

# Quality Assurance in MSc in European Forestry

*Unique perspective to various ecosystem services and bioeconomy*



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# 1. General introduction to MSc EF

- Forest based bio-economy is a global business and requires wide competences and the use of different methods for different temporal and spatial scales ranging from regional differences in practices and cultures.
- Master of Science in European Forestry (MSc EF) is a top class taught Erasmus+: Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Programme (EMJMD) in the field of forest sciences and forest-based bioeconomy in which six European top-class universities collaborate intensively to offer interdisciplinary courses of global relevance in a multicultural environment.
- MSc European Forestry started in 2004 (pre-Mundus 2002) as one of the first MSc courses under the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Programmes: already running over 15 years.
- 302 students from 65 countries since 2002; 220 graduates.



Funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
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## 2. MSc EF consortium and students

Current MSc European Forestry is offered by a consortium of six European universities (*Full Partners*):

- ✓ University of Freiburg, **Germany**
- ✓ University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, **Austria**
- ✓ University of Lleida, **Spain**
- ✓ University of Eastern Finland, **Finland (coordinator)**
- ✓ AgroParisTech, **France**
- ✓ Transilvania University of Braşov, **Romania**

In partnership with five non-European universities (*Associated Partners*):

- ✓ **Brazil:** Federal University of Paraná and São Paulo University
- ✓ **China:** Northwest A&F University
- ✓ **Canada:** University of British Columbia and University of New Brunswick



And several *Associated Industrial and Scientific Partners* in Europe and outside, e.g. StoraEnso Wood Supply, Arbonaut, IIASA, Centre Tecnològic Forestal de Catalunya, Chinese Academy of Forestry, etc.

# MSc European Forestry students 2002-2019

34 Spain  
34 Brazil  
20 Nepal  
17 Bangladesh  
17 China  
16 Germany  
13 Russia  
13 India  
9 Netherlands  
9 Indonesia  
8 Canada  
7 Philippines  
6 Ethiopia  
6 Serbia  
5 USA  
4 Finland  
4 Romania  
4 Thailand  
4 UK  
3 Belgium  
3 Costa Rica  
3 Nigeria  
3 Peru  
3 Poland  
3 Taiwan  
3 Tanzania  
3 Vietnam  
2 Austria  
2 Cameroon  
2 France  
2 Ireland  
2 Jordan  
3 Latvia  
2 Lebanon



2 Pakistan  
2 Paraguay  
2 South Africa  
2 Sweden  
1 Australia  
1 Bosnia and Herzegovina  
1 Cambodia  
1 Colombia  
1 Estonia  
1 Ghana  
1 Greece  
1 Guatemala  
1 Guyana  
1 Hong Kong  
1 Hungary  
1 Iran  
1 Italia  
1 Japan  
1 Kenya  
1 Malaysia  
1 Mauritania  
1 Morocco  
1 Myanmar  
1 Nicaragua  
1 Belarus  
1 Slovenia  
1 Switzerland  
1 Uganda  
1 Ukraine  
1 Venezuela

302 students from 65 countries

### 3. Quality management in the MSc EF programme

- Quality assurance is a very important part in the management of the MSc EF programme.
- **Internal Quality assurance:** MSc EF Consortium Board has agreed to evaluate received students' feedback annually. A major part of the annual Consortium Board meeting is reserved for this feedback analysis and the discussion of its consequences. Questionnaires are also sent to graduated students to get suggestions on how to make the study programme better fitted to the professional requirements. and detailed feedback is evaluated annually.
- **External Quality assurance:** An external Quality Review Board is the authority responsible of external quality assurance.
- **Accreditation:** MSc EF programme is one of the first EMJMD programmes in the world that has been accredited according to the European approach for quality assurance of the joint programmes.

*This presentation will demonstrate the key findings of the self-evaluation report and quality assurance of the MSc EF and how these have contributed to the overall improvement of the programme through the years.*

## 4. European Approach for Quality Assurance

- MSc in European Forestry one of the first joint programmes accredited after the European Approach for Quality Assurance.
- Accreditation completed in 2019.
- System defines standards that are based on the agreed tools of the European Higher Education Area, without applying additional national criteria.
- The accreditation procedure included a self-evaluation report followed by a site-visit of the expert panel and the experts' final report.
- The procedure was conducted by AQAS (Agency for Quality Assurance), Germany.



