

Human Rights Masters Programmes

There are currently four Human Rights Masters (HRM) Programmes financed by the European Commission:

- Mediterranean HRM, based at the University of Malta ("Malta")
- African HRM, based at the University of Pretoria ("Pretoria")
- South East Europe HRM, based at the University of Sarajevo ("Sarajevo")
- European Masters, based at the University of Padua

All the programmes are regional in scope, and all offer a series of lectures, tutorials and internships with external organisations, in standards, institutions and mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy, and require a dissertation from their students. Some offer an LLM while the others offer an MA. The courses last one academic year. Course activities take place in a variety of locations within the region.

The evaluation did focus in particular on two Masters that will end in 2004 – co-ordinated by the University of Malta in the case of the Mediterranean Masters, and the University of Pretoria in the case of the Southern African Masters.

Evaluation questions and methodology

The evaluation does assess the effectiveness and impact of the programmes and will evaluate the proposal for future organisation of the programmes.

To carry out the evaluation In-depth interviews with the staff were carried out at the host institutions, that is, the Centre for Human Rights in Pretoria (CHR-P) and the University of Malta (Faculty of Law and Foundation for International Studies).

In both cases teams of one international and one local consultant interviewed the programme administration, lecturers and tutors, former and current students, external examiners, staff of partner institutions and other programme stakeholders. In Malta, additional telephone interviews were held with former students, external examiners, lecturers and partners.

This evaluation was carried out by .Bård Anders Andreassen, Gerd Oberleitner, Tonio Ellul and Zuberi Farhana and finished November 2003

Description Masters programmes

The evaluation describes the operation of these Masters programmes and examines whether they meet their objectives and fulfil the criteria for added-value of EU funding, and assesses the likely and actual impact that the programmes may have on the professional lives and careers of the alumni. The report also addresses the ownership and effectiveness of the programmes, obstacles and problems encountered as to the background, skills and recruitment of students as well as problems of an administrative nature. The evaluation is put in the context of the whole European Masters Programme, and particularly the course offered at the University of Padua in Venice. It is based on terms of reference (ToR) from the European Commission and makes use of relevant project documents as well as interviews in Malta and Pretoria.

The African LLM in Human Rights and Democratisation is a 12-month programme for 25-30 exclusively African students. Five partner institutions take part in the programme. The overall goal of the African degree is to educate young professionals at post-graduate level by providing academic training in the norms, standards, institutions and mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy.

The Mediterranean Masters Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation is a 12-month programme for 40-50 students from the Mediterranean region and beyond. Its target groups are post-graduate students, government officials, including law enforcement officers, teachers, NGOs, women's rights activists, practising lawyers, journalists, business graduates and other graduates with an interest in human rights and democratisation. It involves 18 partner institutions in the region and six partners from outside.

In both programmes, the first semester takes place at the host university, while in the second semester students go to a partner university, where they write their dissertation and have the opportunity to do internships. Both programmes combine academic teaching with operational skill-building activities. While presenting the international human rights framework, both programmes focus on regional aspects of human rights and democratisation in their respective curricula.

This summary is from an evaluation commissioned by the European Commission on projects financed in the field of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) with the aim to promote and support human rights and democracy in third countries.

Information on activities and actions can be found on the EIDHR website:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/eidhr/index_en.htm

The views expressed in this summary do not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.

Features and qualities of the programmes

Compared with the first regional Masters programmes funded by the EU Commission (the Padua programme in Venice), the two programmes evaluated in the present report, referred to in the following paragraphs have their own features and qualities. As the first regional programme of its kind, the Padua programme developed its curriculum and network 'organically' over several years through processes of learning and failure. After about six years of existence, it contains a very high degree of academic commitment from partner institutions and from a roster of very high standard lecturers. The networking universities feel a deep ownership of a tightly-knit partnership association and there is a genuine network of co-operation and participation by all partners.

Other regional Masters have different histories and may not to the same extent have emerged 'from within', as they have relied to a very large extent on external initiatives, models and academic and financial resources. At the same time, within a relatively short period of time, these programmes have developed their own unique features in terms of bringing in people from conflict zones. Hence, these programmes go beyond the mere academic programme and add practical components that are very worthwhile and valuable. However, as reviewed in Recommendations, they seem to need consolidation and refinement of their programmes rather than expansion beyond their present scope.

The evaluation found that both programmes have a full inter-university structure with active participation and involvement in decision-making by the partner institutions. Partner institutions were considered to have a high level of achievement in human rights and democratisation issues, although the evaluation did not allow for a detailed analysis of all partners involved. Both Masters programmes have been successful in establishing an academic network suitable to their needs and objectives. Both bridge gaps between different academic environments and cut through language barriers.

Content

Formal recognition of the degree in partner countries is guaranteed, although the Malta Masters might have to ensure that this is translated on to the practical level.

Both Masters put strong emphasis on operation skill-building activities. Both programmes make use of an acknowledged academic journal, which is distributed within the region and beyond to further research and publish selected dissertations. The Masters differ in their success as far as the internship programme is concerned. The Pretoria Masters has a more formalised system, including a follow-up to students' activities. In the Malta Masters, only a few students opt for an internship. This system could be improved. Both programmes allow for a great variety of activities (a one-week tour through European human rights institutions and an academic conference in the Malta Masters, field trips to Rwanda and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha and a dissertation workshop in the Pretoria Masters). The Pretoria Masters provides an interesting example with the Mandela Award.

The quality and content of teaching is high-level, rewarding and demanding in both Masters programmes, involving a great number of experts from within and outside the region. The curriculum differs to quite an extent due to the different objectives and background of the students. The length of the Masters programmes and of the respective components is a matter of discussion. Tight schedules make both programmes utterly demanding and more time for writing the dissertations should be allowed in both programmes. In the Malta Masters, the timing of the internship could be made more flexible. The Pretoria Masters suffers from a lack of assistance and guidance for students to counter the 'flying-teacher' phenomenon. The Malta Masters deals with this better through its excellent system of formal and informal tutoring.

The Malta Masters is more focused on providing information on the EU's human rights activities and policies; the Pretoria Masters is in the process of integrating this issue better into its curriculum.

Students focus

The selection process for students is transparent, standardised and successful in securing a diverse and high-level group of students in both programmes. Neither language barriers or educational or academic background seriously impede the selection of students. Both programmes offer English language courses. Both programmes offer scholarships for students from within the region. The Malta Masters would benefit from more applications from Mediterranean countries not yet represented. The Pretoria Masters should consider allowing non-African students into the programme.

The system of student representation is successful in both programmes and both programmes succeed in ensuring consistency in the examination and assessment of dissertations. Both Masters programmes allow for evaluation of teaching staff and experts.

The Pretoria LLM puts more emphasis on following up graduates' career development, while little information on this is available for the Malta Masters. In the Pretoria LLM case there is a high degree of return by students to their home countries and institutions after completing their degree. Networking takes place at the informal level only. Both programmes look into the possibility of establishing alumni associations, but have no clear vision about the format and objectives of such associations.

Conclusions

In both Masters programmes, questions about effectiveness in relation to the objectives, the relevance for the stakeholders, the issue of ownership by host institutions and the impact on the stakeholders can largely be answered positively. Although quantitative data will have to be made available in future evaluations, there are indications that both programmes succeed in having a considerable impact on the professional and personal lives of alumni and, upon return to their home countries, on their immediate environment.

The evaluations are carried out in partnership with the Netherlands Humanist Committee on Human Rights and The Danish Institute for Human Rights.

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