs and interests of the local community. This is the case, for example, of the Washington DC Centre's success in reaching political leaders due to the uniqueness of its location and credentials of the Centre's staff and professors, or the EU Centre in Seattle's ability to build on the local business community's links to the EU, or Miami-FIU's capacity to focus on the multi-lateral and intersecting interests of the European Union, the United States and the countries of the Caribbean and Central and Latin America which has brought them access to the local diplomatic and

business communities. Moreover and from a general standpoint, the outreach component may not be as effective as the work in the other areas, but it does provide a good return on investment to the Commission.

Many Centres have also shown a tendency in recent years to increase their outreach efforts with secondary schools. This is especially the case for many of the Centres in the US and Canada, as well as those in Australia and New Zealand. But the Centres in the Asian countries are also moving towards a more regular interaction with teachers and students in secondary schools. Feedback collected from secondary school teachers who have participated of the programmes and activities organised by the Centres, and who have had access to the materials and resources offered, has tended to be highly positive. The mature Centres go as far as saying that after some years working with secondary schools, they are now being approached by many community colleges and some Universities as a result of the success of the outreach activities in the form of simulations and challenges. There are also examples of cooperation between Centres, as Pittsburgh and Toronto are in conversations for Pittsburgh to train the staff at Toronto on the Model EU programme.

Some Centres also argue that there is a very effective long-term outreach variant in training graduate students on the EU who will incorporate what they learned in a variety of ways in their professional and academic careers. Once these students go out of the University, they have the potential to generate strong multiplier effects among colleagues and the generations that come next.

Thus the outreach appears to flow more naturally when it is tailored to local audiences who have genuine interests in the topics and strong links to the host Universities, or when it is focused on the academic audiences either at secondary school level or within the Universities. The responses to the questionnaires provided by the Centres – all mature, new and former – confirm that graduate students in the first place, followed by faculty and undergraduate students are the three stakeholder groups that are the most important in the Centres' strategy and that the Centres have been more effective in interacting with. Political leaders and the general public come next in the list, with more moderate levels of importance and effectiveness. Primary and high school teachers and students are still new as a target group, so they are increasingly coming to be seen as important for the Centres.

The profile of respondents to the online survey targeted at beneficiaries corroborate the responses provided by Centres: more than seven out of every ten respondents (72%) were stakeholders within the Universities, with graduate students making up 31% of the sample, faculty/researchers representing 25% of respondents, and undergraduate students standing for 16%. The remaining 28% of the sample was evenly distributed among representatives of other groups such as primary and high school teachers (5%), business stakeholders (4%), politicians (3%), and others. Media respondents only accounted for 1% of the sample.

Where the outreach meets with more difficulties is when targeting the media, and to a lesser extent the industry and business communities. There are exceptions to this, with Centres like the Washington DC Consortium having an effective reach to media, and others like Montreal in Canada and Pusan in South Korea successfully reaching out to business groups. Links with think tanks and International Organisations are also not at the top of the priority lists of the Centres.

The outreach component has been more difficult to implement so far in countries like Japan and Taiwan. The Delegation and the Institutes in Japan all highlight that there is not a strong outreach

culture in the country, so it has been difficult for the Institutes to put in practice the activities in their programmes. The Delegation has changed the weighting of the outreach component in the last two cycles to give it a more prominent role and the results have been positive so far with a lot of ongoing support from the Delegation. The EU Centre in Taiwan also experienced some complications in launching their outreach plan in the first year of funding, but the Economic and Trade Office and the Commission have been monitoring performance in this front and acknowledge good progress.

It should be noted that there is a learning curve to the outreach, both at individual level for each Centre and at collective level for the Initiative as a whole. Thus it is logical to see variations across Centres and countries, with the more mature Centres and countries more established on this front, and the newer Centres and countries in the process of transiting the learning curve.

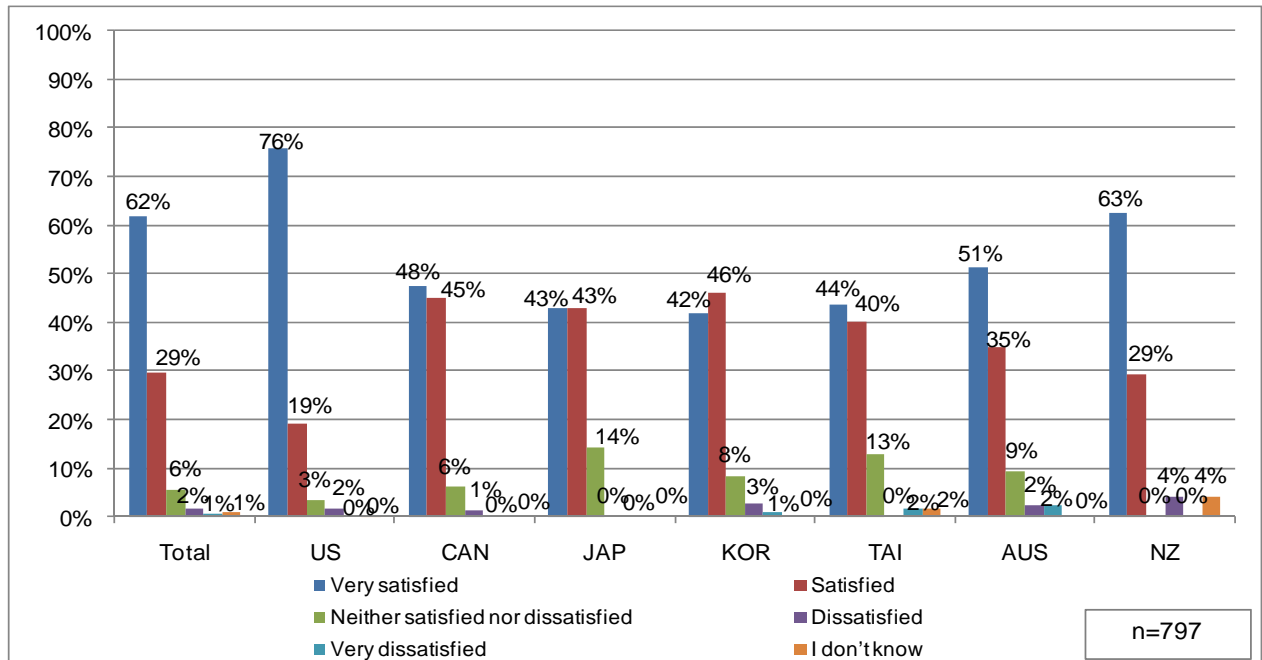
#### **4.2.6 *New types of activities***

##### **What alternative types of intervention or introduction of new types of activities might be possible in order to improve effectiveness?**

The current menu of activities and programmes offered by the EU Centres worldwide can be said to be sufficiently broad to effectively pursue the objectives set out and to successfully address the needs and expectations of the Initiative's clientele groups. The main issue moving forward is not so much linked to "reinventing the wheel" by introducing alternative types of intervention or new types of activities, but strengthening the current offer by consolidating specific programmes or activities that work well, improving aspects that have scope for further adjustments, reaching out to different target groups both within and beyond the host Universities, and increasing the networking component at country, regional and worldwide levels.

As per the online survey results, levels of satisfaction of respondents with the services and activities provided by the Centres are very high, with more than nine out of every ten respondents (91%) expressing themselves either very satisfied (62%) or satisfied (29%) with the EU Centres' offer. As shown in the graph below, enthusiasm levels are markedly high for beneficiaries of US Centres (who consider themselves as "very satisfied" in a larger proportion than others), but the general trend across countries speaks of a pleased clientele.

**Graph 3 - Beneficiaries' level of satisfaction with the EU Centres offer (total and country percentages)<sup>17</sup>**



Source: Online survey with beneficiaries. Numbers of respondents in the US (419); CAN (82); JAP (21); KOR (119); TAI (55); AUS (43); NZ (24).

Levels of satisfaction with the specific activities/services offered by the Centres (i.e. EU-related courses, information material, exchange programmes, fellowship programmes, travel grants, research grants, activities and materials for different groups, etc.) are also high among beneficiaries who have had exposure to the different activities/services.

Also evidenced by the online survey, EU Centres are mainly seen by beneficiaries as places running events and activities and providing services on the EU, and as places for networking in relation to the EU. The majority of respondents were eager for the Centres to retain this multiple offering.

When consulted about potential improvements that could enhance the EU Centres they interacted with, the majority encouraged “more” of what is currently in offer as opposed to new or different elements. It is also interesting to note that many were also conscious of the funding and staff limitations, and hence asked on the one hand for more funds for expanding research, grants and scholarships; and on the other hand for more staff and resources to generate a real research and academic dynamic. Respondents to the survey called for more speakers and visitors, especially

<sup>17</sup> Singapore was not included in the graph as there are only 10 responses for this country, which makes the percentages not comparable with the rest. On a qualitative note, it should be noted that 8 out of the 10 respondents in Singapore were satisfied or very satisfied with the offer of the EU Centre.

academic invited speakers and visitors from the EU. More networking in the form of enhanced exchange programmes with EU Universities and institutions were also claimed by respondents. The promotion and communication dimensions were brought up by many beneficiaries as areas for improvement. In particular, respondents highlighted that more promotion beyond campus to the local communities would be beneficial, as well as improved websites and information channels such as newsletters. The use of new technologies was also considered that could enhance the visibility of the Centres by for example uploading videos or speeches to the Centres' websites.

#### **4.2.7 Development of curricula on EU studies**

##### **What impact has the Initiative had on the development of curricula on EU studies in terms of content, number of courses on offer, and level of demand?**

The impact that the Initiative has had on the development of curricula on EU studies has been considerable. This is of course more evident in countries such as the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, where the Initiative has been established for longer periods of time. But it is also showing signs in some of the new Asian countries, such as Japan.

##### **Content**

In terms of content, many Centres in the US have highlighted in the visits that the discipline of EU studies has over the years succeeded in forging its own distinct identity as opposed to that of European studies. The development of EU curricula and the consolidation of a community of EU studies across the country – both factors facilitated by the EU Centres Initiative – have been factors of weight in this differentiation process, but this progress still remains pretty much confined to the academic community and other key informed stakeholder groups.

The Initiative has also helped EU studies to increasingly develop as a multidisciplinary field interacting with and feeding from a range of different disciplines, from the Social Sciences to the Languages, Arts, and Hard Sciences. There is strong support among mature Centres to interdisciplinary research and teaching because it is believed to broaden the audiences and impact of the Centres. New Centres tend to start with a relatively compact offer that is mainly linked to the offer of the host Universities but are willing to explore new disciplines by working together with more Schools and Departments as they move along.

The evolving nature of the EU as the subject of study has also contributed towards the multidisciplinary character of the discipline across countries, as academics, researchers and curricula have had to adapt to the evolution of the subject matter.

Another element that has played an important role across countries is that EU studies has also developed as a comparative discipline in that the majority of Centres have found that the comparative dimension is highly relevant to the interests of local audiences. In Montreal, for example, the EU is relevant as a comparative example in relation to the federalist/separatist divide in Quebec; it is used as an example by each of what works/doesn't work in federalism. The EU Centre at Christchurch focuses on topics such as the perceptions of the EU within the Asia-Pacific region, migration patterns between the EU and New Zealand or EU development policy issues in the Pacific. There are other similar examples across the board.



## Number of courses on offer

As per the responses provided by the Centres in the self-completion questionnaires<sup>18</sup>, the number of courses on offer has tended to increase over the successive funding cycles, with more than 900 courses offered in the aggregate under the current funding cycle.

In the case of the mature Centres, as shown in the table below, increases have been slight in some cases and more pronounced in other cases. There are a few exceptions where courses have declined in the current cycle, but numbers should be read as provisory in these cases as the current cycle is still ongoing. It should also be highlighted that there are significant differences in the offer of EU and EU-partner country related courses across the different Centres.

In the case of former Centres, the number of courses taught on the EU and EU-partner country relations was reduced once EU-funding came to an end.

**Table 5 - Number of courses taught on the EU and EU-partner country relations**

<b>Mature Centres</b>	<b>Current cycle</b>	<b>Previous cycle</b>	<b>Initial cycle</b>
Berkeley	10	N/A	N/A
Georgia Tech	30	N/A	N/A
Florida + Miami	12	12	10
Michigan	41	40	27
North Carolina	270	218	170
Pittsburgh	49	118	97
Washington DC	148	130	95
Washington Seattle	26	26	32
Wisconsin	68	52	N/A
Carleton	15	10	N/A
Dalhousie	5	13	N/A
Montreal	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kansai Kobe	214	174	N/A
Tokyo	7	N/A	N/A
Christchurch	20	15	N/A
Monash	58	50	N/A
<b>Former Centres</b>	<b>During EU funding</b>	<b>After EU funding</b>	
Indiana	18	9	
Texas Austin	1	0	

Source: Questionnaires completed by mature and former Centres

## Level of demand

The level of demand has also increased throughout the years. Even though there are no quantitative measures to support this finding, the feedback from many of the Centres suggests that the tendency

<sup>18</sup> Results are reflected only for those Centres that completed the questionnaire and that provided details on the specific question. Even when results are not available for all Centres, the numbers in the table provide an approximation of the evolution of the offer of EU and EU-partner country courses.

has been towards an increase in the number of students and beneficiaries participating from the activities of the Centres. An example is the EUCE at Washington Seattle, which according to its staff experienced a 90% increase in the number of undergraduate students from the first funding cycle.

The feedback from students and beneficiaries (both from the visits and the online survey) shows that there is a strong demand for the Centres to organise more activities and to focus on new topics. Slightly more than four out of every ten respondents to the survey (42%) claimed they had taken courses on the EU and/or the EU relations with partner countries, which is a very high attendance number when considering that students (at undergraduate, graduate and post-doctoral levels) account for 50% of the sample of respondents.

#### **4.2.8 Development of a cadre of graduates**

**How far has the Initiative provided a valid educational experience for students and academics on EU issues? For example, to what extent, if any, has the Initiative helped to develop a cadre of graduates likely to build on their knowledge of EU matters in their professional careers?**

The development of a cadre of graduates likely to build on their knowledge of EU matters in their professional careers is regarded by many EU Centres as a very relevant long-term objective, but not something that can be achieved rapidly. The positive experience described by some of the mature Centres in the US shows that the multiplier effects that graduate students can have on the dissemination of EU studies can be extremely effective. Some go even as far as to say that training graduate students on the EU is one of the biggest pay-offs of the Initiative. The majority of graduates will incorporate the knowledge on the EU in a variety of ways in their professional careers, and may even pave the way for EU studies in places that do not offer these. The high degrees of mobility of graduate students are thus instrumental to expanding the Initiative beyond the Universities that are currently hosting EU Centres.

Academics in some of the mature Centres acknowledge that the recruitment of faculty and top graduates has been made easier with the presence of an EU Centre. The prestige of the Centres allows recruiting top candidates who are very sophisticated in their fields. On a related note, respondents to the online survey speak very highly of the impact of the EU Centres in their studies and careers, with 81% of beneficiaries expressing that their participation in the Centre had a positive influence in their studies, 78% of respondents highlighting that the experience had a positive influence in their professional careers, and 70% stating that it had increased their network of contacts in the EU and their countries.

The Initiative has been successful at providing many students and faculty with valuable “seed” money that has then allowed them to further pursue their projects. EU funding has in particular been an important first step for many students who were searching for or working on their dissertation topics. In relation to this, it usually takes some time for graduate students to pick up their dissertation topics, so the availability of funding at this stage in the career can be seen as an important outreach investment on the future professional careers of graduate students.

#### **4.2.9 Policy oriented research on the EU**

##### **What value added has the Initiative provided for policy oriented research on European integration and EU-partner countries' relations?**

The results of the questionnaires completed by the EU Centres confirm that all mature Centres that completed the questionnaire offer the possibility to conduct research on issues of applied EU and EU-partner country public policies. The numbers are slightly lower in the case of new Centres, but still the offer is high for all types of Centres. The amount of policy oriented research in any given Centre is linked to a certain extent to the profile of the host University, the specific interests of the management of the Centre and of the faculty collaborating with the Centre. Centres which are centrally located in the different countries from a political standpoint, such as Washington DC or Carleton, are more likely to have a stronger component of policy oriented research than others. But the feedback obtained from the visits shows that this is an area that is certainly growing in the interest of both students and faculty. Policy oriented research also feeds largely from other activities organised by the Centres, including the outreach conferences with less of an academic angle, the visits from practitioners from the EU and the exchange programmes with EU Institutions.

The outreach more generally, which promotes links with the non-academic world, is a clear initiator of policy oriented research projects. An interesting example is that of the University of Montreal. The Centre has contributed to developing policy oriented research on EU integration and EU-partner country relations, notably as a result of the free-trade negotiations, with requests from policy makers to write a briefing note on economic governance in the EU and a paper on the free trade talks. In addition, the Strategic Knowledge Cluster 'Canada-Europe Transatlantic Dialogue: Seeking transnational solutions to 21st century problems' (of which the Centre is part) is key in promoting research on policy challenges of common concern to Europe and Canada.

From the point of view of beneficiaries of the EU Centres programme, the results of the online survey show that the Initiative has so far had a positive outcome on the overall dissemination of information on the EU and its policies, and on relations between the EU and the partner countries. Respondents to the survey were highly in agreement that the Centres disseminate information on the EU and its policies which is accurate (89%), up-to-date (86%), balanced (84%), relevant to issues in the different countries (75%), and relevant to issues in the different regions (75%).

In line with the above views, the most evident impact of the Initiative as reported by 89% of respondents to the survey was that it had contributed to a greater understanding and knowledge of the EU and its policies among beneficiaries.

There are numerous requests from beneficiaries for expanding the number of research opportunities (including policy oriented research) offered. This was usually related to increasing the allocation of funds for research grants and travel grants used for researching purposes, presenting a paper at a conference, etc. It also included organising seminars targeted to students' specific research interests, hosting visiting academics or practitioners who address the different research interests, increasing the production of papers, helping students to get their EU-related articles published, etc.

#### **4.2.10 Added value of a network coordinator**

**In the case of the US and Canada, to what extent did the work of a network coordinator promote cooperative efforts, as compared to the cycle without a coordinator? Has the lack of a network coordinator in Australia had a detrimental effect?**

The work of a network coordinator is in principle an important element in promoting cooperative efforts between EU Centres in a given country, but there is scope to further deepen the role of the network in those countries that have one.