# 5. Self-evaluation

## 5.1 Eligibility, joint design and delivery

- All *Full Partners* of the MSc EF are recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries. The national framework of each country in question also enables them to participate in the joint programme and to award double degrees.
- The following key elements have been designed and agreed jointly by the *Full Partners*:
  1. Responsibilities of each partner
  2. Aim of the programme
  3. Intended learning outcomes of the programme
  4. Structure of the studies incl. module structure and related study tracks
  5. Teaching responsibilities
  6. Student selection criteria
  7. Finances
  8. Marketing





- The delivery of the programme is a joint effort of the *Full Partners*. Both the complementary scientific competences and a common administration allow to run a joint and integrative Master programme.
- The first academic year of the course is taken in charge by the *Coordinating University* -the University of Eastern Finland - whereas for the second-year studies the individual academic strengths of the other *Full Partners* contribute to the success of the studies.

## 5.2 Cooperation agreement

- The *Partners* have closed a Consortium Cooperation Agreement that outlines the underlying terms and conditions of the joint programme.
- The Cooperation Agreement follows the guidelines and fulfils the requirements and recommendations set by the EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) for Erasmus+ Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Programmes.





## 5.3 Learning outcomes

- The Curriculum of MSc EF programme is designed to achieve the jointly defined specific learning outcomes.
- MSc EF has a total of five major learning outcomes which are allocated to the different modules during the study programme.
- MSc EF offers a wide and comprehensive range of MSc level courses that covers considerable climatic, political and economic diversity in European forestry.



- The structure of the programme is diverse and includes:
  - A compulsory joint introductory course and a global seminar with the joint teaching efforts of all Partners
  - Compulsory courses that provide students competences in academic and methodological skills
  - A joint field course, which provides the students with practical knowledge and hands-on experience in five different European countries;
  - Professional modules, which utilise interactive and integrated teaching
  - Elective courses which students can select according to their interests
  - A compulsory internship period introduces to the working life and includes e.g. problem-based learning



## 5.4 Study programme - Curriculum, credits and workload

- The curriculum offers a good practical approach and each consortium partner university brings in their specific expertise regarding European forestry topics.
- Student mobility is one of the key elements of the programme.
- Compulsory mobility periods (traineeship, field course and second year studies) allow students to experience different environmental and social-economic conditions.
- ECTS conversion rules indicate how the local grades are converted to ECTS grades at each *Full Partner*.
- The monitoring of the effective student workload is part of single course evaluations as well as of the overall student survey related to the overall Curriculum.



## 5.5 Admission, selection and recognition

- The admission requirements have been jointly agreed by the *Full Partners* and are documented transparently.
- All eligible applications are ranked according to six evaluation criteria:
  1. studies in forestry
  2. academic excellence
  3. motivation letter
  4. work experience
  5. international experience
  6. two recommendation letters
- According to the Lisbon Recognition Convention periods of study and the achieved credits at different *Full Partners* are fully recognised by all of them.



## 5.6 Learning, teaching and assessment

- The learning and teaching approaches in the MSc EF Curriculum have been carefully jointly designed by the *Full Partners* to correspond with the jointly agreed intended learning outcomes.
- In the courses included in the MSc EF Curriculum a variety of learning and teaching methods are used which vary from traditional to more innovative ones.
- Teaching and learning methods and grading used in the compulsory and elective courses are described in a transparent way.
- Summary of the assessment and examination rules at the *Full Partners* are documented.



## 5.7 Student support

- As in the MSc EF programme, students are coming from many different countries and have a variety of different backgrounds, special care is taken to ensure that all students can accommodate well and start their studies smoothly.
- Already during the application phase all applicants are well informed about the aims of the programme, learning outcomes, structure of the programme as well as practicalities related to the programme including a variety of mobility possibilities.
- MSc EF Consortium takes care that students are well informed throughout their studies and that all students have a place to turn to and contact person regardless of the issue they want to solve.





## 5.8 Resources – staff and facilities

- The competencies expected from all key staff members include high academic knowledge and skills based on most recent research, educational and pedagogical competencies, and coaching skills and intercultural competencies.
- MSc EF students have access to all facilities at the institutions of the *Full Partners*, including classrooms, libraries and computing labs, which are in most cases available 24/7 and are the main necessary facilities for the study programme.





