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The European M. Sc. programme in Agricultural, Food and Environmental Policy Analysis (AFEPA)

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The origin of the Programme

- The 1st edition of the AFEPA Programme took place in the years 2010-2014 with a first round of Erasmus Mundus funding
- At that time, UCSC was not involved in the Programme
- After the first edition, two of the original main partners formed a new Consortium, involving also our University
- The new Consortium submitted a first application in 2017 (unsuccessful) and a new **application in 2018** (finally successful!)
- Now the programme is running its **last year of funding** (2019/20-2022/23) and we are preparing a new application for February 2023

The origin of the Programme

- The four main partners of the Consortium have a long and well established **collaboration in research**, developed through several EU research projects under **FP6, FP7, H2020** and now **Horizon Europe** funding programmes
- One of the focus of our research is the **economic and social impact of agricultural, food and environmental policies**
- Studying the impact of policies in agriculture and food is very important for several companies/stakeholders:
 - Farmers and farmers' organisations (i.e. farm subsidies)
 - Food processors/retailers and their organisations (i.e. labelling/packaging rules)
 - Consumers and their organisations (communication and pricing rules)
 - Policy makers at International, EU, Member state and regional levels

The Consortium

- The Consortium includes four main partners:
 - [Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität](#) (UBonn) in Bonn, Germany
(*coordinator of the Programme*)
 - [Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore](#) (UCSC) in Piacenza, Italy
 - [Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences](#) (SLU) in Uppsala, Sweden
 - [Université catholique de Louvain](#) (UCLouvain) in Louvain-la-neuve, Belgium
- ...and three associated partners:
 - [Pontificia Universidad Católica](#) (PUC) in Santiago, Chile
 - [Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya](#) (UPC) in Barcelona, Spain
 - [African Economic Research Consortium](#) (AERC) in Nairobi, Kenya

Functioning of the Programme

- Each of the 4 main partners of the consortium has an **active regular M.Sc. Degree** (2 years – 120 ECTS) in the area of **agricultural and food economics**, entirely (or in large part) taught in English
- AFEPA students attend **the same classes** attended by regular students
- AFEPA students attend the **first year (60 ECTS)** in one of the four partner university and the **second year (54 ECTS)** in another one, and take two **summer schools (6 ECTS)**, one for each year
- Students may spend **short periods** in **associated partner** universities (i.e. for the thesis) or take an **internship** in a company/organisation

Admission

- **Centralised students:** Students apply via the AFEPA portal by January 31st. The academic Board evaluates the applications and ranks the students on:
 - Minimum eligibility criteria (i.e. contents of the Bachelor degree classes)
 - Additional subjects covered in the Bachelor degree
 - Bachelor grades
 - Motivation letter and references
- The **best ranked** students obtain the **EM Scholarships**. All the other admitted students may join the programme as self-funded students
- Self funded students **pay tuition fees in the Universities they attend** (1st year and 2nd year) plus an admin fee to the 1st year University to maintain the student status during the 2nd year
- Self-funded student may obtain the **Erasmus Exchange scholarship**

Admission

- **Decentralised students:** Regular students enrolled in the first year of each of the four Master's degree can apply for joining the AFEPA Programme during their 1st year of study
- The selection is carried out by the 1st year University, which proposes students for admission to the Consortium, which is responsible for the final decision
- Decentralised students **cannot obtain the EM scholarship and pay tuition fees for both years only in their first year University,** following the standard Erasmus Exchange scheme
- Decentralised students may obtain the **Erasmus Exchange scholarship**

Structure of the Programme



The Summer schools

- The Summer schools (one for each academic year) are activities dedicated **only to AFEPA students**, in which all students of the four Universities meet and spend one week together
- **First year students** present a tentative research proposal for their M.Sc. thesis to their colleagues and instructors. Based on their proposal, a supervisor is assigned in the 2nd year University
- **Second year students** defend their M.Sc. Thesis (finished or at an advanced stage), which is evaluated by the AFEPA Academic Board
- All students attend a **one-week intensive class (3 ECTS)** held by a recognised scholar in an **emerging research/policy topic** in agricultural and food economics, not covered in regular classes

The Summer schools





Internships

- **Internships** are **optional** and managed by the University that the student is attending (1st or 2nd year)
- Students may take the internship during the **summer of the 1st year** or the **second semester of the 2nd year** (sometimes connected with the thesis work)
- The **OECD internship** opportunity is managed directly by the consortium (each year one student is selected) and we are negotiating a similar opportunity with the FAO



Online activities

- After the Covid-19 experience, we have developed several common online activities
- **Presentation** of the 2nd year destinations to the 1st students
- **Seminars** organised by one of the four partners to which all other AFEPA students can attend online

Thesis

- Students are required to prepare a **M.Sc. Thesis (30 ECTS)** in subjects related to agricultural, food or environmental policies. Students may adopt a theoretical or empirical approach, but are encouraged to address a **concrete policy issue**
- The thesis is **jointly supervised** by two supervisors, from the 1st year and the 2nd year Universities
- The Thesis Thesis (finished or at an advanced stage) has to be **presented orally** at the **Summer School**

Degree Awarding

- At the end of the Programme, AFEPA students obtain a **double degree** from the two universities they attended and the **AFEPA Joint Certificate** (but *not yet a joint degree*)
- Each partner University **recognises the full year of activities** carried out in the other partner university for obtaining the national degree (although in some cases students may have to take slightly more than 120 ECTS)
- The **M.Sc. thesis** is valid for both degrees. In each of the two universities students follow the **local procedure for submission and defense**

Future of the Programme

- We are planning to introduce an **AFEPA joint degree**, certified by an International Agency, but this will always be awarded **together with the national degrees**
- Since the Programme is based on regular degrees, it can continue **independently of the EACEA funding**, with self funded students, either centralised or decentralised
- However, without the EM scholarships, participation of **non-EU students** would be **much more difficult** (unless they obtain a scholarship in their country or from an international source)
- That is the main reason for applying again to next round of funding



Thanks for your attention!