#### **The network in the US**

While the role of the network coordinator in the US was perceived by many of the Centres as very useful in terms of maintaining the EUCE's website, distributing information on events and updating the calendar of activities, the network is not sufficiently taken advantage of. Some agree that the national coordinator role has the potential to develop more fully, promoting real cooperation and interaction among Centres, sharing of information or planning of common activities. The current lack of formal cooperation and interaction channels happens particularly in relation to research and teaching, as there are some examples of outreach activities that have been organised in the framework of the network (e.g. video-conference with President Barroso in opportunity of his visit to Pittsburgh).

Networking does take place between Centres in the US in a more ad-hoc or informal fashion, in particular between a reduced core group of mature Centres including Pittsburgh, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Washington Seattle, Michigan and to some extent Colorado, that has a Director with long-standing links with the Initiative and hence familiar with the other Centres. Centres that are relatively new or that are geographically isolated do experience more difficulties in taking advantage of the network. Former Centres on the other hand all regret that they have been excluded from participating and contributing to the EUCE network after EU funding came to an end.

According to some Centres in the US, the geographic distances of the country attempt against the idea of the network. The fact that the US is the country that hosts more Centres also somehow interferes with the idea of a close cooperation among all Centres. The division in geographical clusters could encourage a more natural interaction between Centres that are relatively close to each other.

It is the shared view of many Centres that the network coordinator could take a more active role to facilitate the transmission of video conferences when key EU leaders and scholars made presentations. Most felt that the EU was missing a significant opportunity by not taking greater advantage of the power of video conferences to both include more Centres in major presentations, and in not disseminating these addresses more broadly.

For the last two funding cycles, the University of North Carolina has served as network coordinator, aiming at promoting cooperation and sharing best practices within the network. The EUCE at North Carolina was forced to face a difficult situation in 2009 with the passing away of its former Executive

Director Ruth Mitchell Pitts, and it is believed that the network was also impacted with this significant loss.

### **The network in Canada**

The network in Canada is perceived by the Delegation and by the majority of the Centres to have added great value to the Initiative. The networking requirement in the call for proposals that was introduced in the second cycle has translated itself into a strong cooperative dynamic in an otherwise traditionally competitive environment. More formal links and collaboration channels appear to exist in Canada, starting with regular meetings between the Centres, but also seeking to develop funding leverage with the federal authorities in Canada for the Initiative, and including a shared speakers' programme.

It also appears to help that the relationship between the five Centres in Canada is good, providing for cooperation and information sharing. There is good chemistry among the personalities themselves and Carleton's efforts at coordinating the network are largely well received. The more reduced number of Centres certainly makes it easier for the network coordinator and for the different Centres to interact, meet, and exchange information.

There are however some voices that raise specific concerns on the current value of the network, and who argue that the Initiative in Canada could be improved by supporting more dialogue between the Centres, and by encouraging the sharing of information and resources. According to these people, there could be much gained from allowing additional communication channels (i.e. meetings, informal exchanges, etc.), let alone partnering on research projects and speakers series.

### **The network in Australia**

While there is some interaction between the EU Centres in Australia there was a general feeling that there is scope for this to be enhanced. EU Centres believe that there could be some real benefits from further interaction within the network. This is an aspect that the current Australian Coordinator (ANU in Canberra) should consider carefully and work to address as soon as possible. A couple of EU Centres went further by saying that it would be beneficial for the Initiative as a whole for interaction to go beyond Australia and New Zealand and extend into the APAC region – Singapore, Taiwan, Korea and Japan.

#### ***4.2.11 Links with EU bodies***

#### **To what extent has the Initiative promoted links with equivalent academic bodies within the European Union focusing on EU or transatlantic studies?**

The results collected from the visits to the Centres, the Centres' questionnaires and the online survey suggest that this is an area that is gradually growing, with more exchanges taking place between EU Universities/Institutions and the EU Centres across the globe and with an increasing demand from beneficiaries for internships, summer programmes, EU speakers and visitors, etc. As per the responses to the questionnaires, there is near unanimity among mature Centres that their work has contributed to a great extent to the strengthening of academic cooperation between the EU and their

countries. Almost all mature Centres offer some type of exchange programme with EU Universities and Institutions, and all of them have received visiting EU scholars and practitioners.

The tables below provide an overview of the numbers/dimensions of the different type of activities undertaken by mature and former Centres in this specific area<sup>19</sup>.

From the data provided by the 16 mature Centres that responded to the questionnaire, there were more than 850 fora organised for prominent speakers from EU institutions and EU Member States in the current cycle, with some Centres (Washington DC, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Florida + Miami and Christchurch) more active than others. Overall numbers for the previous cycle are slightly similar.

In the case of former Centres, the number of fora for EU speakers was reduced once EU-funding came to an end.

**Table 6 - Number of fora for prominent speakers from the EU institutions and EU Member States**

<b>Mature Centres</b>	<b>Current cycle</b>	<b>Previous cycle</b>	<b>Initial cycle</b>
Berkeley	15	N/A	N/A
Georgia Tech	14	N/A	N/A
Florida + Miami	49	36	32
Michigan	12	5	5
North Carolina	+110	+100	+80
Pittsburgh	16	19	50
Washington DC	450	400	78
Washington Seattle	16	45	N/A
Wisconsin	75	50	N/A
Carleton	20	25	25
Dalhousie	2	14	N/A
Montreal	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kansai Kobe	3	2	N/A
Tokyo	4	N/A	N/A
Christchurch	40 (10 per year)	32 (8 per year)	N/A
Monash	10	18	N/A
<b>Former Centres</b>	<b>During EU funding</b>	<b>After EU funding</b>	
Indiana	22	2	
Texas Austin	1	0	

Source: Questionnaires completed by mature and former Centres

Mature Centres reported more than 500 exchange programmes organised during the current funding cycle with Universities in the EU and specific institutions. It should be noted that the number of exchange programmes reported are University-wide in some cases and Centre-specific in others. From the data available for previous funding cycles, exchange programmes have registered a gradual increase over the years.

<sup>19</sup> New Centres were not asked to provide details of the current activities/services as it was judged that it would be too early to assess these.

**Table 7 - Number of exchange programmes organised with Universities in the EU and specific institutions**

<b>Mature Centres</b>	<b>Current cycle</b>	<b>Previous cycle</b>	<b>Initial cycle</b>
Berkeley*	59	N/A	N/A
Georgia Tech*	30	N/A	N/A
Florida + Miami	12	N/A	N/A
Michigan*	65	64	64
North Carolina*	119	105	83
Pittsburgh	12	9	6
Washington DC	27	22	12
Washington Seattle	3	3	1
Wisconsin*	+100	+100	N/A
Carleton	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dalhousie	1	2	N/A
Montreal	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kansai Kobe**	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tokyo*	30	N/A	N/A
Christchurch	8	7	N/A
Monash*	60	11	N/A
<b>Former Centres</b>	<b>During EU funding</b>	<b>After EU funding</b>	
Indiana	2	0	
Texas Austin	0	0	

Source: Questionnaires completed by mature and former Centres

\*University-wide exchange programmes

\*\*Member Universities signed individual agreements for exchange programmes. The Centre as such did participate in the organisation of these programmes.

On a related note, as per the data available, nearly 5000 students from mature Centres benefited from exchange programmes organised with Universities in the EU and specific institutions organised during the current funding cycle. As highlighted above, the numbers of students benefited from exchange programmes are University-wide in some cases and Centre-specific in others.

**Table 8 - Number of students benefited from exchange programmes organised with Universities in the EU and specific institutions**

<b>Mature Centres</b>	<b>Current cycle</b>	<b>Previous cycle</b>	<b>Initial cycle</b>
Berkeley*	383	N/A	N/A
Georgia Tech*	75	N/A	N/A
Florida + Miami	N/A	N/A	N/A
Michigan*	N/A	3029	712
North Carolina*	+700	+900	+1130
Pittsburgh	25	17	34
Washington DC	540	486	274
Washington Seattle	21	45	47
Wisconsin*	2956	+2000	N/A

Mature Centres	Current cycle	Previous cycle	Initial cycle
Carleton	25	25	N/A
Dalhousie	1	2	N/A
Montreal	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kansai Kobe**	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tokyo*	30	N/A	N/A
Christchurch	8	7	N/A
Monash*	60	11	N/A
Former Centres	During EU funding	After EU funding	
Indiana	2	0	
Texas Austin	0	0	

Source: Questionnaires completed by mature and former Centres

\*University-wide exchange programmes

\*\*Member Universities signed individual agreements for exchange programmes. The Centre as such did participate in the organisation of these programmes.

According to the online survey results, 38% of respondents have attended fora bringing prominent speakers from the EU or the Member States, 21% have participated from exchange programmes with Universities in the EU and other EU institutions, and 14% have benefited from travel grants for visiting EU scholars and practitioners.

#### 4.2.12 Engagement with other stakeholder groups

##### **Has the programme engaged with other sectors such as industry, NGOs, community group, decision makers in politics and other areas?**

The programme has engaged to some extent with other sectors such as decision makers in politics, industry/business stakeholders, media players and other groups, but external audiences have not been the main focus of the strategy of the majority of the Centres to date hence the effectiveness in reaching out to these groups has been limited in average.

Political leaders and governments, the general public, and to a lesser extent industry and business stakeholders have been the three external audiences that have been considered more important in the strategies of the Centres, but the importance of these groups still ranks significantly lower compared with the importance assigned to graduate and undergraduate students and faculty. Primary and high school students and teachers are beginning to emerge as an important group in the outreach strategies of the Centres, but there are still many Centres where the activities with these groups are limited. Media and opinion formers, think tanks, International Organisations and NGOs are ranked lowest in terms of their strategic importance to the Centres.

The profile of respondents to the online survey confirms the above views, as only one out of every four respondents (26%) represented an external audience group. The broad majority of respondents were related to the University/academic environment.

Creating awareness of the EU among external audiences appears to be currently more complicated in the newer Asian countries. As defined by key staff at EU Centres in South Korea, the Centres have



an important role to play in developing the linkages with the EU and increasing EU awareness and visibility, particularly amongst academics, policy-makers, businessmen and the media. This would imply increasing these audiences' knowledge on European culture, policies and standards regarding e.g. environmental protection, trade law, labour law, etc. Though to a lesser extent, Japan, Singapore and Taiwan are also faced with a similar challenge.

In countries such as the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand where the Initiative is more established, links with external audiences work better where there is a local component that promotes the interaction (e.g. the Washington DC environment supports the fluent interaction between the John Hopkins Consortium and government stakeholders, in the same way as it works for Carleton in Canada and NCRE in New Zealand). Centres should therefore be encouraged to think local, both in terms of the audiences that they could approach and in terms of the topics that are of interest to these audiences.

### 4.3 Questions on the IMPACT of the Initiative

The evaluation examined various aspects of impact, drawing on the evaluative questions below. At Initiative level, these include the added value of the Initiative relative to people-to-people links; the contributions to bilateral cooperation and, the changes in the levels of awareness and understanding of the EU and EU-partner countries' relations. At Centre level, these include the critical mass of activities achieved by individual Centres (deemed necessary to ensure visibility, bring added value, and to foster genuinely new activities) and the impact on the level of awareness and understanding of the EU and EU-partner countries' relations amongst key stakeholders.

#### 4.3.1 Enhanced "people-to-people links"

**How and to what extent has the Initiative demonstrated its potential to contribute towards furthering the goals of cooperation instruments with the partner countries through enhanced "people-to-people links"? How can this contribution be maximised?**

One way of assessing to what extent "people-to-people links" have been enhanced through the EU Centres Initiative is examining the impact it has had so far on EU Centres beneficiaries' motivation to **interact** and **network** with people and institutions in the EU, in other Centres or in their own countries. In this respect, the online survey showed that even though the main motivations beneficiaries had for engaging with the different EU Centres were more related to learning or researching on the EU rather than networking or exploiting business opportunities with it, respondents also stated that participating in the Centres' activities had made them want to travel to, work or study in the EU (82%). This could be taken as evidence that the Initiative might have created a new interest (or enhanced an existing one) related to establishing more personal links with the EU.

In addition to this, seven out of ten also agreed that engaging with the EU Centres had helped them increase their network of contacts in the EU and in their respective countries. However, it should be noted that networking was also one of the areas where beneficiaries saw more scope for improvements. In relation to this, there is a demand for Centres to maintain contact with previous beneficiaries who are currently not attending the Universities and link them to current students or faculty so as to enhance the network of people interested in EU topics. There were also some

requests for providing students with more **contacts** in the EU that could help them find employment there, travel, conduct research, etc. In line with this, the survey also showed that **exchange programmes** are highly valued and that several students and faculty staff would like to see these programmes enhanced with additional resources and information. Beneficiaries also suggested that EU Centres could engage to a greater extent with other departments in the Universities, other Universities in the country and other EU Centres worldwide.

The interviews with students and faculty staff conducted during the visits to the different EU Centres evidenced that being able to engage and interact personally with **EU visitors, scholars, experts, Commission officials**, etc. is highly valued and that it is a means to contributing to cooperation between the EU and partner countries. The study tours to the EU (like the one organised by the Delegation to the US) and the exchange or internship programmes are also viewed very positively. Expanding the **opportunities to study/travel/work in the EU** could further enhance the Initiative's contribution to people-to-people links. Additional funding for these programmes could come both from the Commission and Member States.

The interviews with the EC Delegations engaged in the Initiative also served to confirm that there is still scope to further enhancing the Initiative's contribution to people-to-people links, particularly by strengthening these links beyond the academic and local communities and trying to have a national impact in each of the countries where the Centres are located.

For example, in the **US**, even though EU Centres have been somewhat effective in engaging local authorities, state governments, educators, and –in some cases– the local business community, having a national impact *“is still the 64.000 dollar question”*, according to the Delegation. Annual high profile events involving all Centres in the country could help to achieve this goal. However, as stated by the **Canadian** Delegation, increased funding appears to be a key element to start working in this line.

According to the Delegation in **Japan**, personal networks are deemed as very important and thus it is important to “put a face” to the Initiative that audiences beyond the academic community and students can recognise and identify (e.g. making officials from the Delegation, the EC and Member States' embassies more visible). The Delegation in Japan is already working in this line by trying to engage Member States' embassies, e.g. by inviting them to the events such as the opening of Centres. However, many embassies still do not know much about the Initiative in Japan.

The impact of the EU Centres Initiative in **South Korea** and **Taiwan** has been limited so far given that the programme is still transiting an early phase in both countries. The major impacts to date have been related to teaching (e.g. through the establishment of EU studies programmes) rather than creating/increasing people-to-people links with the EU and other Centres around the world.

In **Australia** and **New Zealand**, the greatest impact on enhancing people-to-people links has been achieved through the Initiative's research component which has increased the links between institutions (e.g. Universities and government) and individuals in Australia and New Zealand and in the EU Member States. These links and interactions come in many forms: exchanges (short and long term), papers, conferences and seminars. It could also be argued that the EU Centres Initiative has actually contributed to increasing the size of the academic community specialising in this area in

Australia and New Zealand, for example where EU researchers have taken up posts in Australian Universities.

In Singapore, the EU Centre hosted its first two visiting fellows from the Europe in 2010. It has also played host to numerous post-graduate / PhD students and scholars passing through Singapore for their research by offering them a desk space, internet access, and access to the libraries and other resources at NTU and NUS. To date, the Centre has organised a one major conference attracting over 60 participants from various Universities, research institutes, foundations from Asia and Europe. The Centre's Director and other members of the academic staff regularly participate in conferences across the EU.

#### ***4.3.2 Increased knowledge and awareness of the EU and of EU-partner countries relations***

**In particular, to what extent has the Initiative contributed to better knowledge of the EU and of EU-partner countries relations on the part of Commission's partners as well as the general public in these countries?**

According to the survey's results, the most evident impact of the EU Centres Initiative across the eight countries has been not only that it has increased the **level of understanding and knowledge** of the EU and its policies but also that it has enhanced beneficiaries' **interest** on the EU, with circa 90% of all respondents that either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that their experience at the EU Centres had helped them develop a greater understanding and knowledge of the EU and its policies (88%) and had made them want to know more about it (87%). In addition to this, more than half of respondents said that if they had not engaged with the EU Centres, they either "probably" (31%) or "definitely" (21%) would not have achieved similar outcomes.

It should be noted that the majority of the survey respondents were graduate students, university teachers or researchers, and undergraduate students, meaning that they had greater chances of engaging with the Centres on campus and benefiting from an increased knowledge and understanding of the EU. That said, the impact on the **general public** (and/or audiences beyond campus) has been more limited. The fact that non-University related stakeholders were scarcely represented among survey respondents may be a signal of the limited access EU Centres have beyond Universities and the wider academic communities.

One of the ways in which the EU Centres can engage with the general public is through the **media and opinion formers**. From the mature Centres that responded to the pre/post visit questionnaire, half said that they had been "fairly effective" in reaching this group, followed by a similar number who thought they had not been very effective. The same trend was registered among new Centres. This is also reflected by the fact that the publication of articles in the media and specific activities targeting journalists and media stakeholders are still two underdeveloped areas, both in mature and new Centres.

The interviews with EU Centres, Delegations, and officials at DG RELEX confirm that the outreach component has been the one with the most limited impact so far. Officials at DG RELEX questioned the extent of the impact of the Centres in terms of outreach, even when Centres are expected to reach out to audiences beyond campus. Officials in this group acknowledge that this task can be

resource-intensive for Universities (particularly in terms of staff). The successive calls for proposals in the different countries have been relatively flexible on the audiences that Centres should prioritise and on the types of activities that could be proposed to attract external stakeholders. There has thus been a tendency of Centres to focus on groups that can be more easily reached, like the business community in Busan or politicians in Washington DC.

In the **US**, it is possible to say that the outreach targeted at audiences beyond campus has been particularly effective in places where Centres have focused on the particular needs and interests of the local community where these are hosted. For example, the EU Centre in Seattle has been able to access businessmen/women by appealing to the business links Seattle had with the EU even before the Centre was constituted. The same happened in Miami-Florida, where the Centre's capacity to focus on the multi-lateral and intersecting interests of the European Union, the United States and the countries of the Caribbean and Central and Latin America brought them access to the local diplomatic and business communities.

In **Canada**, it was the opinion of the Delegation that the Initiative has contributed to a better knowledge of the EU and of the EU-partner country relations primarily among students (and potential students) and, to a lesser extent, among the wider community. Centres' most effective activities with the wider community include events with high schools and with local chambers of commerce.