## 5.9 Transparency and documentation

- General information about the programme including admission requirements and procedures, course catalogues, examination and assessment procedures have been published at the programme web site.
- Applicants, students as well as outsiders can inform themselves about the study programme.



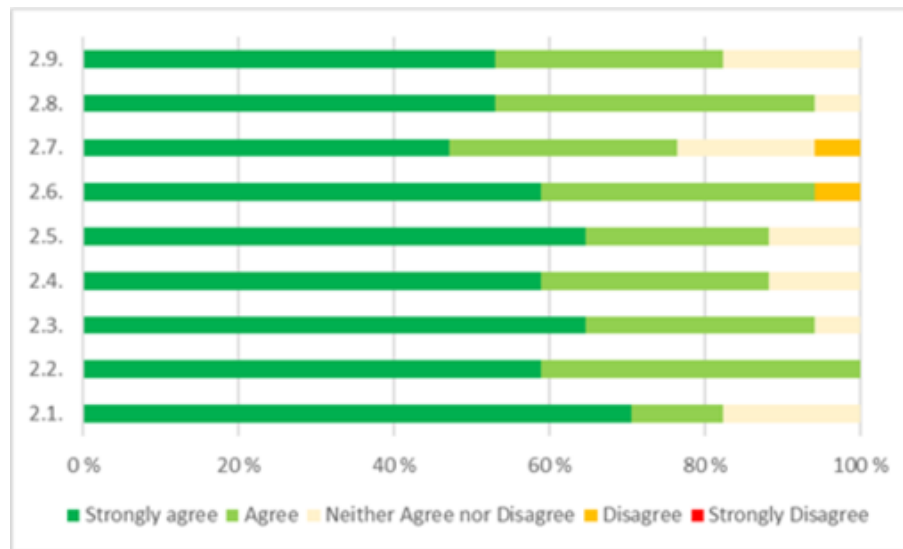
## 5.10 Quality assurance - Consortium Board, Internal and external evaluation processes

- The Consortium Board has decision mandate, is in charge of student selection processes and has responsibility for joint programme activities and for the Curriculum and quality assurance in general.
- Consortium Board has agreed to evaluate received feedback annually.
- The student representatives have the opportunity to present their views and suggestions for changes.
- The Quality Review Board (QRB) is the authority responsible of external quality assurance.



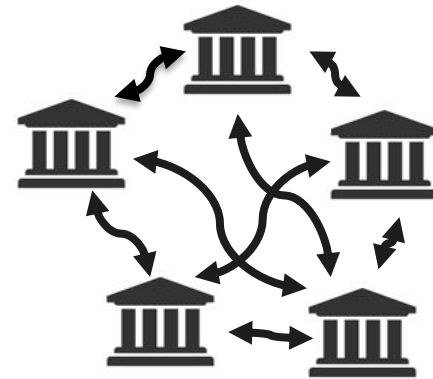
# An example of single teacher/course evaluation

1. *My understanding of the subject increased.*
2. *The studying atmosphere was encouraging.*
3. *The content of the course corresponded to the set goals.*
4. *The advance information given on the course was sufficient.*
5. *The learning materials promoted my learning.*
6. *The teacher(s) focused on the essentials.*
7. *The course was well organised.*
8. *The course contents were useful to me.*
9. *The objectives/learning outcomes of the course were clear.*



## 6. Why Accreditation?

- Supports management of network structured organisation
  - General university audits conducted nationally are not detailed enough
  - When staff changes occur -> good guidelines available
  - Motivation to keep all guidelines up-to-date
  - Less communication is needed when joint practices have been well defined for all needed aspects
  - Commitment of partners is formalised and less arguments/justification is needed in daily management
- Student perspective
  - Equal treatment of students within the network
  - Stability and trust
  - Information about management and procedures
- Marketing tool – quality confirmed formally



- Benefits

- Review of practises
- Formal documentation
- Gaps and development needs identified
- Recommendations for future improvement

- Workload

- Selection of consultant, 2 weeks
- Preparation of self-evaluation report (first version), 2 months + circulating among the partners
- Preparation of site visit programme, 2 weeks
- Site visit, 1 week



# Contact

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[www.europeanforestry.eu](http://www.europeanforestry.eu)

*Thank you!*



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