

Executive Summary

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) undertook a survey on behalf of the IPN Working Group 1 that would look at higher education marketing initiatives by both national agencies and higher education institutions (HEIs) across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in late fall 2010. The objective was to take a snapshot of what activities were being undertaken, who was involved in higher education marketing, what tools were being used, and if any marketing was being done that related specifically to the EHEA.

Thirty six countries responded to the survey, which was sent to the national ministries of education (?) and then forwarded to the best possible respondent. The surveys were completed by people in various functions and with varying degrees of experience with higher education marketing, and, in some cases, were likely filled out by a number of people answering different questions relating to their particular responsibilities. As such, the survey was written in a way that would make it as accessible as possible for the respondents, and the intent was more to get a broad sense of the activities across the EHEA than to fill in all the details. At the end of this report, a relatively large number of potential questions for follow-up surveys are suggested, which delve more into the specifics.

The results of the survey say something about the diversity of European higher education systems, as well as different reactions to a quickly changing world in which global competition, shifting demographics and student flows, international rankings, and increasing professionalization (some may say commercialization) have begun to impact on the day-to-day business of universities across Europe. Technology has changed how prospective students learn about degree programs or study abroad opportunities, whether its accessing a website, getting a recommendation from a friend via Facebook, or “tweeting” questions to a university directly. At the same time, marketing efforts—and in this case, we are speaking of those that impact student recruitment—are being undertaken at the institutional, national, and regional levels around the world.

In the face of these new challenges and opportunities, what does international higher education marketing look like today in the EHEA? The following are some of the key findings from the survey:

- International marketing is widespread across the EHEA, but takes different forms, has different focuses, and varying degrees of intensity from country to country
- Most HEIs or countries focus on a handful of key geographic target markets for their international marketing efforts
- At the national level, many EHEA countries do have national agencies focused on higher education marketing as well as departments in one or more federal ministries
- A broad range of marketing tools are used by HEIs, and the most popular are familiar tools such as leaflets/brochures, fairs, and websites
- There is a large degree of participation in pan-European marketing and promotional efforts such as the EHEFs or activities as part of EU-funded programs such as Erasmus Mundus
- There seems to be broad agreement on key messages about the EHEA such as quality of higher education institutions, diversity, and quality of life/culture

- There is less agreement about the benefit of EHEA-wide marketing efforts versus national or institutional undertakings
- There is not yet a common language about marketing within the EHEA, and terms can have very different meanings when taken in different national contexts

Looking at these results with the sense that marketing activities are likely to grow in future points to a clear question: what, if anything, could or should the EHEA countries do as a group to help raise the profile of the EHEA for international students and draw more students to Europe? The options that are suggested in this report are meant only to give a sense of the possible range of activities and to spur discussion. Some of these include:

- Create a website about the EHEA that is targeted towards potential students from outside of Europe
- Develop information “packages” about the EHEA that can be used on other websites for students as well as in the press.
- Distribute information with key messages about how to market HEIs within the specific context of the EHEA to people at national agencies and HEIs working on international marketing.
- Conduct research in key markets about perceptions of Europe, perceived benefits or hurdles to studying in the EHEA, the student decision-making process, etc.
- Build ties between organizations and individuals dealing with international higher education marketing by:
 - Hosting conferences and seminars that tackle the big issues faced by societies and HEIs around the world to, in part, showcase forward-thinking initiatives in Europe
 - Help build networks of marketing professionals within the EHEA to share best practices and create informal (or formal) training opportunities
 - Actively participate in international education conferences with topics related to the EHEA
 - Addressing EHEA marketing at forums that bring together key decision makers in the member countries

For these activities, and for others, there may be opportunities to access existing funding programs , particularly the Erasmus Mundus Action Line 3 for the Promotion of European Higher Education. Additional options would be for national agencies and ministries to contribute funds if they saw joint efforts as being in the best interest of the individual member state; foundations and NGOs in the higher education and research space; HEIs themselves (in the form of participation fees for conferences and seminars; other EU program lines.

The real mission of universities does not change in the context of marketing—they will still exist to serve society by training individuals, education the next generation of scholars, and pushing the boundaries of knowledge. With the “grand challenges” facing the world today, the importance of research and collaboration across disciplines and across borders seems even more clear. The purpose of marketing is not to shift this towards any form of “hyper-commercialization” but to make sure that the real strengths of HEIs and higher education systems in Europe are clear to prospective students in other countries.

In areas where there are shortages of domestic students such as the STEM fields, the ability to attract high-quality students to Europe—and retain some of them in European companies and universities—will be an important factor in the strength of the economies within the EHEA and the ongoing strength of the research institutions themselves. In the face of more “aggressive” student recruitment from key non-European target countries such as Australia, the waking up of the US institutions to the need to actively recruit international students, as well as the development of local options for students in key source countries such as India and China, it seems as if any additional benefit that may be provided to individual countries and HEIs by joint efforts within the EHEA would be welcome.

This survey and this report will hopefully present (or simply confirm) information about the current activities that can help shape the discussion about the future in helpful ways, and the authors thank everyone who participated in both the design of the survey itself and answering the questions.