The new Centres in the Asian countries have had a more limited impact on the general public given that they have focused so far on establishing the Centres and on developing the teaching and research components. This is particularly the case of the **Taiwanese** Centre, whose outreach efforts have not yet extended on networks outside the academic community, but it is expected that impacts on these fronts should be achieved in a longer timeframe. In this line too, interviewees in **South Korea** have highlighted that they still have an important role to play in developing the linkages with the EU and increasing EU awareness, understanding and visibility, particularly among the media, policy-makers, and businessmen/women. The EU Centres in **Japan**, particularly the one in Tokyo currently transiting its second funding cycle, have made progress in developing ties with policy makers and non-profit organisations and in organising a range of activities, demonstrating that they have the potential to have a broader impact on the general public's level of knowledge of the EU in the coming years.

In **Australia**, there was a general view that the EU Centres Initiative is performing adequately with regard to meeting its academic and research objectives but to a lesser extent with the outreach. The main reason cited for this is that outreach is not one of the core functions of a University. At the same time there is evidence that suggests there has been some success with outreach activities. For example, the development of secondary school curriculum aimed at raising awareness of the EU and its role in the world at Monash and the fact that Australian Radio Stations and Newspapers now seek out comment from the Centre on happenings in Europe; recent examples include Euro financial crises and the Australian Share market; Greek financial crisis Columns regularly appear in The Australian Newspaper and the Farmers Weekly (the main conduit to people operating in the Agriculture Sector). Nevertheless this particular Centre has failed to make any significant impact on the business community. The newest EU Centre in Australia – the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) – has particular ambitions to strengthen the outreach side of the Initiative. It promises to further establish and consolidate links into existing Industry Network Groups, facilitate prominent EU

speakers into existing Industry Forums, run professional development workshops for teachers and develop a targeted media and communications strategy for the effective publication and dissemination of information about the activities and outputs of the Centre to different constituencies.

The EU Centre Network in **New Zealand** has certainly contributed to increasing awareness and understanding of the EU among numerous audiences across the country. There are strong links with the New Zealand Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), Research, Science and Technology, and Education. There are also ties with the EU-New Zealand Business Council. A parallel Initiative, FRENZ (Facilitating Research co-operation between Europe and New Zealand) is also managed by the NRCE which means that many critical stakeholders are within the EUCN's circle. A pilot project for developing four modules for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) school curriculum was carried out in 2008 and 2009 and is expected to be extended in the current funding cycle.

The EU Centre in **Singapore** appears to have been particularly successful with its outreach activities to date. The Centre's strategy is to establish itself through outreach. The Centre has organised a significant number of outreach events including lectures, research seminars, workshops and panel discussions involving the audiences from academia, government and business since its launch in 2008. Outreach activities have not only been confined to Singapore. The Centre is also extending its outreach efforts to Southeast Asia Universities and students, and is keen to build up research expertise and knowledge in the area of EU-ASEAN cooperation. The EU Centre has developed an outreach programme specifically aimed at secondary schools and junior colleges – this is aimed at raising some basic awareness of the EU and potentially “wetting” student's appetites for studies related to the EU in the future. It is estimated that up to 20 schools and junior colleges and an estimated 6000 students in the age group of 15 to 17 will benefit from this series of talks and lectures.

**To what extent has the Initiative increased awareness in the countries for the political, economic and cultural importance of the relationship with the EU, especially the increasing scope of EU-partner country relations?**

The online survey with beneficiaries showed that eight out of ten either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their experience at the EU Centres had made them more aware of the political, economic and cultural importance of the relationship between the EU and their countries. These positive results should be analysed taking into account that there is a tendency for EU Centres to focus on the academic activities in which the host Universities are strong at and that the students and other local audiences are interested in. This means that not all Centres might be addressing **all aspects of the EU-partner country relationship** but concentrating on political or economic ones, with certain general neglect of cultural aspects. For example, in **Canada**, it is the view of the Delegation in Ottawa that the Initiative has increased awareness of EU-Canada relations notably in relation to the trade negotiations (CETA) with the Centres capitalising on these to give talks, write papers, promote student interest and research in the area, and provide courses on the subject.

As highlighted before, the more mature the Centre is, the broader the offer; meaning that in the mid or long-term Centres show a tendency towards **widening the issues addressed and the disciplines covered**. In this task, the links of each Centre with the different University departments and professional schools are key as these can help the Centres expand towards new aspects of the EU-

partner country relations, as well as new audiences and interests not only on campus but beyond it. It is positive that, in general, there is strong support to interdisciplinary research and teaching and that this could favour the development of courses and activities that tackle a broader set of aspects of the relations of the EU with the different countries.

Also in relation to further increasing awareness for the political, economic and cultural importance of the relationship with the EU is the fact that there are certain countries where the audiences' attention on this relationship may be challenged by **other growing bilateral relationships**. For example, in the **US**, there is a rising popular view that Asia is becoming more dominant, and that the future key relationship is between China and the US. The interviews with staff at the Delegation in Washington DC confirmed the existence of this view and emphasised that, in this context, the EU Centres Initiative appears as more necessary now than ten years ago. As the interviewees explained, the challenge is about "*competing for attention*". This would be the case in **Canada** too, as staff in some of the Centres highlighted that there is limited interest at the federal and provincial levels and among large North American funding agencies in funding EU studies/issues. The focus in Canada tends to be more on the US and Asia.

In **Japan**, due to geographical and/or political reasons, students generally seem to be more interested in research relations and exchange with China and/or the US. However, according to the EC Delegation in Tokyo, the EU Centres Initiative has contributed to increasing the level of awareness on the importance of the EU-Japan relations. While the relationship between Japan and the EU had gone relatively quiet in the past, the EU Centres Initiative was perceived as having helped to "*re-launch*" this relationship with a lot of new ideas and undertakings. For example, in EUJ-Kansai, the significant increase in the number of visits of high-level European researchers, politicians and diplomats has contributed to stimulate students' interests in EU studies. In this respect, the EU Centres activities focusing on different aspects of EU-Japan relations and on "*putting a face*" to the EU (in terms of a receiving a considerable number of European visitors) could further deepen the impact.

In **South Korea**, even though the EU is the second largest trading partner after China, the EU's lack of awareness and visibility is still high. According to one of the Centres' staff, this situation is not limited to ordinary citizens but to policy-makers, academics, and business people. In this context, the core objective of the Initiative in this country should be to increase EU awareness. This is particularly necessary (and could imply a high pay-off for the EU) within the business community as many small to medium sized companies that trade or want to trade with the EU are not aware and/or understand the EU's trade, labour and environmental policies. Given that the press usually pays relatively little attention to these issues, it is this Centres' understanding that they should be the ones filling the gap.

It is too early to analyse the impact of the Initiative on the level of awareness of EU-**Taiwan** relations; however, it is possible to say that in the coming years there is potential for the Initiative to contribute to the improvement of bilateral relations, not only with the EU but with other countries that are part of the Initiative. The EU Centre in Taiwan has high expectations towards the relations and networking with the EU and other Centres and relevant stakeholders in Asia. In addition to this, the added value of the programme for the EU has to do not only with the opportunity of strengthening the links between the two societies (e.g. through working together on long time shared concerns such as new

kinds of security threats, public health, terrorism, cross-border and crime, climate change and energy) but also with the fact that Taiwan could become a gateway to establishing links with China.

One of the major challenges that EU Centres currently face in **Australia** and **New Zealand** is the fact that there is major interest in the Asian region, and particularly, in China. In this sense the EU faces stiff competition in that Universities are not only targeting their teaching and research activities in this direction but the market to attract students from these parts of the world has increased dramatically. The same is true in the case of **Singapore** where there is a focus on the surrounding region both in terms of studies and research but also attracting students.

### **4.3.3 Contributions to bilateral cooperation**

**Has participation in the Initiative contributed to bilateral cooperation, either positively or negatively? What has motivated partner countries to engage in the Initiative? Has the Initiative provided opportunities or responded to needs not addressed by other programmes?**

The dimension of bilateral cooperation that has been mostly enhanced through the EU Centres Initiative is the **academic** one, with circa 90% of the mature Centres that answered the pre/post visit questionnaire agreeing that they have contributed “to a great extent” to strengthening academic cooperation between the EU and their respective countries. This cooperation has happened mainly through **visiting EU scholars and practitioners** as well as through **exchange programmes** with Universities in the EU and specific institutions, with the majority of Centres stating they have carried out this type of academic cooperation activities with the EU. These activities have also predominated among new Centres. Co-taught courses and other curricular development programmes have not been fully exploited yet among mature or new Centres.

In order to go further than scholarly interaction and cooperation and enhance **other type of links with the EU**, it would be necessary to increase the effectiveness of Centres in reaching audiences beyond campus e.g. the business community and politicians, who could have a more direct impact on the economic and political aspects of bilateral cooperation. Some of the mature Centres in the US have been particularly effective in reaching out to key target groups and in disseminating information on the EU. The Consortium in Washington DC has strong links with US government representatives. Other Centres like Seattle, Miami-Florida and Georgia Tech have been particularly effective in reaching out to the business community. In Miami for example, the local business community supports the Centre through in kind contributions such as providing venues for events and food.

The EU Centres in **Canada** have had some difficulties in reaching out to audiences beyond campus because they are often not sure how to fulfil the outreach-related objectives. However, the Delegation in Ottawa acknowledges that the Canadian Centres have played a role in bringing visibility to the trade negotiations with the EU (e.g. by giving talks and writing papers on the subject) and this is perceived as having contributed to strengthening the relations between the EU and Canada. In words of the Delegation’s staff: at present *“there are relations at every single level and they are being enhanced in every sector – education, standards, intellectual property, youth mobility, public procurement etc.”*

The impact achieved in terms of contributing to bilateral cooperation between the EU and the different partner countries is not yet possible to assess in countries where the Initiative is still at an early stage of development (i.e. Japan, Taiwan and Singapore). The major impacts in these countries have so far been related to being able to establish or expand new/existing EU studies programmes rather than to enhance economic, political, cultural bilateral cooperation with the EU. However, some positive initial impacts are perceived in **Japan**, where the Initiative is seen to have contributed to strengthening the cooperation between people in Japan and the EU through increasing students' knowledge and interest on the EU.

Analysis has also shown that in some respect, the EU Centres Initiative goes beyond the objectives of other programmes. For example, a lot of programmes funded by DG EAC or DG RTD aim to strengthen the cooperation in research between Europe and non-EU countries, enhance the quality of higher education and build partnerships. However, while the EU Centres Initiative shares these objectives, one of its main aims is also to reach out to non-EU stakeholders, such as policy-makers, media, businesses, general public etc. This objective adds a public-diplomacy component to the EU Centres Initiative, which none of the other programmes provide.

In addition, the co-financing arrangement which is part of the EU Centres Initiative is quite exceptional in terms of its scale. Most programmes that inherit co-financing have a 50% - 50% funding share, while the EU Centres Initiative grants 75% of funding by the European Commission as a "start-up" aid for new Centres, with decreasing funds in subsequent funding periods.

### **To what extent do the resources allocated allow Centres to reach a critical mass of activity sufficient to ensure visibility, added value, and foster genuine new activities?**

The number and type of activities varies considerably across Centres. The number of years (or cycles) Centres have been operating greatly influences the possibility of reaching a critical mass of activity that can ensure visibility, added value, and innovation. In this respect, the **number of activities** steadily increases as Centres transit through their different funding cycles. The analysis of the pre/post visit questionnaire showed that those Centres that have been operating for at least three funding cycles (e.g. Washington DC, Seattle, North Carolina and Michigan) have been able to raise the number of courses taught on the EU and EU-partner country relations from circa 79 (in average) in the first cycle to 121 (in average) in the third one, representing a 54% increase. The same trend is present in the research and outreach components, with the number of doctoral students focusing their dissertation research on the EU and EU-partner country relations increasing from 15 (in average) in the first funding cycle to 30 (100%) in the third one. The number of outreach conferences, workshops, briefing sessions, and other information activities organised by mature Centres also increased from 126 (in average) in the first round to 225 (in average) in the third one (78%).

The answers to the pre/post visit questionnaire also proved that the **range of activities** covered by Centres increases steadily over subsequent funding cycles. For example, over the years, there has been an increase in the number of mature Centres that produce textbooks, articles, and briefing papers, as well as Centres that organise events targeting journalists / media and primary / secondary schools.



There are several factors that might explain these trends and that could be taken as example of what would be necessary to promote in other countries with newer Centres to produce similar results. Drawing from the visits to these Centres, as well as the views and opinions of the Delegation in the US, what these Centres share is mainly:

- Continued EU funding for over 9 years
- An intention to stay new and innovative over the years
- A continued and very proactive leadership heavily involved in the design of the Initiative which has looked to forge new alliances with a broad range of departments across campus in order to increase the number and type of activities offered
- A focus on specific audiences reachable at the local level that has resulted in long-standing relationships and a quite stable level of participation
- An appealing and tailored programme of activities for every specific audience addressed that has maintained the attractiveness of the offer
- A very good use of the university' space, location, infrastructure and people so as to maintain the level of activity
- A consistent use of the branding "EU Centres of Excellence" as a "stamp of EU approval" and guarantee of credibility and prestige that has helped in reaching audiences, maintaining university support, and obtaining additional sources of funding so as to continue developing activities

From the answers provided to the pre/post visit questionnaire by former Centres it is also evident that when **EU funding ends**, the number and range of activities decreases considerably. The EU Centre in Indiana, for example, reduced the number of courses taught on the EU and EU-partner country relations from 18 to 9 when it stopped receiving the Commission's funds. The production of textbooks, articles, and briefing papers was also reduced as well as the number of doctoral students focusing their dissertation research on the EU and EU-partner country relations and the number of outreach conferences, workshops, briefing sessions, and other information activities organised. The activities that suffered the greatest cuts were academic research conferences; speakers and visitors from the EU; events targeted to journalists / media and primary / secondary schools; and the number of students benefiting from exchange programmes organised with universities in the EU. In Australia, the loss of activities was even greater, with the EU Centre at La Trobe University discontinuing the majority of the activities it had organised while it was being funded by the EU.

All in all, it appears to be evident that, in the longer term, the **teaching** component is the one with the greatest chances to continue and grow, even without EU funding. Some of the interviewees explained this is because it is closely linked with students' demands and interests as well as with the core business of Universities. In the same line, the **research** component is likely to continue and grow as far as there are students and/or faculty interested in conducting research on the EU and travelling abroad. The **outreach** element is usually the most affected by grant reductions, given that it is not the priority of Universities to reach audiences beyond campus.

#### **4.4 Questions on the SUSTAINABILITY of the programme**

The overall objective of this section is to examine whether the flow of benefits to the beneficiaries, i.e. the Centres' clientele, and to society generally, is likely to continue in the future. To reach a

conclusion, the evidence collected will be analysed and examined mainly at Centre and Initiative levels, but also at Network level. Conclusions will be drawn relating to the extent to which the Initiative is sustainable in the long term, whether Centres are appropriately embedded in their host institutions, whether Centres will be able to maintain the momentum of the Initiative if EU funding ended, whether sustainability is an appropriate criterion for measuring the success of the Centres, and if the Centres should be allowed to make a profit to ensure their long term sustainability.

#### **4.4.1 Longer term sustainability**

##### **Is the Initiative sustainable in the longer term and if not, why not and what can be done to enable it to become sustainable?**

There is strong agreement among all Centres that there are three main factors that can ensure their sustainability in the coming years. These are: maintaining the European Commission's support; maintaining the host Universities' support; and ensuring enthusiastic and committed Managers, Directors and staff. Even though the three factors are judged to be a necessary combination for enabling the sustainability of the Centres, guaranteeing continuous financial support from the Commission is seen however as a pre-requisite for the continuous buy-in from the host Universities. The majority of the mature Centres that are currently on a 50-50 funding scheme have gone as far as to say that the Universities that host them will not reapply to the EU Centres' grant in the future if Commission funding were to be further reduced from the current levels. In other words, Universities will not commit funds without the European Commission grant, and other funding sources are reluctant to supplant European Commission funding as they see the activities of the Centres as being focused on, and serving the interests of, the EU.

Other factors such as maintaining and increasing the visibility of the Centres in the host Universities and ensuring that the Centres have a distinct location and are seen as individual entities inside the Universities are considered to be important as well, but somehow these two factors are seen to feed on the Universities' support element.

There are some Centres that have been able to secure grants provided by third parties, similar to that provided by the Commission (e.g. grants provided by federal governments in the US and Canada) but the bottom line is that these alternative sources of funding do not have the same goals and objectives as the EU Centres' grant, so even if additional funding is available in some cases, EU funding continues to be very important for achieving the objectives of the Centres.

Gaining financial independence through tuition fees and/or alumni contributions is definitely not considered to be a viable option among Centres for securing their sustainability. In particular, alumni contributions for the Centres are judged to be unlikely for a number of reasons. To begin with, Centres tend to have less appeal to graduates than their home departments (e.g. Political Science, History, Sociology, etc.). Relatedly, the fact that the Centres do not offer any terminal degrees also reduces alumni loyalty. Even if the availability of small scholarships for students was considered by many to have acted as seed money, EU Centres' grants compete with those of other programmes. In some cases stipends provided by other programmes cover all of a student's costs for a year, promoting a stronger sense of student loyalty to the competing Schools or Departments.

Long-term sustainability of the EU Centres Initiative is thus deemed to be largely contingent upon the mutual interests of both the EU and the host Universities in promoting the educational, research and outreach goals that reflect the purpose and fundamental missions of both organisations. The viability and relevance of the Initiative requires in addition extraordinary commitment from the Centres' leadership and staff and from the staff of the host Universities as well as the financial and administrative support from the EU.

#### ***4.4.2 The relation between the Centres and the host academic structures***

##### **To what extent are the EU Centres embedded in the academic structures that house them?**

Centres are embedded to varying degrees in the academic structures that house them, but as a general rule Centres that are more established within their host Universities and that receive more support from the Universities' management and administrative structures are more successful in their activities and have more chances to consolidate themselves more solidly than those who lack this support.

