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## Dear partner universities and scholarship holders within EM ECW China,

In the second newsletter you will be able to read more about the experience from different scholarship holders. You will also get an update of the mobility and short information about the survey we have made for the first part of the programme. The whole study will be presented and discussed among the partner universities of the consortium at the consortium meeting in Beijing in May. Partner universities will also receive information about the conference that will be held at Peking University on May 16-17.

Enjoy reading!

Best regards/Elisabeth Axell (Project Co-ordinator) and Katarina Wingkvist (Ass. Co-ordinator)

## Stories from scholarship holders

### Experience at Xiamen University

By Sam van Damme Ph.D. student at University College Dublin

As a Ph.D. student from University College Dublin, the Erasmus Mundus scholarship offers me the wonderful opportunity to spend 22 months at Xiamen University. Being a doctoral student at the School of Politics and International Relations at my home university in Ireland, I am also enrolled at Xiamen University's School of Public Affairs within the subarea of social policy. As courses are being taught in Mandarin, I accumulate credits by taking different courses taught in English at the School of Humanities, School of Economics and School of Asia-Pacific International Relations. Moreover, for more specific Ph.D. guidance I have a good relationship with my course responsible that speaks English perfectly. Xiamen is a wonderful coastal city in southeastern China that looks out to the Taiwan Strait. With a total population of 2.5 million and honored as "The Garden on the Sea" and "The Most Pleasant City in China", Xiamen became one of China's earliest Special Economic Zones in the 1980s. With an annual average temperature of about 21 C, Xiamen's climate is characterized by long, hot and humid summers and short, mild and dry winters. There is a vibrant expat community but Xiamen is also a hotspot for those eager to learn Mandarin. Amoy might be the local dialect, nevertheless everybody is happy to help you out in Mandarin. My Erasmus Mundus Scholarship allows me to be enrolled in the Overseas Education College where I attend Mandarin courses.

Inspired by the school motto: Pursue Excellence, Strive for Perfection, Xiamen University offers an increasing wide range of English-taught programs. The university presents its features as a university "in the Special Economic Zone on the coast near Taiwan and with close ties with overseas Chinese" and has enjoyed a fine reputation both at home and abroad. The 22,000 square meters library of Xiamen University offers 2 million books in Chinese and over 500,000 books in foreign languages.

Studying overseas in China is definitely an opportunity not to miss. In general research is about a lot more than just problem solving. It is about conceptualizing, finding issues and directions, definitions, exposition and critical insight. Studying abroad is just an-



other excuse to raise the bar on yourself and to question all that is around you while seeking out new ways of doing it or seeing it. Everything in life entails a set of opportunities or problems of some sort, but how often do we think about it that way and how can we improve to approach methodically the job of solving it? Doing a Ph.D. allows you develop a frame of mind to better research multidisciplinary subjects, jump into different interconnected areas while expecting that you will soon fully understand and come up with new perspectives that add value to the academic literature. In this global and admittedly challenging economy, a study abroad experience could also be the “extra” that distinguishes a student from the crowd in a competitive job market. Although the career component may be valid reasons to literally go the extra mile, China can be considered as one of the most challenging but also rewarding destinations. Studying in China is without a doubt a wonderful and life-changing experience that can result in a great deal of personal growth such as Chinese language proficiency, increased cultural awareness but maybe most importantly a more balanced perspective on world affairs.



### **An Unforgettable Experience Recognizing Kořakowski in Poland**

By Dr. Yanhong Liu, post-doctorate from The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Funded by the Erasmus-Mundus fellowship of the European Commission, I came to the University of Warsaw for a ten-month post-doc program on September 1st of 2010. Before this, I had respectively spent one year and one month in the US and UK for academic purposes. I believe that the academic or educational mobility is a very important and even necessary way to strengthen the understanding of any foreign country and its culture. My experience in Poland proved this.

On the All-Saints day, the most important festival for Polish people to memorize their relatives and friends passed away, I experienced an unforgettable occasion. That evening, I went to the public cemetery with my family and some Chinese fellows. We were trying to look for the tombs for soldiers who died during the wars, when we noticed a tomb with hundreds of candles and many people at its front. And we thought that might be a tomb of an important military leader. To be surprising, a Polish couple told us that this tomb attracted probably the most candles, was not of any military general or politician, but of a professor. His name was Leszek Kořakowski.

After returning home, I checked online and realized that Kořakowski was the best-known philosopher in contemporary Poland, and was particularly famous in academia for his reflection and criticism on Marxism. His three volume works entitled *The Main Currents of Marxism* has been widely recognized as a most comprehensive and authoritative research on Marxist thoughts by far. For the Polish public, he was popularly respected for the contribution to a peaceful political transition of Poland from a non-democratic regime to an open society, through influencing the people’s minds. Although he was forced to leave Poland in 1960s for political reasons and since then have lived abroad, mostly at the Oxford University of the UK, he finally returned to his homeland after the death in July 2009. He was buried as a hero of the country, according to a media report from China.

