

## TUBEMATES PROJECT: TOWARDS A COMPETITIVE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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tuBEMATES project is a transnational venture started in 2012 and focused on the promotion of European Higher Education (EHEs) and intercultural exchange with Third, in particular, Asian countries. It is aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of international studies as well as the visibility of European brand characterized by an innovative and competitive identity.

Relevant weaknesses of European Higher Education (EHE) have been highlighted by the research *Perceptions of European Higher Education in Third Countries* drew up by the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) in response to a call for tender issued by the European Commission's Directorate for Education and Culture.<sup>1</sup> In particular, the participation rate of Asian students in Erasmus Mundus Programme is still very low since their most favourite destinations are USA and Australia and European Higher Education is perceived by Asian students as less innovative, competitive and dynamic. Europe is perceived with less chances of employability either during the studies or post-graduation and even if European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are valorised for their tradition and cultural heritage, Asian students perceived diversities of languages and diversity of cultures as a barrier to communication. In conclusion, even if European Higher Education has a great potential (quality of education, tradition, internationally compatible degrees) it suffers from the lack of a unique brand, a clear European identity and an attractive synergy of diversities. In line with these studies and the new programme *Erasmus 4 All*, tuBEMATES has been tailored to sustain students' employability and foster collaboration between academic and business worlds. To achieve these results, Social Networking tools have been chosen to exchange information, experience and encourage self-promotion in a competitive labour market. tuBEMATES Community contributed to enhance the visibility of Erasmus Mundus and intercultural exchange successful stories providing information actually hard to access through attractive

1. Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), *Perceptions of European Higher Education in Third Countries*, 2005, <http://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Publications/Publications-and-Reports/IIE-Bookstore/Perceptions-of-European-Higher-Education>

tools and social virtual environment, such as a *Video Sharing Community* based on existing open source social networking engine (e.g. ELGG), tailored on specific project target group, university students.



Figure 1. tuBEMATES project website [www.tubemates-project.eu](http://www.tubemates-project.eu)



Fig.2. tuBEMATES Video Sharing Community <http://elgg.tubemates-project.eu/>

2. [www.youtube.com/  
channel/UC\\_  
7aEBnuvPD1w7kp5HNGHHw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_7aEBnuvPD1w7kp5HNGHHw)

A *YouTube Channel* has been set up to disseminate and share impressions on EM students' experiences<sup>2</sup>. In the first year project partners have recorded videos to promote the Programme, while in the second year a Transnational Video Trailer Competition has been launched. From February to June 2014, students, through short dynamic videos, were able to:

- contribute with real life trailers to disseminate the added value of Erasmus Mundus;
- promote mutual understanding and enrichment between different cultures;
- provide precious information and suggestions to forthcoming EM Students (Foreign University life, local habits, cultural background, language tips);
- promote themselves and the added value of foreign experience in the labour market among enterprises and business world;
- promote their culture and perspective through such video trailer recording it in English and in national language.

Thanks to this captivating transnational venture, European and Third Country EM Students were able to increase important transversal skills, essential in this changeable uncertain economic and political scenario. Competition has, in fact, reinforced key competences such as:

- social and civic competences;
- sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
- cultural awareness and expression;
- language, digital and English skills.

Making the videos students approached to the Methodology of Digital Story Telling (DST), that has been used to promote transnational studies and the added value of EM programme as well as supporting students' personal and professional growths.