It could be said that mature Centres in countries that have been in the Initiative for a long time now are generally well embedded in their host Universities and in the specific Institutes that house them within the Universities. Such is the case of Pittsburgh, Michigan, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Florida-Miami, Berkeley, Washington Seattle and Washington DC in the United States; Carleton, Toronto, Montreal and Dalhousie in Canada; Monash, ANU and Melbourne in Australia; and Christchurch in New Zealand. Supportive host Universities in this group all appear to share an outward looking perspective and to have a special interest in the development of international curricula, with strong pre-existing European Centres/Institutes. Centres are highly regarded by the Universities in this group as they are considered to bring credibility to the Universities' international offers. The majority of Centres in this group are set in an established Institute/School within their host University which reaffirms their position as they are more likely to be supported and sustained in the longer term. It should be highlighted however that for the majority of these Centres, visibility and support within their Universities have been the gradual results of internal processes that took time to materialise. Centres arrive at this stage of maturity and consolidation usually after two, and certainly three, tranches of funding.

The experience of newer Centres in countries that are more recent newcomers to the Initiative is more variable. In Japan, EU Institutes have so far impacted heavily in their host Universities but the challenge in the long-term is working towards achieving internal visibility and towards identifying complementarities with other Departments/Institutes so that the initial impact becomes sustainable in time. Host Universities in Japan all appear to have the same outward looking perspective as their counterparts in other countries, so the activities of the Centres would be in line with their strategies. It remains to be seen if the Centres established as Consortia will face difficulties when attempting to consolidate their support among partner Universities.

The experience in South Korea is relatively similar to that of Japan, but the main difference is that the three Centres have received support not only from their host Universities but also from partner Institutions, which in some cases have been significant in terms of funding. In particular, the EU Centre at Pusan National University received a substantial amount of funding from the Busan

Metropolitan City, with the associated risk that demands from this local partner could divert the Centre from its programme and activities. In South Korea, the interaction between host Universities and partner Institutions should be monitored on a regular basis.

#### 4.4.3 Sustainability of the Initiative in a scenario with no EU funding

##### **Will Centres be able to maintain the momentum of the Initiative when EU funding ends and if not, why not?**

There is strong concern among all Centres – whether mature or new, and irrespective of any country/regional differences – that a potential decrease in the levels of EU funding below the 50% co-financing threshold that is currently being offered to mature Centres in the US and Canada would be highly detrimental to the activities of the Centres and the Initiative as such. There is the same sense among EU Centres in Australia and New Zealand that can currently have the scope to apply for up to 75% of Commission co-financing. The visibility and impact of the Centres would be significantly reduced and the achievement that the Initiative has accomplished to date would lose momentum.

With reduced EU funding, Centres highlight that it would be very difficult to leverage comparable internal University funds. Other potential sponsors (i.e. private or public) would provide only limited funds, or push the Centres to engage in projects less directly focused on the EU. Many Centres across the board agree that other sources of funding with the same goals as those of the EU Centres Initiative are not readily available. The bottom line is that teaching and research would be sustainable at a more modest scale but the outreach component would be the first to be significantly downscaled in most cases. Without the EU grant, Centres may not have the support of Universities or the necessary human resources to conduct outreach activities. The teaching component would most likely continue because the courses, certificates, minors and majors have been added already to the Universities' books. The research component would also continue as long as there is a faculty interested on EU-related topics. As one Centre respondent in the US clearly pictured: *“Universities see their mission as teaching and research; outreach is a benefit few can afford. Few Universities will support an EU Centre in its mission beyond teaching and research, in particular if there is no external funding for the outreach. Inevitably it is the outreach that will be the first to suffer.”*

The feedback obtained from former Centres no longer funded by the Commission supports the above views to some extent, but it is interesting to see that two former Centres in the US (Texas A&M and Indiana) have been actively seeking to maintain some of the outreach efforts, and have succeeded so far – at least in the short to medium term.

The EUCE at the **Maxwell School of Syracuse University** was funded for three cycles. The last funding cycle was 2005-2008. With the demise of EU funding, and without the prestige of the EUCE, the Centre at Syracuse University has not been able to attract additional funding to support the types of activities which were possible during the years it received the EUCE grant. The Centre has sought to continue the types of activities which existed during the EUCE grant years. However, absent that funding, the number and types of events has declined. EUCE funding was a definite factor in achieving a critical mass. One of the great benefits of the grant is that its parameters of types of activities that can be funded are different than those provided by US funding sources. Thus the combined grants were able to leverage a broader range of activities and events than either type of

grant individually. In addition, the discontinuity of the brand, of being a European Union Center of Excellence, is a substantial loss.

The **Texas A&M University** received funding from the EU for two successive funding cycles, from 2001 to 2008. It was not successful in its bid for a third grant in 2008, but did receive a 13-month outreach grant for 2008-09 (“Getting to know Europe”). Loss of EU funds and the EUCE moniker have made it difficult to keep the strategies and programmes in place. The addition of the outreach grant helped alleviate shortfalls, but programmes had to be altered. Programme staff noted that it takes about three-years to plant the seed and let programmes grow and mature. They spent most of the decade planting these seeds and building the programme, only to have funding stop. The Centre is providing more in-kind resources, but the lack of funding has modified the relationship with other programmes/departments on campus. Where the EUCE would have initiated many projects, they now follow. It mostly hurts their ability to set an agenda. Funding aside, a bigger blow was losing the EUCE status of “excellence”. The status as an EUCE helped them gain access to people and organisations. But that has been stripped. They also feel frustrated that they aren’t considered part of the network of EUCES anymore. They are of the opinion that they have much to add to the conversation and can provide useful information.

The **University of Texas** EUCE officially terminated its EUCE grant in August 2009, one year after it first began its operations in September 2008. The Centre was one of the new recipients of EU funding for the 2008-2011 grant cycle. Given that the EUCE lost institutional support from the host University, there have been no attempts on behalf of the University of Texas to search for other funds since the termination of the EU grant. It is the opinion of the former management of this Centre that EU Centres in the US cannot become sustainable without EU funding. Very few American universities in connected cities have got funding from large donors from European origin or with a very strong EU connection. In the heartland –including places such as Texas, Oklahoma, and even California to name some– it does not work like this at all, and alternative sources of funding are much more difficult to obtain.

The EUCE at **Indiana University** received EU funding for one cycle, between 2005 and 2008, but the grant was not renewed for the current cycle. According to the management, the Centre is sustainable in the near future (3-5 years), but without funding from the EU, they have had to refocus their activities. Indiana University is able to maintain the current level of support for academic programmes such as classes without EUCE support. However, the EU Centre was forced to cut faculty and student support, especially research, training, and course development. In addition, the EU Centre reduced its support for overseas study programmes in the EU. Without additional support, it is unlikely that the EU Centre will be able to restore these activities. The EU Centre has instead refocused its limited resources on outreach activities that build a greater awareness of the EU in the region, which build capacity but are not sustainable since they do not produce revenue for the EU Centre.

The **La Trobe** EU Centre was established in partnership with Macquarie University in 2006. The EU Centre was based on expertise in history exposing undergraduate students to contemporary issues in the EU. The focus was to develop a series of courses from which undergraduate students could build a major sequence within the BA degree. This curriculum would also be offered by the Network of Universities with at least one University in each State of Australia. The Centre was funded for 42

months in 2006 with a total budget of EUR 1.23 Million (a EUR 600,000 contribution from the European Commission, and the remainder split between La Trobe and Macquarie Universities). La Trobe failed to secure a second cycle of DG RELEX funding in 2009 but was able to secure some funding from the EU Delegation. This funding has sustained the EU undergraduate courses offered to all universities in the Regional Network, at least in the short term. However new sources of funding will have to be found if the undergraduate courses are to be implemented across the entire Network.

#### **4.4.4 Sustainability as a criterion for measuring success**

##### **Is sustainability an appropriate criterion for measuring the success of the EU Centres? Would another criterion be more appropriate?**

Sustainability remains an important criterion for measuring the success of the EU Centres as long as the equation foresees the continuation of core funding coming from the EU, be it from DG RELEX or a new funding model with funds coming from alternative EU sources. If sustainability means significantly reduced funding from the EU (lower than the current 50% threshold for mature Centres in the US, Canada and Australia and New Zealand), the shared opinion is that it is not a viable criterion for measuring the success of the Centres.

If the Initiative wants to maintain its current objectives and build on its achievements to date, it is not realistic to expect EU Centres to become fully sustainable. There is an inherent risk that the Centres could lose their focus on the EU and cease outreach and public diplomacy activities, in the quest to become sustainable. Alternative sources of funding for the Centres may require shifts in programming or activities that may divert the original objectives of the Centres. In the long run, the results could be that some of the Centres achieve sustainability but to the detriment of what the EU Centres Initiative is currently trying to achieve.

In the US, there was a discussion around the need to rethink the principle of degressivity and the requirement for matching funds. The example of the Title VI National Resource Centre Programme was provided in the context of the discussion. The Title VI grant supports National Resource Centres, which would be the counterparts to the EU Centres, through a competitive process but does not require the host institutions to put up a certain percentage of cost-share/matching funds. Institutions remain competitive by the amount of "institutional support" they claim in their proposals, but there is no need to provide a given amount of matching funds. In most cases, these National Resource Centres are not meant to become sustainable on their own. In light of the particular characteristics of the North American University system, self-sustainability is not meant to happen. In this context, if EU funding were to go lower down the 50% threshold, few Universities would support the EU Centres in their mission beyond teaching and research. Outreach would be the first to suffer.

#### **4.4.5 Feasibility of third party funding**

##### **Is it realistic to expect Centres to attract third party funding to continue their activities?**

Even if difficult, third party funding has been/is available for some Centres. To a great extent, funds provided by third parties that have been secured by some of the Centres are tied to Commission funding. In other words, it is the funding and support provided by the Commission to the Initiative that has attracted money from other sources, be it local governments, private sector stakeholders, Think Tanks and foundations, International Organisations and individual donors. If Commission funding were reduced or discontinued, it is the shared opinion of many Centres that support from host Universities would be withdrawn and third party funding would be very difficult to maintain.

The table below provides the current levels of co-funding percentages that the Centres receive from the Commission and other sources, as reported in the questionnaires completed by the Centres. In the case of mature Centres, the percentages below reflect that except for a few cases where funding appears to be more diversified (North Carolina, Washington DC, Wisconsin and Monash to some extent as well), the majority of the Centres that have been in operations for more than one funding cycle continue to be highly dependent on the funding provided by the Commission and by their host Universities.

The discussion that took place during the visit to Pittsburgh may be representative of the current difficulties that the majority of Centres in the US and probably Canada are facing. As highlighted by the management in Pittsburgh, the considerable reductions in funding from both public and private sources in recent years have increased internal competition for financial support within the Universities. On top of the recent cuts, funding to Europe from the Federal Government has usually been small as there are other priority regions that the country is concerned about. Europe is perceived as a friend and the US government is more inclined to fund countries and regions that are more problematic. The business community is not naturally inclined to fund EU programmes but is more likely to give money to the hard sciences. Individual donors with links to Europe are generally more prone to give money for activities related to specific countries in Europe, but nobody gets enamoured of the EU. EU studies is thus defined as a “stepchild” because it does not fit in any of the funding parameters.

The situation of new Centres in South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan reflect an incipient success in obtaining external funds from different stakeholders, including governments, private sector, international organisations, Think Tanks and tuition fees. This diversification may also be a signal of lower levels of support in these countries from host Universities, which would lead Centres to look for alternative funding to match the Commission’s grant.

**Table 9 – Current sources and levels of co-funding of the Centres (in percentages %)**

Mature Centres	EC	Host Univ.	Ind. Donors	Govts.	Foundations	Private sector	Intl. Orgs	Think Tanks	Tuition Fees	Alumni
Berkeley	71-80	11-20								
Georgia Tech	71-80	21-30								
Florida/ Miami	41-50	41-50								
Michigan	41-50	41-50								
N.Carolina	41-50	21-30		11-20						
Pittsburgh	41-50	51-60								
Wash. DC	21-30			1-10	41-50	11-20				
Wash. Seattle	41-50	41-50								
Wisconsin	41-50	11-20		1-10			1-10			
Carleton	41-50	41-50		1-10*						
Dalhousie	41-50	41-50								
Montreal	41-50	41-50								
Kansai Kobe	71-80	21-30								
Tokyo	71-80	21-30								
Christchurch	71-80			1-10		1-10			11-20	
Monash	41-50	21-30		11-20					1-10	
New Centres	EC	Host Univ.	Ind. Donors	Govts.	Foundations	Private sector	Intl. Orgs	Think Tanks	Tuition Fees	Alumni



Colorado**	71-80	21-30								
York	21-30	71-80								
Tokyo Waseda	51-60	41-50								
Melbourne	61-70	31-40								
Seoul Yonsei	51-60	11-20		1-10		1-10	1-10	1-10	1-10	
Pusan	51-60	21-30		21-30						
Singapore	71-80	21-30				1-10		1-10		
Taipei	71-80	11-20		1-10		1-10		1-10	1-10	

Source: Questionnaires completed by mature and new Centres

\*Two percent provided by Embassies for Carleton

\*\* The EU Centre at Boulder has received additional funds from Western Union that have been used to augment their programming and operations.

#### 4.4.6 Centres as profit-makers

#### Should the Centre be allowed to make a profit in order to ensure their long term sustainability?

It might be helpful to have some prospect of “making a profit” from EU grant related activities in order to assist long term sustainability, but public Universities might need to set up a separate entity for this purpose, given the legal requirements associated with the Universities’ general non-profit status. Even if the idea is in theory attractive, host Universities’ rules are in general complicated when it comes to organising such activities for a profit, in addition to the fact that it would be necessary to hire someone to do the accounts, so it is not clear if the benefits of such a move would outnumber the costs.

The main issue seems to be related to the potential difficulties that Universities would have to approve and implement such a move. Allowing the EU Centres to make a profit is not seen as a solution in many cases as this would run counter to the culture of the host Universities.

#### 4.5 Questions on the EFFICIENCY of the programme

The efficiency review looks at the degree to which inputs have been transformed into outputs and includes an analysis of cost-effectiveness and value for money. For the purposes of this evaluation, the team will examine whether the level and type of financial support provided by the Commission for the Initiative is appropriate and sufficient to achieve Initiative objectives. Comparisons will be made between Centres and partner countries to establish how far the different activities individually and collectively, are a cost-effective means of achieving Initiative objectives. Additionally, the evaluation will examine whether the same results could have been achieved at lower costs; or whether there might have been different, more appropriate ways of achieving the same results.

##### 4.5.1 Cost-effectiveness of the different activities

#### How far are the different activities, individually and collectively, a cost-effective means of achieving Initiative objectives?

There is a shared perception among Commission interviewees in Brussels and in the Delegations to the countries that have been part of the Initiative for a longer period of time that the different activities,

both individually and collectively, have been a cost-effective means of achieving the stated objectives. Generally speaking, the money allocated to the Centres across the board was spent as it was thought and agreed to be spent. In addition, the details/numbers of the different activities undertaken by the Centres – be them academic, research or outreach activities – have generally reflected increases in time. Thus, even when Commission funding for the mature Centres has decreased, the current cycle shows increases in the numbers of courses offered, numbers of textbooks produced, numbers of conferences organised, numbers of speakers from the EU, numbers of events with high schools, numbers of exchange programmes organised and numbers of students benefited from those programmes. With a minimum guaranteed flow of EC funding, many of the mature EU Centres have demonstrated that they are in a position to go beyond the realms of business as usual and/or having both a wider and deeper impact on teaching, research and outreach

According to the EU Delegation to the US, the amount of work conducted by the EU Centres vis-à-vis the cost of the programme annually proves that Centres are adding real value to the Initiative. In their opinion, EUCE's staff are "*extremely dedicated*" and allocate a lot of time to the programme, beyond what is included in grant agreements.

The perception in Canada is very much in line with the above views. The Centres were found to have fulfilled their teaching objective in particular as there is an increasing number of students studying EU affairs and courses offered at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The Centres were also seen to have added to the Delegation's public diplomacy work in a new and innovative way, but also to have filled a gap that the Delegation cannot due to resource constraints. Particular mention was made of the internet activities undertaken by certain Centres for outreach which were perceived as new and innovative. Furthermore, the Delegation does not produce papers on relevant issues and does not have the resources to organise high-level conferences on specific topics.

In Australia and New Zealand, in many cases individuals responsible for and /or involved in actions have gone "beyond the call of duty" by putting in additional time and effort. Looking at this from an efficiency perspective, the EU Centres really benefit from this extra effort and dedication and, in this context, the Commission gets additional value for money.

In Japan, even when the Initiative has not yet fully consolidated, the Delegation believes that the Initiative provides good value for money. Average Commission funding for each Institute amounts to 1 million Euros per funding cycle, but the EC benefits tremendously from the Initiative, i.e. in terms of contacts, research activities and events.

The situation in countries that have joined the Initiative more recently is different in that it takes time for the activities of the Centres to transform into real impacts. The first round of funding is considered to be mainly focused on embedding the Centres and their programmes into the culture of the host Universities and local stakeholders, but it is only in the second round of funding that the Centres can show clearer value for money in their activities.

It should be noted that despite the differences between mature and newcomer countries and Centres, there is the perception among many of the Centres that the EC "*gets a lot of value for money*" particularly because it only covers a small portion of indirect costs (7%). The issue of indirect costs has been raised with certain uneasiness by the administrative staff at some of the host Universities,

who have highlighted differences with other non-EU grants that foresee a much higher level of indirect costs, usually around 60%. In general and as shown in the table below, the fixed staff costs and the fixed administrative and reporting costs of mature Centres absorb between 25 and 60 percent of the total resources available. In the case of new Centres, the proportion can be even higher, with staff and administrative costs exceeding in some cases 70 percent of the total resources.

**Table 10 - Proportion of the total resources available absorbed by the different activities in the current funding cycle (in percentages %s)**

Mature Centres	Academic Activities	Outreach Activities	Academic Exchanges with the EU	Cooperation with other Centres	Fixed Staff Costs	Fixed Admin & Reporting Costs
Berkeley	48	11	6	3	17	15
Georgia Tech	12	17	44	1	26	0
Florida + Miami	30	5	10	5	30	20
Michigan	68	2	0	0	30	<1
North Carolina	40	15	15	5	20	5
Pittsburgh	49	4	23	0	24	0
Washington DC	31	27	3	1	35	3
Washington Seattle	25	20	5	10	40	0
Wisconsin	20	10	5	5	60	0
Carleton	26	21	15	12	22	4
Dalhousie	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Montreal	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kansai Kobe	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tokyo	13	28	0	3	53	3
Christchurch	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Monash	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Centres	Academic Activities	Outreach Activities	Academic Exchanges with the EU	Cooperation with other Centres	Fixed Staff Costs	Fixed Admin and Reporting Costs
Colorado	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
York	50	26	5	2	17	0
Tokyo–Waseda	21	17	14	3	42	3
Melbourne	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Seoul Yonsei	25	25	14	7	20	9
Pusan	24	20	31	2	21	2
Singapore	7	10	1	2	70	10
Taipei	30	30	10	10	15	5

Source: Questionnaires completed by mature and new Centres

#### 4.5.2 Degree of success in attracting co-financing

**How successful have Centres been in attracting co-financing for their activities?**

The majority of Centres have succeeded in securing co-financing for their activities from their host Universities. University support for mature Centres in the US and Canada generally fluctuates around 50%, the so called matching funds. There are some Centres like North Carolina, Wisconsin and Washington DC that have succeeded in attracting other sources of funding for their activities, so University and Commission financial support are usually lower in these cases. North Carolina for example, receives funds from the Commission (41-50%), the US government (11-20%)<sup>20</sup>, and direct University support (21-30). The Washington DC Consortium receives funds from the Commission (21-30%), which it complements with government funds (1-10%), money from the private sector (11-20%) and money from foreign foundations and governments (41-50%). The EUCE at Wisconsin has also succeeded in diversifying its funding sources, with 41-50% coming from the Commission; 1-10% provided by the US government, 11-20% of funds coming from the host University and the remaining 1-10% from International Organisations. All three Centres highlight that it has been fairly to very difficult to obtain these alternative funding sources and that it will be equally fairly to very difficult to maintain them in the future. So even Centres that have succeeded in securing co-financing for their activities have not found it easy and do not have a guarantee that they will be able to sustain the alternative funding in the future.

As per the co-financing percentages provided by the new Centres, there has surprisingly been some capacity to attract funds from sources other than the Commission and direct University support, which augur for an interesting potential in countries like South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. Commission financing fluctuates between 71-80% levels in Taipei and Singapore, to 51-70% in Pusan, Yonsei, Waseda and Melbourne, and goes down to 28% in the case of York, in Canada. Varying levels of funding from local governments, private sector, foundations and Think Tanks have been secured in Taipei, Pusan and Yonsei. The Centre at Yonsei has also managed to obtain funds from International Organisations and tuition fees. In addition, Universities have stretched in some cases (i.e. York and Waseda), providing higher levels of funding than what would be required for new Centres.

In general, Centres in the Asian countries are more positive about the prospect of attracting leveraging funds for their activities. They have not found it very difficult to obtain some of these external funds, and do not consider that securing them in the future will be necessarily complicated. The particularly negative views observed in the US and Canada, which contrast with the opinions of the new Asian Centres, may be partly explained by the 2008-9 financial collapse which hit US and Canadian colleges and Universities quite severely. This is mostly true of public Universities for which state and local support remains central to their ability to provide broad educational services. For the years to come, competing issues, international relationships and other regional Initiatives may lead to reassessments at the Universities' higher managements as budgets are severely squeezed. The financial uncertainties and budget constraints are certainly affecting the leadership of the Centres in these countries.

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<sup>20</sup> The EUCE at UNC has a Title VI National Resource Center and a FLAS grant, both from the US Department of Education.

#### **4.5.3 Level and type of Commission financial support for each country**

**For each country, is the level and type of financial support provided by the Commission for the Initiative appropriate and sufficient to achieve Initiative objectives?**

The level and type of financial support provided by the Commission seems to be appropriate and sufficient to achieve the objectives of the Initiative at an overall level. In addition and probably as importantly, being awarded an EU Centres grant is perceived as having a non-financial benefit in terms of the prestige that it brings. Commission funding thus has the capacity to act as seed money, mainly by attracting other sources of funding that are pulled towards the Initiative.

There are divergent views in the different countries, and in particular there are specific requests in some countries for additional support to expand the Initiative, but it is the view of the evaluation team that the Initiative's gradual disembarking in new countries has been a sensible strategy so far.

In the US, the Delegation and the Centres are of the opinion that the current number of Centres (10+) and the financial support provided to each Centre are appropriate. The current 50-50 scheme for mature Centre is judged to be suitable to allow the Centres to reach a critical mass of activity. There is however a firm consensus that there is no margin to lower the Commission's contribution further than the 50% funding threshold. If the Commission decided to go further down this line, it would be extremely difficult to convince host Universities to contribute with higher matching funds. Moreover, knowing that Commission funding could go below 50% makes the programme less attractive for new applicants too. There are some interviewees that question the disparity in the funding per country, and the fact that some Centres in other countries that are new to the Initiative receive four times as much money as mature Centres in the US that have a wider potential to make an impact on the target audiences and EU-country relations.

The level and type of financial support is also judged by respondents in Canada to have been appropriate to date. With three Centres operating since the outset of the programme, one Centre undergoing its second cycle, and a new Centre with good future prospects, the Initiative is highly visible and well consolidated, all of which speaks well of the support provided by the Commission. As per discussions with the Delegation, it was felt that there could be scope to establish three to four more Centres in the centre of Canada (the prairies) and the north in particular. No proposals were received in previous calls from these two geographical areas, which would lead to think that there may be less of an interest and awareness of the EU up north and in the prairies. These were also areas where RELEX funding in general was lacking. In line with the views of respondents in the US, a potential reduction of EU funding to less than 50% would be highly detrimental to the Initiative in the country. Universities would not renew their support under a reduced funding scenario which would leave the Initiative in a critical situation.

With regard to the situation in Australia and New Zealand there were no complaints received about the current level of EU funding on offer for EU Centres. There were also no gripes raised with the current levels of co-financing required (minimum of 25%) and nor were there any significant issues with the duration of the grant agreements. In terms of the number of Centres in Australia and New Zealand, the general consensus was that the region could benefit from one additional Centre.

Over and above funding, it should be noted that Australian and NZ Universities awarded funding to establish their Centres believe there is real benefit in being associated with the European Union – in terms of credibility and kudos. The senior management at Universities and those who manage the EU Centres themselves have a particularly positive view of this association. The fact that the funding comes from the EU is perceived to raise the profile and credibility of the intervention. It is also considered prestigious for the University. The fact that universities take this view is a real strength and bodes well for the sustainability of the Initiative. Additionally, EU branding of the Centre provides a quality endorsement which is useful in attracting alternative funds from other sources such as Jean Monet Chairs and EU Framework Programmes.

The Initiative in Japan has met with more challenges than has been the case in its counterpart countries, partly as a consequence of the cultural differences between Japan and the EU and the difficulties faced by Japanese Universities to abide to some of the requirements of the Initiative, in particular the outreach component. The Delegation has so far done a very good job in bridging these difficulties by providing continuous support to the EU Institutes. This has also been made easier by the deconcentration policy that has placed the day to day management of the Initiative in Japan in hands of the Delegation.

The number of EU Centres and their geographical distribution in Japan were perceived as needing to be improved. In the 2008-round of the Initiative, the Delegation tried to incentivise the development of one institute outside the Tokyo area, but none of the applications provided a successful candidate. Tokyo is the political as well as international centre of the country. The Universities outside Tokyo have difficulties applying for the EC's grant as they cannot provide outreach activities and hence cannot match the tendering requirements. In addition, at the Universities outside Tokyo there seems to be only little interest in and understanding of the European Union.

The Delegation highlighted that it would benefit from more human resources as well as more financial means to run the Initiative in Japan. If a fourth EU Institute were recruited, the management of the Initiative would be a big task to take on for the members of staff that the Delegation has at the moment.<sup>21</sup>

The level and type of Commission's financial support in South Korea appears to be adequate. The Initiative is still relatively new in this country, with only the Centre at Seoul National University having completed a full cycle, and with two Centres recently launched. The main issue in South Korea seems to be the need for more regular guidance and monitoring of the activities of the Centres and of the networking between them, as was and currently is still the case in Japan. The Delegation in South Korea does not have strong links with the Centres, in part because the Initiative in this country is managed centrally from Brussels. A more active role from a local Commission player – be it the Delegation in South Korea or even the Delegation in Japan – should be envisaged to provide a stronger strategic direction to the work of the Centres.

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<sup>21</sup> At the time this report has been drafted, a grant agreement was signed with Kyushu University for the establishment of a 4th EUIJ.

With only one Centre established in each country, Taiwan and Singapore are still at very early stages of development to judge the level and type of financial support provided by the Commission. The Centres did not voice any particular concerns in terms of the current funding levels, but there was perceived a concern about the longer-term funding plans of the Commission.

There is scope in all the newcomer countries to the Initiative, including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, to further create awareness of the Initiative in the candidate Universities and the wider academic communities. In general, the calls for proposals have not met with many candidates and the Commission is finding it hard to expand the Initiative beyond the capital cities. The EU Delegation to Japan has been active in this field, and it is believed that there is scope for the other Delegations – in the case of Taiwan the Economic and Trade Office – to organise visits and other activities to introduce the Initiative to potential candidates in these countries.

#### **4.5.4 Time scale of the grant periods**

**Is a grant period of 3 years the optimum time scale to achieve the objectives of the Initiative more effectively? Or is a 4 years scale more efficient?**

Opinions are divided in relation to what the optimum length of the grant periods should be.

According to the mature Centres in the US and Australia, a three year funding cycle is just about right. It is long enough to provide a manageable planning horizon and to provide a level of stability based on assured financial resources. At the same time it is short enough to take advantage of emerging issues and events and allow for a change in direction of emphasis should such a change be needed. Centres in this group include Washington DC, Florida/Miami, Michigan, Pittsburgh and Monash.

For the Centres in Canada and in the rest of the countries, a four year funding period is seen as more appropriate. In Canada in particular, it was agreed by the Delegation and all the Centres that lengthening the grant period would help align the Centres and their activities with the academic system of four years. A longer funding cycle would also benefit increased cooperation and networking, as the Centres get competitive leading up to the grant competition every three years. Another advantage of extending the funding cycles from three to four years is that it would provide more time for forming new funding arrangements with other parties, which takes time, involves a greater number of stakeholders, represents a greater administrative burden and is necessary as a result of the principle of degressivity. Moreover, it is at the half-way mark of the funding period that the Centres need to start thinking about the next funding cycle. Centres in Canada also highlighted that the three year period is financially more problematic due to the length of time it takes for the funding to “kick in”.

In the case of Japan, it was highlighted by the Delegation that the Japanese culture relies on long-term commitment and trust. Thus, in case a Centre loses the Commission’s financial support after a funding cycle, this is perceived as breaching the confidence the Centre might have developed towards the Initiative and the Commission. Only the guarantee of long-term commitment will incentivise Universities to apply for a grant from the EC. In this context, four years is seen to be a more appropriate time period than three years.

New Centres in South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore are also more supportive of a four year cycle, at least at these recent stages of development of their projects. The preparation of proposals and the reporting requirements are very challenging and time-consuming at the outset; allowing more time between cycles would therefore result in a better focus on the projects underway.

With the exception of Centres in Canada, there seems to be a tendency for mature Centres in some of the pioneer countries (e.g. the US and Australia) to be satisfied with the three year grant period, whereas new Centres in the countries that joined more recently, but also the majority of Centres in Canada, are more likely to support longer funding cycles.

#### **4.5.5 Division of activities**

**Is the division of activities (i.e. academic/outreach/research/mobility etc.) well structured? Is it useful to allocate a minimum/maximum percentage to all type of activities in a call?**

As reflected in Table 10 above, the teaching and research components of the Initiative (integrated under “academic activities” in the table) tend to have a significantly greater share of the total resources of some of the Centres than the outreach component. This is the case for Centres like Berkeley, Georgia Tech, Florida/Miami, Michigan, North Carolina and York.

There are other Centres that appear to have more of a natural inclination towards outreach, either because they are centrally located and thus enjoy access to key government and political circles (e.g. Washington DC in the US or Carleton in Canada), or because they have developed ties with local audiences that have a particular interest in the EU (i.e. Washington Seattle and Wisconsin to a lesser extent). The Washington DC Consortium features an impressive track record in the outreach field, having organised more than 600 outreach conferences and events and circa 500 media events per funding cycle. Centres like Michigan, Seattle, Miami/Florida, Carleton, North Carolina, Wisconsin and Pittsburgh have also grown active in the outreach to secondary schools, with the majority in this group averaging 30 events per funding cycle.

New Centres in Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan report a more balanced allocation of resources between the academic and the outreach activities. This is partly the result of Commission’s requirements in these countries for the Centres to move towards more focused outreach efforts. It is interesting to note though that when consulted if they see the current allocation as appropriate there are specific requests to move away from the outreach intensive allocation towards more academic activities, academic exchanges and cooperation with other Centres.

Some of the mature Centres in the US and Australia argue that academic and outreach activities should not be seen as separate compartments but more as interrelated pieces of the strategy with the academic component as the baseline allowing the other areas/activities to develop. The experience of North Carolina is that a strong academic foundation is vital in sustaining and growing the other areas of activity. For example, their support of faculty and graduate student research through conferences, grants, travel awards, etc, is an important tool in recruiting top-notch graduate students. In the field of political science, the resources of the Centre have helped move UNC from being a department which could rarely attract Europeanists graduate students to a situation where half of the students in



comparative politics are Europeanists. The flow of graduate students, in turn, has allowed them to attract and retain top scholars in the field. This expanded pool of experts focusing on Europe enriches the Centre's outreach effort, as faculty and graduate students regularly participate in teacher training workshops, draft media and business briefs, develop information websites, etc. The strength and reputation of their academic activities are also vital in enhancing academic exchanges with the EU and cooperation with other Centres and Institutes. In a similar line, the Centre at Monash focuses on academic excellence which in turn guarantees its credibility in its many outreach activities and in cooperating with other Centres on the world stage.

While it is evident that the general trend is for Centres to be more inclined to the teaching and academic components of the Initiative, all acknowledge that this bias is to be expected as long as the Initiative is hosted by Universities as teaching and research are constitutive elements of the mission of Universities and outreach is a benefit few can afford. On a related note, some Centres have argued that increasing the outreach would in turn demand increasing the amount devoted to fixed staff costs as there would be stronger staff requirements to work on the more labour-intensive activities linked to the outreach.

The above is not to say that the Initiative should not encourage Centres to be more active on the outreach front. But a balance would be advisable where Centres and host Universities feel comfortable and confident with what is expected from them in this area. If the outreach is somehow built from the bottom to the top and is linked to the strengths of the host Universities, as is the case of the Washington DC Consortium, Centres would have an enormous potential to grow in this field and to generate significant impacts. Identifying local audiences and searching for synergies that can be developed through outreach efforts is probably more creditable in the long-term than imposing minimum/maximum percentages to the different activities. Centres need to find the outreach structures that more naturally complement their programmes and activities. The Commission and the Delegations can certainly help them by providing them support, contacts, tools and training. Mature Centres with a positive experience in this area can also provide good advice. But the bottom line is that Centres and Universities need to be the owners of their outreach programme, as opposed to feeling obliged to abide to certain standards that are externally imposed.

#### **4.5.6 *Functioning of Consortia***

**In case of Centres covering a consortium has the partnership functioned as envisaged in the original proposal? What specific problems, if any, have been encountered? What examples of best practice and lessons learnt can be derived?**

The experiences of Centres covering a Consortium have been influenced by different contexts so it is difficult to generalise. There are cases of highly successful Consortia such as Washington DC, Florida/Miami, and Christchurch in New Zealand that have maintained the same partnerships over the years. The newly formed Consortium between Toronto and Victoria in Canada has not been exempt from experiencing specific organisational issues at the outset, which are currently being dealt with. The other Consortium in Canada between Montreal and McGill has been functioning for three cycles now, but the EUCE is more embedded in Montreal than McGill, which attempts against the overall effectiveness of the Consortium. South Korea provides some interesting examples of

Consortia/partnerships between Universities and non-University partners. Taiwan and some of the Japanese Centres provide examples of Consortia composed of multiple partners.

The **Washington DC Consortium** was established in 2001 and is now in its third funding cycle. The Consortium membership comprising five Universities<sup>22</sup> has been stable over the three funding cycles. What changes from time to time is which of the partners handles particular components of their joint programmes. Johns Hopkins University serves as the secretariat and manages the administrative and financial structure for the Consortium. George Washington University is one of the most active partners within the group. The other institutions participate as their time and interests dictate. Each of the other members of the Consortium focuses on a particular area of support for the EUCE. One of the keys to the partnership is that the Consortium is perceived to make a major contribution to coordinating European studies in each University, and in the aggregate has a powerful influence on assuring that the five are seen as a force to be reckoned with in the Washington DC metropolitan area. The other key is that the partners have clear roles and areas of activity.

The **Florida/Miami Consortium** received an initial EU Centres grant in 2001 and has been funded in each of the succeeding cycles since. The Centre is jointly administered through Florida International University's School of International and Public Affairs, and the University of Miami's Jean Monnet Chair which is held by Dr. Joaquin Roy. Both Universities are strong supporters of international affairs generally and of the important and strong bilateral relationship between the EU and the US. In this context, the EUCE is highly regarded by authorities at the two Universities. The power of the grant goes well beyond its literal value. It brings prestige to both institutions and serves to attract interest and increasing shares of "in-kind" support. It has also served to protect the resources both Universities are willing to maintain for the EUCE.

The **New Zealand European Union Centres Network (EUCN)** is made up of a consortium of seven Universities from across the country. The NRCE at the University of Canterbury plays a significant role in the EUCN coordinating three quarters of the network's activities. One crucial development in the 2010-2014 funding cycle is that all University partners will make a contribution to the 25% co-funding required by the grant. In the 2006 to 2009 grant these contributions came exclusively from NRCE. The introduction of this requirement has achieved explicit buy-in from the network partners and demonstrates their commitment to the Initiative. The EUCN takes a "New Zealand Inc" approach (based upon principles of collaboration, coordination and cooperation between EU Scholars within NZ's university system) which is proving very successful in that it is recognised and supported at the highest level of bilateral relations - the Joint Declaration on Relations and Cooperation between the European Union and New Zealand "*acknowledged the importance of the EUCN to the EU-NZ relations....and reconfirmed commitment to continued support for this activity*".

The **EU Centre in Toronto** has been in existence since October 2000. As part of the latest funding period (2009-2012) the University of Toronto has built a partnership with the **University of Victoria** in British Columbia, thereby splitting the funding received from the European Commission between the two institutions. The main challenge to the Consortium was perceived to be the distance separating Toronto and Victoria and the additional costs this engenders, but technology (e.g. Skype) goes a long

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<sup>22</sup> These are: Johns Hopkins University, American University, George Mason University, George Washington University and Georgetown University.

way to helping in this respect. Toronto had hopes that the administrative burden would also be shared through the consortium set-up, but to date this had not been the case as Victoria still had to familiarise itself with the ins and outs of the EC contract. Aside from this, it was seen by both parties as being something that “works” because the relationship was born out of existing relationships between key scholars and complementarities in their research, but also joint recognition of the quality of research on the EU and European Affairs coming out of each University.

Existing cooperation in research terms between the **Université de Montréal and McGill University** in European studies meant that it was natural for them to work together in submitting a proposal for the EU Centres Initiative back in 2000. The Consortium arrangement continues to this day, the EUCE having been granted funding for three consecutive cycles. Moreover, since becoming a EUCE in 2006, the Centre has grown in importance, comprising over 40 researchers from a variety of disciplines and six different universities in Quebec. Due to the particular level of interest in EU studies within the Université de Montréal, it has been the main host of the EUCE in budgetary and logistical terms, though recent changes at McGill mean that it now holds on to the matching funds it provides to the Centre. The EUCE is housed in a dedicated section of a building at the Université de Montréal, shared with other related departments with whom links are already or are looking to be forged, namely the Centre d'études et de recherches internationales de l'Université de Montréal (CERIUM), Canadian Centre for German and European Studies and the Greek studies department. At McGill, the Centre does not have a physical presence in the sense that it does not have a dedicated office on the university premises; this is in part due to space restrictions.

Japan hosts two EU Institutes that operate as Consortia of three Universities: the recently established **EU Studies Institute (EUSI)** and the **EU Institute in Japan (EUIJ)**, which is undergoing its second funding cycle. Both Consortia work well in general, with the partner Universities complementing each other due to their different profiles and with an equal share of activities and expenditures. The challenges are linked in both cases to the different timings and strategic priorities of the member institutions, which sometimes attempt against the diligence of the decision making processes. On the balance, joining forces appears to be a feasible approach for Japanese Universities as it allows to widen the coverage of subjects and fields, and to reach out to more audiences.

The three EU Centres that have been selected for EU funding in South Korea all reflect a mixed structure, with Universities as lead partners of the respective Consortia and non-University institutions playing key roles and contributing with significant funding within each Consortium. The **EU Centre at Seoul National University**, which received funding in the previous cycle, partnered with the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP). The recently established **EU Centre at Yonsei University** was set up with a supporting grant from a corporately funded research institute, the Samsung Economic Research Institute (SERI). The other newly created EU Centre in South Korea at **Pusan National University** has developed a partnership with the Busan Metropolitan City, with a substantial amount of funding provided by the local government partner. Given the high dependence of the Centre on the continued financial support of the Busan Metropolitan City, there was some concern expressed by the staff of the Centre about the demands raised by the partner for the EU Centre to provide programmes and activities that it deemed important and the fact that these demands could interfere with the key objectives of the Centre.

The newly established EU Centre in Taiwan (EUTW) is a Consortium composed of 7 major

Taiwanese Universities which is led by the **National Taiwan University** (NTU). Taiwan has quite a lot of Universities in general, but the Universities that are partnering in the Consortium are those that are the more renowned. Given that the Universities are spread all over the country this enables them to have a better coverage of EU-related events organised by the different Consortium partners. On the other hand, with seven Universities as part of the Consortium, a lot of time needs to be spent on coordination.

#### **4.5.7 Frequency and timing of proposals**

##### **How appropriate has the frequency and timing of the calls for proposals been?**

The frequency and timing of the calls for proposals have been tailored to meet the needs of the different countries involved in the Initiative.

In the US there have been four calls for proposals to date; the first one was launched in 1998 to cover the initial funding cycle with 10 Centres selected out of a total of 69 candidates. Three successive calls have been launched since then, resulting in the 2001-04, 2005-08, and 2008-11 cycles, with 15 Centres funded in the second call; 10 Centres awarded funding in the third call; and 11 Centres selected in the fourth call currently ongoing.<sup>23</sup> Funding has been granted to the Centres on an annual basis for periods of three years.

In Canada, a pilot programme was launched in 1998-99. As this project was deemed successful, the Commission decided to launch a competitive call for proposals in 1999. This resulted in the selection of four universities across the Country for a period of three years: 2000 to 2002. At the end of the first grant period, the Commission decided to carry on the Initiative and launch a new selection process which resulted in five successful candidates which received funding over the period of 2003-2006. As a result of the third call, launched in 2006, four Centres were awarded support from the Commission. In the last call of 2009, five Centres were selected. As in the US, the Initiative in Canada runs on a three year time-frame, where grants are provided for one year with the possibility of two renewals.

In early 2001, DG RELEX moved towards extending the EU Centres Initiative to Australia and New Zealand. This move was modelled on the experiences in the United States and Canada. With assistance from the Commission Delegations, two pilot projects were agreed upon in May 2001 and December 2001 respectively. The host universities were the Australian National University (ANU) at Canberra and Canterbury University at Christchurch, New Zealand. The number of EU Centres in the Asia/Pacific region increased in 2006 with the selection of four projects, three of them in Australia and one in New Zealand, for a period of 3,5 years. A new call for proposals was launched in 2009, as a result of which 3 Centres received funding in Australia and one Centre received funding in New Zealand. Additional funding was provided to ANU to act as national coordinator for networking and outreach for the current cycle.

The first EU Institute in Japan was launched in April 2004 in the Tokyo region. Another EU Institute was established outside Tokyo in 2005 for a period of 3,5 years. After expiration of these two grant

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<sup>23</sup> There are currently 10 Centres in the US as the former EUCE at Texas Austin stopped the Grant after the first year in operations, forcing the Commission to terminate the Grant.

agreements, the Commission launched a new call for proposals in 2008 aiming at fostering an open and competitive process for the establishment of 2 EU Centres in Tokyo and 1 EU Centre outside the Tokyo region. As result of this procedure, three EU Institutes received co-funding for the current period of four years (2009-13).

The Initiative was officially launched in South Korea in 2006 with the establishment of one EU Centre at Seoul National University (SNU) – in consortium with the Korea Institute of International Economic Policy – for a period of 3,5 years. The contract between the Commission and SNU expired in August 2009. A call for proposal for the establishment of another Centre in Seoul was launched in early 2010. In 2008 the Commission launched a new call for proposals aiming at fostering an open and competitive process for the establishment of further 1 EU Centre in Seoul and 1 EU Centre outside the Seoul region. As result of this procedure, two projects received co-funding for 4 years (2009-12).

In June 2008, an EU Centre was launched in Singapore inaugurating the Initiative in this country. The Centre, hosted at the National University of Singapore (NUS) in partnership with Nanyang Technological University, is expected to run for 3 years. An EU Centre was also established in Taiwan at The National Taiwan University (NTU), in consortium with six universities in Taiwan. Launched in May 2009, the funding cycle will extend for 4 years.

There has been no negative feedback from the Centres or Delegations in the different countries on the frequency and timing of the successive calls for proposals, which has led the evaluation team to conclude that this particular aspect of the Initiative has worked relatively well so far.

#### **4.5.8 Operational structures**

**Are the operational structures, including the selection process and monitoring of the Initiative, appropriate and effective? What alternative approaches could be considered in the future?**

Feedback on the operational structures of the Initiative presents some commonalities across the board and some particularities in the different countries and according to the stage of maturity of the Centres.

##### **Selection process**

Commission officials – in Headquarters and Delegations – are responsible for reviewing and evaluating the proposals received under the EU Centres Initiative. The information available for the other cooperation programmes assessed show that independent experts are appointed to evaluate the proposals received for funding. A peer review element was introduced in the United States when the Initiative was first launched, but according to feedback from the Delegation it was difficult to identify the independent experts and the selection process was made longer so it was decided against appointing external experts in the call that came next.

In Australia and New Zealand, several EU Centres believed that the selection process could be strengthened by including a peer review element that guaranteed that the selection was carried out in a fair, transparent and systematic manner.

The selection process in the US is performed by members of the EU Delegation in Washington and by DG RELEX Headquarters in Brussels. A Committee of three to four members reviews the proposals individually and then collectively to select the successful candidates. The Delegation has moved towards making the process more agile over the years to shorten the gap between funding cycles.

Similarly, the evaluation of proposals in Japan is split between three members of staff at the Delegation in Tokyo and one EC official from Brussels. The Evaluation Committee has some influence on how to phrase the calls for proposals and to adapt them more to the standards in Japan.

As the Initiative in the other countries is managed centrally by Headquarters, the Delegations/Economic and Trade Office play a minor role in the selection process. Typically the Delegations are part of the Evaluation Committee that reviews the applications, ranks them and makes recommendations but it is Headquarters that coordinates the process in each case.

Many Centres in the different countries agreed that it would be useful to receive from the Delegations and/or Headquarters more detailed feedback on the grounds of selection or rejection of their proposals.

### **Monitoring of the Initiative**

According to DG RELEX interviewees in Brussels, the monitoring of the Initiative is usually conducted by the project officer in charge of the respective countries/Centres.

The Initiative seems to lack however quantitative indicators reflecting the levels of activity of the Centres (e.g. numbers of events, numbers of exchange programmes organised, numbers of events organised with high schools, etc.) and the results of these activities (e.g. numbers of attendees to events, numbers of beneficiaries of the exchange programmes, numbers of high school students attending these events, etc.). Even though the reports produced by the Centres provide a narrative of their activities and services, the lack of aggregated data on the activities of the Centres does not allow the Commission to have a clearer comparative picture of the overall outputs of the Initiative. The current evaluation requested the mature and former Centres<sup>24</sup> to provide detailed numbers on the activities undertaken on the different fronts – academic, outreach and academic exchanges – for the current funding cycle and for previous cycles. The fact that not all of the Centres provided a full set of numbers, and that many did not have data available for the previous cycles, suggests that if this data is not collected on a regular basis (ideally annually) this is very valuable information that the Initiative is missing. Interviewees at the Delegation in Washington agreed that this gathering of information could be a task for the national coordinator in the US (and similarly in other countries that have a coordinator), for which it would be important to provide appropriate resources. Delegations would provide support and advice on what sort of things it would be convenient to measure.

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<sup>24</sup> New Centres were not requested to provide detailed numbers on activities as it was judged that it would be too early for them to reflect results.

#### **4.5.9 Management and monitoring systems**

**Are the management and monitoring systems in place adequate for the management of this programme? What obstacles have projects encountered in terms of project implementation and management? Have effective solutions been found?**

In the US and Japan, where the day-to-day management of the Initiative is in charge of the respective Delegations, the majority of Centres are very satisfied with the permanent and valuable support that they receive from Commission officials at the Delegations in their countries. In particular in the US, where the Initiative was managed centrally for some years at the outset, Centres tend to agree that the changes have been significant and very positive. From the financial side, the change has been significant because all the payments are now made from the Delegation. This has reduced considerably the administrative burden and time-consuming process of the Delegation being the intermediary between the Centres and Brussels. Strategic decisions are still taken in Brussels ultimately but the Delegation provides advice, as well as the initial drafts of the calls for proposals and the list of selected candidates, meaning that most decisions are taken on the basis of consensus. In Japan, the Delegation plays a crucial role. The Centres rely heavily on the support provided by the Delegation team, often seeking advice for different activities, i.e. when planning events or courses or when conducting outreach.

In Australia and New Zealand, staff at the Delegation in Canberra are seen as very supportive, responsive and professional. While the EU Centres Initiative is managed from Brussels, from time to time EU Centres call on the Delegation for advice and guidance particularly in the area of administration and navigating the complexities of EU grant agreement contracts. This assistance is very much appreciated and was mentioned by staff at all EU centres.

For the majority of staff at the Centres, the financial management is perceived as quite complex and time consuming, though the burden is heavier on new Centres undergoing their first funding cycle. The fact that the grant is delivered in Euros, as opposed to other grants that are delivered in the respective local currencies, requires that the Universities deal with currency fluctuations that have had a negative impact on budgets in recent years. The grant is also defined by many Centres as “high maintenance” with lots of resources spent in fulfilling both the Commission’s and the Universities’ requirements in terms of management and reporting. This is accentuated by the fact that the 7% established by the Commission to cover indirect costs is very limited compared to how other grants work in the different countries. It was highlighted by some Centres that the more limited European Commission funding becomes, Universities will be less willing to bear the excessive administrative burden that results from the above combination of factors.

There is scope for the Commission to incorporate specific elements that would somehow ease the burden on Centres, and the Delegations could play an important role in this process. The US example is illustrative in this sense. For the mature Centres in this country, the operational mechanisms have successfully evolved over time with the deconcentration policy and have eased the burden substantially. In this respect, many acknowledge that the Delegation in Washington DC understands the US University system better than Brussels and that they provide relevant and useful support to the Centres.

**Are certain components of the programme more cost-efficient than others? Is it justifiable to have such high personnel costs in a proposal compared to the share allocated to activities? Is the reporting mechanism appropriate? Could this be streamlined?**

In general, the academic activities – featuring both teaching and research – can be said to be more cost-efficient than the outreach, as the Centres tend to work in close cooperation with Departments and Schools in the host Universities with established programmes, courses and faculty. In other words, there are many synergies in the academic front with the host Universities that the Centres can make good use of. The outreach activities, on the other hand, are not traditionally part of the mission of Universities so they require more time and staff to develop and implement. Unless there are members of staff working at the Centres with specific outreach skills or experience, the majority of Centres are integrated by academic staff who are not familiar with the outreach. So this is another difficulty that many of the Centres – in particular the new ones – face when organising activities on the outreach front. In addition, the outreach tends to be resource intensive, so at the end of the day fixed staff costs will be greater for activities in this area.

As per the above, the majority of the Centres argue that it is justifiable and reasonable to have high personnel costs in their proposals as compared to the share of allocated activities. Many are of the opinion that the 7% ceiling assigned by the Commission to indirect costs is very low and that it does not accurately reflect the indirect costs associated to running the Centres. Additional staff overheads tend to be currently absorbed by Universities but many Centres would favour an increase in the Commission's share of the indirect costs as they consider it would alleviate the burden on them.

The reporting mechanism is less onerous for mature Centres but can be a serious challenge for Centres undergoing their first funding cycle. Many of the new Centres agree that reporting systems required by the Commission are very different to those that are used by the host Universities and hence require a steep learning curve. Staff costs associated to reporting are high as well. While Centres do recognise that the reporting requirements are the Commission's prerogative and are necessary to ensure homogeneity across the board, some degree of flexibility in reviewing and softening the current requirements would be welcome. In relation to this, there are many Centres who would like to receive feedback from the Commission on their reports in order to have indicators of positive activities or points of improvement that they can take as reference.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to build on the findings presented above in relation to the 39 evaluation questions by taking a more holistic view of what the EU Centres Initiative has achieved to date, and in particular over the past six years since the last evaluation, where the main areas for improvement lie and what the focus should be going forward. Conclusions and recommendations are presented around the following five evaluation areas that have structured the evaluation assignment: relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and efficiency.

### 5.1 Overarching conclusions and recommendations on the RELEVANCE of the Initiative

#### 5.1.1 Conclusions on relevance

- The EU Centres Initiative is **growing in all of the right ways**. The programme has achieved a solid base in those countries that have been pioneers to the Initiative, including the United States and Canada, and is successfully striving towards higher levels of maturity in Australia and New Zealand. The performance of established Centres, those that have at least completed at least two funding cycles, is a clear indicator of the Initiative's potential to achieve a solid and enduring impact across all three pillars of the Initiative but particularly in the research and teaching elements.
- Compared to other means of implementation, for example Think Tanks, NGOs or policy research institutes, placing EU Centres within **higher education institutions** seems appropriate in attaining the overall programme objectives since Universities are capable of building on the three pillars of the Initiative – the teaching, research and outreach – by taking advantage of existing infrastructure such as networks with European Institutions and in-depth knowledge of the EU among faculty. The reputation and neutrality of Universities are also important to enhance the prestige of the programme.
- The current **geographical distribution** of EU Centres across the world is about right considering the length of time the Initiative has been around and the levels of resources dedicated to it. The recent enlargement to additional countries and territories in Asia, starting with Japan back in 2004, and following with South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, has reflected an important move towards a region with growing importance on the world stage.
- It is envisaged that in the years to come, with **incentives to extend the Initiative to other countries**, the expansion of the EU Centres programme is likely to be shaped by the human and financial resources available and by the strategic and political priorities of the Commission. Any expansion of the Initiative to new countries should not divert the focus of attention on the consolidation of the EU Centres that are currently in operations, in particular those new Centres in the countries that have joined more recently. In other words, the focus should continue to be on those countries where EU Centres already exist, in particular the newer countries that have joined

recently. All of the Centres that are currently operating in South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, which have joined most recently, are still transiting through their first cycles with all of the difficulties and efforts that first cycles bring. Japan is in a more advanced stage of development than its counterparts in Asia, but the EU Institutes still tend to rely heavily on the support provided by the EU Delegation in that country. Awareness of the EU and of the EU Centres Initiative in these countries is low and it is the opinion of some of the Delegations that stronger promotional actions directed to the relevant academic communities would result in improved competition as more Universities would be interested to host an EU Centre. There is also scope for the new Centres to learn from the experience of their mature colleagues, and for the networks at different levels -country, regional and worldwide- to consolidate. In sum, it would be recommended that the Initiative embarked into a new expansion with some of the above variables more firmly rooted. As per the results of the evaluation, this would only be a matter of time and would allow the Initiative to keep growing on firm ground.

- The current **number of Centres** in the countries that are part of the Initiative is considered to be appropriate and functional to the capacity of the Commission – through Headquarters and the Delegations – for managing the programme. The geographical distribution of the Centres could be more balanced in some countries. In the US, Canada and Australia, the geographical distribution of EU Centres could be more widespread. However, location should not be put above the quality and excellence of proposals in future Calls.
- In terms of the **range of academic disciplines** offered by the Centres, there is a tendency for Centres to move from a relatively limited menu of disciplines when they are transiting their first years, towards a more multidisciplinary offering as they become more established and gain visibility and support within their host Universities. This was judged by many Centres as a very positive evolution that widened their base of support and allowed them to incorporate innovative content and approaches to their programmes. Student demand is also very much supportive of moving towards a multidisciplinary offer.
- The EU Centres stand out from other University Schools or Departments because they promote **interdepartmental/ faculty synergies**, which result in academic staff working together on cross-disciplinary projects, when this would previously not have been the case. In many of the more established Centres, interdisciplinary cooperation which had initially tended to focus on the Social Sciences, the Arts and Sciences and the Humanities faculties, has expanded lately to the professional schools, the Business Schools in particular, and to the hard sciences.
- In terms of the **range of activities covered** by the Centres, there is a delicate balance between what Universities are willing and able to contribute with and what the Commission is expecting from the Initiative. Universities across the board feel more comfortable with the teaching and research components of the Initiative, because this is considered their “core business”. The Commission places a certain emphasis on the outreach activities organised for the wider audiences beyond the academic community. Universities will never become strong outreach supporters because it is not in their nature, but experience shows that they can do a good job and can be enthusiastic about it if they have the appropriate tools to target the right audiences and deliver the appropriate messages. In this context, outreach to high schools students and teachers has significantly grown in recent years. Outreach to local audiences with complementary interests in the Centres and their activities also work particularly well.

- The “**EU Centres of Excellence**” (**EUCE**) **brand** has had a beneficial effect in the United States and Canada, in particular for promoting the Initiative to Universities’ administrations and other potential funding sources. The brand has not yet been particularly effective in reaching the beneficiaries of the Centres, as reflected by the low levels of awareness of respondents to the online survey when consulted about the EUCE brand. Some of the beneficiaries who were aware of the brand viewed it in a positive light as they expressed that it opens “doors” to them. There is scope to further consolidate the brand with beneficiaries in the US and Canada in the years to come, and to explore the launching of the brand in Australia and New Zealand. The Initiative is still not mature enough in the other countries to capitalise from the EUCE brand.

### 5.1.2 Recommendations on relevance

#### Geographical and Regional Balance

- It is recommended that **any expansion of the Initiative to new countries in the years to come does not divert the Commission’s focus from consolidating the existing core group of countries and EU Centres**. Even if there were resources and there was the political decision to expand the Initiative, there is still scope in the years to come to strengthen the model in the countries that have joined more recently and to reinforce the networks in the mature countries. In other words, expanding the Initiative should not deter the Commission from one of its main objectives which should be consolidating the existing core group of countries. Consolidation of the current EU Centres could be achieved through a number of combined actions, including a more active involvement of Delegations in promoting the Initiative among Universities and the wider academic communities in each country; and a more fluent interaction and regular exchanges between the Centres and networks at country, regional and worldwide levels.
- The Commission may wish to launch, through the relevant Delegations, a number of **preparatory promotional actions in the countries that are potential candidates for joining the Initiative**. This could include running information sessions for potential host Universities in each country to introduce them to the Initiative. Additionally, liaising with the wider academic community would be a useful way to test the initial response to and the feasibility of launching the Initiative in new countries.

#### Number of Centres

- An approach that could be included in subsequent calls for proposals to account for some geographical imbalances in a number of countries would be **encouraging candidates to build Consortia with Universities in specific regions or cities** that are underrepresented in the different countries. The EU Centres Initiative in New Zealand has evolved into a network which covers the length and breadth of the country. In the context of New Zealand this collaborative approach (the “New Zealand Inc” approach) is considered highly effective and efficient. The Toronto/Victoria Consortium in Canada is another good example of such a partnership, the Centre being formed by two Universities located in different regions in Canada, with existing relationships between key scholars and complementarities in their research, and joint recognition of the quality of research on the EU and European Affairs coming out of each University. There are other examples

of Consortia that are newly formed or that have been together for a longer period of time, which show that despite the difficulties it is possible (and in some cases convenient as it allows for economies of scale) to run successful Consortia.

- In cases where the establishment or the management of a Consortium is too complicated, **ad hoc partnerships between established EU Centres and Universities in underrepresented regions or cities could be encouraged** for the joint organisation of specific programmes, courses, seminars, workshops or events. These partnerships would allow the Initiative to gradually expand to specific cities or regions without the need for Centres to formally join forces as a Consortium from the outset but providing Universities with the opportunity to explore joint collaboration opportunities that could result in more permanent arrangements. The partnerships would also be beneficial to promote the Initiative to new Universities and in the longer term could lead to increases in the number of applicants from specific cities or regions in the different countries.
- In Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, more promotional actions could be organised by the Commission through the Delegations/Economic and Trade Office with a view to increasing the awareness of the EU Centres Initiative among Universities and the wider academic communities in these countries. This would in turn encourage **the Initiative to become more competitive in these countries**, so that a selection of the best proposals in terms of quality, value-for-money and potential for impact can be made. The work of the EU Delegation to Japan provides a good example of the type of efforts that the Delegations can coordinate. The Delegation has used the EU Centres as a building block to promote the Erasmus Mundus programme and vice versa. For example, one staff member in the Delegation does presentations in Universities about Erasmus Mundus, and at the same time promotes the EU Centres. In this way the Delegation tries to attract Universities to apply for the EU Centres Initiative in Japan. The Delegation also sends out emails to all networks of the Erasmus Mundus programme in order to promote the EU Centres Initiative.

### **Move towards interdisciplinary research and teaching**

- It is recommended that **interdisciplinary research and teaching be encouraged in Centres in the different countries**, allowing the Centres to expand their offers beyond the realms of the traditionally complementary Social Sciences, History and Languages Departments and exploring collaboration opportunities with new partners within the Universities. This move was registered to have allowed mature Centres in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to gain stronger visibility and buy-in at their host Universities, contributing to an enhanced impact among students, faculty and external audiences. EU Centres like Pittsburgh, Michigan and Wisconsin, all of them strong advocates of an interdisciplinary approach, have ongoing intellectual and institutional exchanges with disciplines such as Public Health, Engineering, Medical Science and Life Sciences Communication, to name a few. Engagement with other disciplines can take many forms, including conferences, working groups, visiting scholars, speaker series, faculty and graduate student research support, curriculum development grants, exchange programmes, etc.

### **Maintain the current offer of activities**

- It is recommended that the **current menu of activities and programmes offered by the EU Centres worldwide be maintained**. The main issue moving forward is not so much linked to

“reinventing the wheel” by introducing alternative types of intervention or new types of activities, but strengthening the current offer by consolidating specific programmes or activities that work well (e.g. the academic courses on offer, the outreach to secondary schools, EU speakers, etc), improving aspects that have scope for further adjustments (e.g. relations with the media, collaboration with other Centres, etc), reaching out to different target groups both within and beyond the host Universities, and increasing the networking component at country, regional and worldwide levels. The current menu of activities and programmes offered by the EU Centres worldwide can be said to be sufficiently broad to effectively pursue the objectives set out and to successfully address the needs and expectations of the Initiative’s clientele groups.

### The EUCE brand

- The Commission should consider **further enhancing the EU Centre’s brand by continuing to build on the association with the European Union**. The grant programme is seen as having a non-financial benefit in that Universities awarded funding can be associated with the European Union brand. In general there is a particularly positive view of this association. The fact that the funding comes from the EU is perceived to raise the profile and credibility of the action. It is also considered prestigious for the organisation / institution. In this context the evaluation puts forward a couple of options for the Commission to help consolidate the Initiative worldwide by giving it a visual consistency that is currently not evident:
  - The first option would be **including the EU flag as a distinct visual component** in the websites and promotional material of each and every Centre.
  - The second option would be to **create a logo representing the EU Centres Initiative that all EU Centres could use on their websites and promotional material**. If this alternative were considered, it is recommended that the new logo contains the EU flag.<sup>25</sup>
- Having the EU flag or a new logo displayed as a visual element identifying the Initiative would also help **unify the branding in Japan with the rest of the countries** as the current “EU Institutes” name does not help the Initiative in Japan in maintaining an identity with the worldwide network. In other words, this stronger visual component would help the Institutes in Japan to maintain a visual identity (if not the same name) with the other Centres in the worldwide network.
- In addition to the visual component, another element that could be considered to reinforce the concept of the worldwide network would be to have each Centre include the following phrase after their names: “Member of the network of EU Centres”.

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<sup>25</sup> Some of the recent research conducted by TEP for other services across the Commission has shown that consistency is key in branding; and that the EU flag is the EU’s brand.

## 5.2 Overarching conclusions and recommendations on the EFFECTIVENESS of the Initiative

### 5.2.1 Conclusions on effectiveness

- The work of the EU Centres is **very positive**. The level of activity, commitment of the staff, the degree of prestige that the Centres have, and the efforts made to attract support from the host Universities and the different target audiences involved have all been factors of weight in facilitating the Centres to achieve their objectives over the years.
- The overall perception of the majority of stakeholders is that the work of the EU Centres has been **very valuable**. Currently, there are no consolidated outcome and impact indicators that allow for systematic **monitoring of objectives** on a comparative and aggregated fashion. Such a mechanism could facilitate the improved strategic management of the Initiative.
- The Initiative is perceived to be **new and innovative** from various different angles:
  - The majority of beneficiaries (52%) responding to the survey claim that they would not have achieved similar outcomes if they had not been engaged with the Centres.
  - Host Universities see the Centres as cross-cutting players that positively complement the activities of the long established Departments and Schools.
  - The work of the Centres is also perceived to have added to the Delegations' public diplomacy work.
  - From the perspective of Centres, the EU Centres grant is unique as there are no other sources of funding available with the same goals.
- There are **complementarities** between the EU Centres Initiative and other similar Initiatives at EU level such as the Erasmus Mundus Partnerships and the Jean Monnet Actions that are not being sufficiently taken advantage of. The potential for joint promotion and communication of EU-funded Initiatives is a missed opportunity at present. Delegations could play a more active role in this field, by cross-promoting programmes among the different target audiences and beneficiaries involved.
- The **networks** in the different countries have not yet realised their full potential. In the United States and Canada, which are more advanced than their counterpart countries in terms of networking, there is a shared view that more could be done to take advantage of the networks. There is acknowledgement of informal fluent links between some Centres and of formal sporadic links at a more general level, but smaller Centres have not had the opportunity to learn through interaction with others (seen as a potentially important source of support), and the sharing of information across EUCes has been very limited and largely occurred outside of the formal network, and among smaller networks. New technologies, which could increase the links between Centres in a cost-effective way through for example the sharing of conferences/speakers, are not being sufficiently exploited. Australia and New Zealand, which are halfway through, are also supportive of the need for more regular cooperation between Centres. The situation in newer countries with more than one Centre in operations is still fragile, and stronger links between Centres should be forged.
- The networking element on the other hand is still very much confined to the management level of the Centres, with links between Centres understood mainly as links between the management and

staff of the different Centres. It would be particularly enriching for the **network to expand** at wider levels of the pyramid, in particular among students and faculty not directly involved with the Centres. The management of the Centres could act as initiators of a move towards wider social networking, but it would then be up to the users to develop the network in a spontaneous and independent mode.

- **EU funding** below the current 50% co-financing threshold for Centres in the US and Canada would put the sustainability of the Initiative with its current objectives at risk. Part of the value of EU funding resides in that it acts as a catalyst to attract other sources of funding to the Centres, namely funds from host Universities. With decreased levels of funding from the EU, many Universities would not be sufficiently incentivised to be part of the EU Centres Initiative.
- Although the majority of Universities have found the **outreach component** most challenging to implement, outreach activities have been particularly effective when they are tailored to local audiences who have genuine interests in the topics and strong links to the host Universities or the management of the Centres, such as political leaders, business and diplomatic communities, local media, etc. Outreach efforts with secondary schools have also been successful, and this is a field of activity that Centres feel comfortable implementing. New Centres and new countries have met with more difficulties in conducting the outreach, which suggests that there is also a learning curve to the outreach, both at Centre and at country levels that should be steered through.
- The **offer of the EU Centres** is assessed by beneficiaries in a very positive light. The broader offering of the mature Centres meets with higher levels of clientele approval than the more compact offering of newer Centres. In general, there is a tendency for beneficiaries to demand “more” of what is currently in offer as opposed to new or different types of activities. In particular, beneficiaries would be supportive of more funds for expanding research, grants and scholarships on the one hand, and more funds for better staffing of the Centres to expand their capacity on the other hand. There is also a strong demand for increasing networking (e.g. providing students with contacts in the EU, former Centres’ beneficiaries, students in other Centres, etc.)
- The impact of the Initiative has been significant on the **development of curricula on EU studies**, especially in mature Centres in the countries that have been part of the Initiative for longer. Links with equivalent academic bodies within the European Union are gradually growing in number, with more exchange programmes, internships and invited EU speakers and visitors being organised by the Centres in the different countries. The impact on students and beneficiaries benefiting from exchanges with EU Universities and institutions has also received a positive thrust in recent years. The significant numbers registered for some of the mature Centres in the US (but also Canada and Australia) are proof of the strong potential of the Centres once trespassed the second funding cycle.
- There are other fields where the impact of the Initiative has been more modest to date, but still with a potential to expand in the longer term. The **development of a cadre of graduates** likely to build on their knowledge of the EU in their professional careers is one of those areas where the impact cannot be measured in the short term, but if successful, the potential for dissemination and the multiplier effects can be very effective.

- To date, the Centres **have assigned more importance to engaging** with the academic community than to **targeting other sectors** such as industry, NGOs, decision makers in politics, media and other areas. The effectiveness in reaching out to these groups has been therefore more limited than the success in creating awareness among University audiences. Some of the mature Centres have argued that consolidating the academic arm of their projects, both research and curricular, is vital in sustaining and growing the other areas of activity including the outreach and links with external audiences.

### **5.2.2 Recommendations on effectiveness**

#### **Explore complementarities with other Initiatives**

- It is recommended that the EU Centres Initiative be **more strongly promoted among officials in DG EAC, EACEA, and DG RTD running complementary EU cooperation programmes**. Promotion of the Initiative among these officials might bring with it further opportunities for collaboration and interaction; particularly in terms of cross promotion of the EU's various programmes in the different countries. All five comparable Initiatives analysed in the context of this evaluation (Erasmus Mundus Partnerships, Jean Monnet Actions, ATLANTIS programme, Marie Curie Actions, and Cooperation in education and training with Australia) target higher education institutions, research Centres, faculty, researchers and students. The Marie Curie Actions target businesses as well. So there are synergies and common audiences to be made good use of.

#### **Networking component**

- It is recommended that a **further impetus be given to the networking component in the different countries and regions**. The advancement of new technologies and the possibility to share a broader menu of activities (i.e. conferences, workshops, lectures) at relatively low costs suggests that there are huge opportunities for collaboration that are not being taken advantage of. The networks in the US and Canada should take the lead and become pioneers or models to follow for the other Centres, especially those in the more recently incorporated countries like Japan or South Korea where the networking element is still weak. The EUCE at Michigan provides a good example of the use of new technologies to further expand the impact of specific activities. On their website they offer the possibility to download lectures in audio and video format. Their material is also available on Facebook, iTunes and YouTube. As per the Centre's records, their visibility experienced a significant boost when they posted their activities on the web. This experience could be further expanded to the US network so that Centres not only share their calendars of events, but also some of their lectures and materials.
- There is some scope for the programme to move towards a more coherent approach worldwide, but deepening links at both country and regional levels would be more feasible at the current stage of development of the Initiative with a view to intensifying links at worldwide level in the longer term. The **approach towards worldwide harmonisation should be gradual** and focused on the visual logo (i.e. the EU flag or a new logo with the EU flag on it), on specific elements of best practice (i.e. Pittsburgh sharing best practices on the Model EU programme with Toronto, or the different Centres making public part of their Annual Reports), and on specific exchange activities (i.e. visiting scholars), but it should not distract the Centres from the preceding objective of forging stronger links



with their counterparts at country level. Harmonisation should begin at a country level and then build upwards at regional and worldwide levels.

- Suggested **action points to further deepen the role of the network** in those countries that have one:
  - Division in **geographical clusters** could encourage a more natural interaction between Centres that are relatively close to each other.
  - Use of **new technologies** could facilitate the transmission of video conferences when key EU leaders and scholars make presentations.
  - **Network websites** incorporating audiovisual material from different Centres in each country.
  - The **annual meetings** that take place once a year in some countries could be expanded to include not only management staff and faculty but also students. Faculty and students could present their research, the Centres could present their activities, and these annual meetings would serve as a networking event for all, faculty, students and Centres.
  - The annual meetings could also be organised to **match other big events hosted by EU studies associations** in the different countries, allowing the EU Centres network to take advantage of the mainstream gatherings and conferences that already exist. The biennial international conference organised by the EU Studies Association (EUSA) which will take place in Boston in early March 2011 would be a good opportunity for the networks in the US and Canada to organise their annual meetings in Boston before or after the conference. The Centres could promote their work and the work of the Initiative, through networking, promotional material, the presentations that faculty give, etc. Representatives from EU Centres in other countries – in particular the new Asian countries – could also be encouraged to attend this event.
  - The organisation of **regular meetings and workshops** could support more fluent dialogue between the Centres, and encourage the sharing of information and resources.
  - The organisation of **world meetings with more workshops with specific themes**. For example, some focused on the administrative and managerial aspects of the EU Centres: contract and financial management, communication and marketing, websites and some focused more on the actual work of EU Centres: curricula development, research ideas, researcher mobility etc.
  - The **promotion of the main elements of the work programmes** of each and every Centre in their respective websites, highlighting the main activities and events that they are expected to undertake.
  - The **publication of the Annual Reports** (or specific parts of the reports) of each and every Centre on DG RELEX's website, highlighting the main results achieved each year.
  - The **promotion of former Centres** by including their summary descriptions and links to their websites on the network websites. Former Centres could also be allowed to post their EU-related events on the shared calendar of events, and could be encouraged to cross-promote events and activities organised by some of the other Centres in the network.
- If the networks at country (and potentially regional) level are to be further developed, it is recommended that the **roles and expected tasks/responsibilities of the network coordinators** in each country be described in more detail in the calls for proposals. In parallel, additional resources will be necessary for the network coordinators if they are to take a more active role in consolidating the networks.

- It is recommended that the networks be encouraged to expand at the level of students who participate in the activities of the Centres. Developing **social networks for students of EU Centres** in the different countries/worldwide would allow the Initiative to spontaneously grow this very relevant audience group. Students in general are not sufficiently aware of the Initiative and the country networks beyond the Centres that they interact with. If they were given the opportunity to generate communication channels with students in other Universities they would be able to develop research cooperation, get in touch with other students/faculty that might be interested in the same topics, do exchanges of information/students/researchers, organise joint events or attend events hosted by colleagues in other Universities, etc. The possibilities are vast, and the network would be given the opportunity to expand spontaneously at the level of students through a user generated type of approach. Centres would have a minor role to play in promoting this Initiative at the outset by for example starting a Facebook page of the EU Centres Initiative, but the content would be generated by the users of these networks.
- The **exchange of best practices** should ideally be demand-driven, with Centres wanting to learn more about a specific programme, activity, or actions with a particular target group approaching Centres that have expertise in that area. The exchange could flow from the mature to the new Centres (e.g. by providing guidelines for the organisation of specific events or programmes such as those with secondary students), but it could also flow the other way where new Centres develop an interesting niche (e.g. activities with the business community). There could also be specific Centres selected to prepare presentations on their work on specific areas as was the case in the Madrid World Meeting (e.g. Miami-Florida presented an interesting example of outreach and Michigan presented their approach towards financial templates and reporting).
- **Good practice** across the worldwide network could be captured and codified and made available and accessible on a global basis to all involved parties. For example, a manual of good practices could be compiled and distributed to the Centres after each world meeting capturing successful ideas and methods and making reference to those Centres that could be approached as “referents” for the different activities. The manual could cover good practices both on the administrative front but also on the actual work of EU Centres in terms of teaching, research and outreach.

#### **EU funding should not decline at levels below 50%**

- It is recommended that the **50% limit on the maximum level of co-financing required (i.e. at least 50% from EC) remains in place for EU Centres in the US**. There are concerns among the majority of the established Centres that declines in EU funding below the 50% threshold would put the sustainability of the Initiative at risk as many of the host Universities that provide the matching funds would not be in a position to renew their commitments.

## Outreach

- It is recommended that the **outreach not be tied to a “one size fits all” approach but be linked to the strengths of the host Universities**, as is the case of the Washington DC Consortium. Some ideas that Centres could be encouraged to explore in this field:
  - Identifying **local audiences** and searching for synergies that can be developed through outreach efforts.
  - Finding the **outreach structures** that more naturally complement their programmes and activities.
  - Further exploring opportunities linked to the **outreach to secondary schools**, through not only reaching more schools but requesting for co-funding to the private sector for these programmes or promoting these activities in the media.
  - **Proactively contacting the media** in the context of specific newsworthy circumstances linked to the EU. The recent crisis in Greece for instance was an opportunity for the Centres in the different countries to provide opinions and analyses.
  - **Proactively liaising with Brussels and the Delegations** requesting specific support, contacts, tools and training.
  - **Proactively asking for support from the Marketing & Communication Departments within the Universities**. The majority of host Universities have their own Marketing & Communication Units that are experienced at conducting outreach and liaising with the media. Support from these Departments, in the form of advice, contacts, help in drafting communication material, would be highly beneficial to the work of the Centres.
  - (For new Centres) Exploring **links with mature Centres** with a positive experience in this area.
  - (For mature Centres) Develop **best practice guidelines** that can be shared with other Centres in this area.
- Centres should be **encouraged to think local, both in terms of the audiences that they could more easily approach and in terms of the topics** that are of interest to these audiences. In countries such as the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand where the Initiative is more established, links with external audiences work better where there is a local component that promotes the interaction (e.g. the Washington DC environment supports the fluent interaction between the John Hopkins Consortium and government stakeholders, in the same way as it works for Carleton in Canada).

## 5.3 Overarching conclusions and recommendations on the IMPACT of the Initiative

### 5.3.1 Conclusions on impact

- The main contribution of the EU Centres Initiative to **furthering the goals of cooperation** with the partner countries through enhanced “people-to-people links” is that it has fostered a genuine interest among students, researchers and faculty to interact and network with people and institutions in the EU. This is evident particularly in this audience’s demand for increased

networking and collaboration opportunities with the EU; expanded exchange programmes that include opportunities to either study, work, research and/or travel to the EU; increased number of scholars, experts and Commission officials visiting the Centres and participating in both formal activities (e.g. lectures, seminars, courses, etc.) and informal events where beneficiaries can interact face-to-face with them.

- The Initiative's contribution to furthering the goals of cooperation between the EU and the **wider community** (e.g. local/national governments, the business community, opinion leaders and the media, the broader public, etc.) has been more limited. With a few exceptions, the majority of established Centres find the development of outreach activities the most challenging element of the Initiative.
- The **level of knowledge of the EU and of EU-partner countries' relations** has increased particularly in the academic community, among undergraduate and graduate students as well as University teachers and researchers. That said, the impact on the broader public has been more limited, especially in new Centres. The fact that non-University respondents were scarcely represented among the Centres' beneficiaries that answered the survey is evidence that there is scope to enhance the access to groups outside the Universities' campus. The development of stronger links and interactions with opinion leaders and the media (particularly at a local level) could help Centres reach the general public.
- Political and economic aspects of the **relationship with the EU** have been the focus of EU Centres' activities so far. The data collected on mature Centres has shown that in the mid / long-term there is tendency for Centres to expand the range of topics addressed and the disciplines covered. Over the years, Centres tend to develop links with different departments and schools within the Universities that help them maintain a programme of activities that is new and innovative and that has something to offer to different audiences. Moreover, the data collected proved that, in general, there is strong support to interdisciplinary research and teaching across Centres in all countries, favouring the development of courses and activities that tackle a broader set of aspects of the relations of the EU with the different countries.
- That said, the level of interest in the relationship with the EU is being challenged by **other growing bilateral relationships** with the US, China or the Asia region in general. This is particularly the case in the US, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan where there is a strong interest on the relationship with China. In Australia and New Zealand, there is currently far more emphasis placed on the Asia region. In this context, the EU Centres Initiative appears as more necessary now than in the past as it has proved it has the capacity to create and maintain a genuine interest on the EU and to increase the level of knowledge on EU-related issues among the audiences it chooses to address.
- In terms of reaching a **critical mass of activity** across all three pillars with the resources allocated to the Initiative, the number of years (or cycles) Centres have been operating greatly influences the number and range of activities they are in a condition to develop and maintain. This means that, so far, mature Centres have been the most successful in reaching a critical mass of activity that can ensure visibility, added value, and innovation. New Centres' success in establishing and developing the teaching and research components, as well as in their initial efforts in terms of outreach, has demonstrated they have the potential to have a broader impact on reaching a critical

mass of activity in the coming years. Continued EU funding, a stable and proactive leadership, and an effective use of Universities' resources and support are all key factors that can help this to happen.

### 5.3.2 Recommendations on impact

#### Enhanced people-to-people links

- It is recommended that Centres be encouraged to continue expanding their **personal and institutional contacts with people and organisations in the EU**. These links should be utilised as fully as possible to create further opportunities for joint research projects, expand exchange programmes for students, faculty and researchers (both from partner countries to the EU and from the EU to partner countries), establish co-taught programmes (which have been hardly implemented so far), and increasing the number of visiting EU speakers, scholars and practitioners.

#### Exploring all dimensions of the relationship between the EU and partner-countries

- A higher level of importance could be given in the calls for proposals to the development of outreach activities that tackle topics related to the **cultural aspects of the relationship between the EU and the partner-countries**. Even when many Centres are already engaged through their outreach efforts in cultural events, assigning more importance in the calls for proposals to the development of outreach activities dealing with cultural-related disciplines such as music, art, literature, cinema, drama, etc., would help increase the number and diversity of people engaged in the programme.

#### Increasing the impact on the wider community

- In their **outreach work to wider audiences** beyond the academic community, Centres should be encouraged to focus on one or two audience groups where they think they can make a difference and where they see there are already existing links that can facilitate their access to them. High school teachers and students have proved to be one of these audiences where Centres have been more successful. There are other examples of success in terms of reaching out to specific audiences and engaging them in the Initiative (e.g. Miami-Florida and the diplomatic community, Pusan and the business community, Washington DC and the national government, etc.). The common thread across these Centres is that they have chosen to reach these audiences because they were relevant at a local level or because they had already strong links to the host Universities or the management of the Centres.
- It is recommended that a greater number of activities targeted at **journalists and opinion formers** as well as a more regular and proactive flow of information (e.g. through opinion pieces, articles, briefing sessions, press conferences etc.) from Centres to the media could help to enhance the impact of the Initiative on the general public. The data collected has reflected that the publication of articles **in the media and specific events** targeting journalists and media stakeholders are still two underdeveloped areas, both in mature and new Centres. The development of this element should be encouraged in future calls for proposals in all countries and examples of the outputs of the efforts made in this field should be required to be included in annual reports (e.g. through the

inclusion of all articles and opinion pieces generated by Centres' beneficiaries and published in the local/national press, reporting the number of mentions of the Centres – or their beneficiaries- in the print and online media, etc.). Encouraging links to local media (i.e. local radio or TV stations, local newspapers) could ease the burden on the Centres as local media are in general perceived to be more accessible than national media.

## 5.4 Overarching conclusions and recommendations on the SUSTAINABILITY of the Initiative

### 5.4.1 Conclusions on sustainability

- The main factors that can ensure the **sustainability of an EU Centre** are building a solid base of support from the host University and maintaining it, ensuring enthusiastic and committed EU Centre Directors and staff, and maintaining the Commission's support.
- The **most successful Centres** are those that have been able to build upon the existing University's resources (including location, infrastructure, human resources, networking etc.), have capitalised extensively from established EU-related programmes/courses, have achieved a wide base of support for the Centre among faculties from different departments, have been embedded in the host University's strategy, and have enthusiastic and committed Directors and staff, ideally a structure of at least two people heavily involved in running the Centre (usually an EU-related academic leading the Centre in a Director role and an Associate Director in charge of the day-to-day management of the Centre). This situation is unlikely to occur after one tranche of EC funding. However, after two, and certainly three, tranches of funding an effective EU Centre should be in such a position.
- **Support from the Commission** remains essential to ensuring the sustainability of an EU Centre, even in the cases of well-established and successful Centres. Attracting alternative sources of funding for the EU Centres Initiative as it current stands is not impossible but certainly not widely available.
- Other **potential sources of funding** with the same goals as those of the EU Centres grant are not readily available. In a scenario of reduced EU and University funding, it would be very difficult for Centres to leverage comparable external funds. The experience of Centres that have been successful in securing external funding is that funds have been relatively limited. In addition, there is no guarantee that the support will be persistent in time, and (if important the degree of financial support obtained) there is the risk that Centres be pushed to engage in projects not directly relevant to the goals of the Initiative.

### 5.4.2 Recommendations on sustainability

#### Sustainability with EU funding

- It is recommended that **the Commission continues to fund the EU Centres Initiative**. If the Initiative wants to maintain its current objectives and build on its achievements to date, it is not realistic to expect EU Centres to become fully sustainable. There is an inherent risk that the Centres could lose their focus on the EU and cease outreach and public diplomacy activities, in the quest to

become sustainable. Alternative sources of funding for the Centres may require shifts in programming or activities that may divert the original objectives of the Centres. In the long run, the results could be that some of the Centres achieve sustainability but to the detriment of what the EU Centres Initiative is meant to achieve.

- If the Commission takes the decision to maintain the current co-funding levels for the Centres, it will be important to **communicate this strategic decision to the Centres**. This could be done by way of a letter sent by DG RELEX Headquarters to all Centres communicating the results of the evaluation and thanking the Centres for the ongoing support provided all throughout the evaluation process. The main results of the evaluation could be also made available on DG RELEX's website. The lack of certainty on the funding is currently a cause of deep concern for many Centres and host Universities as further decreases in EU funding would put the Centres in risk if, as many say, University funding is tied to the continuity of the EU Centres' grant. Uncertainty on this front can in turn lead to a lack of prevision and plans – or diminished support from Universities – which are all factors that the Commission could avoid with a clear and concise message.

### **Encouraging the other critical factors for achieving sustainability**

- Commission funding apart, it is recommended that emphasis be made on the **need for the Centres to consolidate the other equally critical factors** for achieving sustainability, namely University support and committed leadership and staff. Institutionalisation of the Centres is a factor that the Commission should be very insistent about in the regular and informal exchanges with the Centres. Mature Centres should be able to build a structure that is resistant to changes in the management of the Centres but also to shifts at the higher Universities' level. Commission funding can be a significant factor towards achieving sustainability but experience shows that it is the combination of a number of factors that allows for the long term success of a Centre.

## **5.5 Overarching conclusions and recommendations on the EFFICIENCY of the Initiative**

### **5.5.1 Conclusions on efficiency**

- There is enough evidence to suggest that **the European Commission is getting a good return on its investment for the EU Centres Initiative** in terms of enhancing awareness and knowledge of the EU in partner countries, and most notably among the academic community.
- Mature Centres in the countries that have been part of the Initiative for a longer period of time appear to be the most **cost effective** in achieving visibility, awareness and satisfaction of the stakeholders. Having built up their Centres some are now in a position to leverage additional funding from elsewhere to support their activities further. It takes time for Centres to reach this stage of development, as well as strong University support and constant dedication and commitment from Centres' management and staff.
- The **fluctuating exchange rate** between the Euro and national currencies is perceived as a “financial management challenge” for EU Centres. Fluctuating exchange rates can have a negative effect on EU Centres' budgets in that they cannot be anticipated and Universities are not in a position to cover the exposure to such fluctuations.

- In terms of the **duration of the grant**, there seems to be a dividing line between the views of new Centres and those of mature Centres. The majority of new Centres in countries that have joined the Initiative recently are more supportive of a four year funding cycle as it would provide more stability to the projects. A three year cycle is seen by many of the new Centres as too short, in particular taking into account that it takes time for the funding to arrive at the outset of a cycle, and that there is a time gap linked to the selection process that Centres have to face in between cycles. Mature Centres in the US and Australia on the other hand are comfortable with the three year cycles they have. Some were satisfied with the flexibility that a shorter cycle provided them to make adjustments. The exception to this are mature Centres in Canada, all of which favour a four year cycle that would allow aligning the activities of the Centres with the academic cycles in the country.
- The **division of activities** of the Centres is more inclined towards the teaching and research components and less focused on the outreach. This is more evident in the case of mature Centres, as new Centres in Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan report a more balanced allocation of resources with more funding for the outreach as a result of Commission's requirements.
- As a general rule, the outreach tends to be more efficient when it flows from the Centres themselves. Centres need to find the **outreach formula** that best adapts to their host Universities and their communities. Focusing efforts on specific audiences or specific issues of relevance linked to local interests would more likely generate greater impact than implementing pre-established activities that may not be the most adequate to the specific contexts and circumstances. Universities that already have close links with their local communities (e.g. the Washington DC Consortium and the political community based in Washington, the Miami-Florida Centre and the business and diplomatic communities in Florida) generally perform better at the outreach. In future calls for proposals, the Commission might want to consider asking applicants to demonstrate their level of interaction with the local / regional community.
- With regard to the **selection process**, Centres would appreciate more detailed feedback from Headquarters or Delegations on the grounds of selection or rejection of their proposals. The timing of the selection process has been reduced over the years to allow for continuity of the Centres and the Initiative. However, there are still gaps in between funding cycles which for those Centres keen to continue their EU Centre activities can be a challenge – having to put in measures to keep the Centre going while they learn the outcome of their grant application.
- As regards the **monitoring process**, the Initiative lacks regular quantitative indicators reflecting the levels of activity of the Centres and the results of these activities. This is very valuable information that could be collected on a regular basis and that would allow to analyse performance from an aggregate, comparative perspective.
- The **deconcentration policy** that took place in the US and Japan and which resulted in placing responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Initiative in the hands of the respective Delegations has been viewed positively by EU Centres in both countries. The interaction between Centres and Delegations is fluent and the support received from Delegations is said to be very important. Delegations are also seen to be more familiar with the higher education systems in each country and thus to better grasp the challenges that the Centres are faced with.



- **Reporting** is considered to be particularly burdensome for many Centres; in particular for Centres that are transiting their first funding cycle. Mature Centres have become more used to reporting requirements and are hence less troubled by the narrative and financial reports.
- The use of further **standardised templates** for monitoring and reporting with 'easy-to-understand' procedural guidelines in addition to the financial small print have proved to be useful in avoiding incorrect information regarding the implementation and reporting requirements taking root.

### **5.5.2 Recommendations on efficiency**

#### **Grant Periods**

- There is no need to modify the current duration of funding in different regions as EU Centres are generally satisfied with their respective grant periods. In the longer term, the Commission might consider moving towards **three year funding cycles** as the Initiative becomes more consolidated and Centres become more mature and familiar with reporting requirements. If this alternative were to be implemented, the process should be gradual and focused on the specific background contexts of the countries and Centres involved – not forcing any unnecessary reductions in the grant periods before time if the countries and Centres are not yet prepared to take the leap forward.
- It is recommended that the Commission reduce (or eliminate) any time between one grant period ending and the next one commencing. For Centres re-applying for funding this would help in the context of continuity if they are able to secure a subsequent cycle of funding.

#### **Communicating the administrative and financial procedures**

- There is scope to **more clearly communicate the administrative and financial requirements** that Universities are required to go through in applying for EU funding, in particular in relation to the category of indirect costs, the level of flexibility to make adjustments in programming or to reallocate funding across different categories of activities, and the situation with the fluctuating exchange rates.

#### **Selection and Reporting Processes**

- It is recommended that the Commission consider a **peer review element** in evaluating EU Centre proposals. If feasible, the system could be first tested in the country where the next call for proposals is launched to see how it works and if it is possible to further expand it to other countries.
- **Further feedback on proposals** (for successful and unsuccessful applicants) and annual reports would be useful. Centres are supportive of having a clear indication of what the Commission liked about their proposals and more importantly, which aspects might benefit from improvement. The same was true for the annual reports submitted by the EU Centres on their progress.
- It is recommended that the Commission examine the possibility of **administering and managing the EU Centres grants electronically** (this could include the submission of proposals and annual

reports). While there appears to be no immediate requirement of this sort, it is likely that such an approach would result in efficiency gains. Additionally, the possibility of submitting electronic receipts instead of paper originals would also improve administrative efficiency as many Universities already operate such practices.

**Contact details:**

If you have any queries relating to this report please contact **Ben Ward** on **44 (0) 20 7034 7026**

**The Evaluation Partnership**

part of the Coffey Group

[www.coffey.com](http://www.coffey.com)

Business Address: 83 Baker Street, London, W1U 6AG

[www.evaluationpartnership.com](http://www.evaluationpartnership.com)