As a Chinese, it’s astonishing to see a contemporary intellectual has won so much respect from his people. In the tradition of China, the intellectuals have been admired mostly because they are most likely to be appointed by the government and then become the essential part of bureaucracy. The relative superior of social sciences to the natural sciences in the development in China was regarded by some people as a consequence of the prevalence of such kind of political culture. While Leszek Kořakowski and his legendary life has convinced us that, intellectuals have better ways to contribute to their nation and



thus be remembered by their people.

## Studying at Peking University

By Manuel Eder, undergraduate from the University of Vienna



Wow! A lot of things can happen in three months...

That's how long I have been here in Beijing. I came here to study mathematics and of course learn something about the country and the people and improve my Chinese.

I arrived here practically clueless of what was awaiting me. I had had two years of Chinese language training, so in theory I was able to understand what people was telling me and in turn make myself understood - but I was still terribly afraid when I went to the bank on the first day to set up my bank account - in Chinese.



There are lots of little interesting stories about the differences between Beijing and Vienna, that I could tell - you would still be reading tomorrow if I did that. The things that have really stuck in my mind though and that have caused changes in me are the differences in people's attitudes, values, ideas of how life works and is supposed to work.

The food, the traffic, the weather and even the opening hours (I'm referring to an earlier newsletter contribution here) - all of these things I have gotten used to - even up to the point where I don't really notice them.

But then I talk to my friends who study Mathematics with me and they tell me about what it means to be studying at Peking

University. How their last years in high school were mostly comprised of revising for the big tests that would decide whether and where they would be allowed to study. They tell me that a huge responsibility rests on their shoulders for being among the chosen few who are allowed to study at such a good university.

I am talking to my neighbour and somehow the topic turns on how the Turkish government is supporting or even urging, according to him, a certain Chinese province with a high percentage of Muslim population to declare independence. I ask him whether he has a personal opinion about that and he seems insulted. How would I like it if Vienna suddenly declared independence from Austria? The idea seems quite ridiculous to me. Austria is really small already. But even if Vienna was its own country - it might be a bit annoying - but then in the European Union borders between countries aren't really that noticeable anyway. After pressing the topic he explains to me how, when Outer Mongolia declared independence Russia was suddenly a lot closer to Beijing - and how that is a threat. And if that other province declared independence they might be supported by the USA, who might station military or surveillance equipment there.

I had been living in the illusion of a much more peaceful world - but maybe his view is closer to actual political situation.

I think my stay here will make itself noticeable in lots of small but important ways. I did not tell the above two stories to say that either my way of thinking or the way of thinking about the world I have encountered here in China is right or wrong. I told these stories because they recount experiences that were key for me in realizing assumptions I was making about how the world works even though I wasn't aware I was making those assumptions. To me the world was basically a safe place and war a very distant concept.

To me it was a given, that in the end everyone pursues their own interests and you study and learn because that is what you want to do - not because you owe anyone anything. That is just how things were for me. No further questioning required. Seeing that other people had totally different opinions on these topics made me realize that it was

actually possible to have different opinions about them.

I really value these kinds of experiences because... I don't really know why - it feels good to see a slightly bigger world - a world where not everything is set in stone, a world with more possibilities. Maybe some of you can understand that feeling. There would be a thousand more such experiences that I could recount but I don't have the space to do so here.



I think these experiences will truly benefit me, both personally and academically - both in my Chinese studies (of course) and in Mathematics. For me Mathematics is all about understanding the way you think and studying the consequences of that. That kind of stepping out of one's own frame of mind to discover something new about oneself takes a lot of practice - and I think I am getting that here. And of course I am really hoping that some of my friends here will hold to their promises of coming to Austria in the future.

The picture you see is of me snowboarding near Beijing with some friends I met here. I thought it might make a nice contrast to the maybe somewhat serious tone of my musings. (I am the one below.)

P.S.: Oh, and of course it's also really interesting to see how they do mathematics here :-), but I had to make some kind of selection of what to talk about and I thought these things might be more interesting to people not studying the same subject as me.

### **Academic staff exchange in Spain**

By Dong Xiaoying Ph.D, Associate Professor,  
Guanghua School of Management, Peking University

The academic trip to University of Deusto at Bilbao, Spain is very impressive. During the one month stay, I got to know that the place has been transformed from a traditional industrial city into a beautiful resort. It is vibrant and it is striving for development. The people I have talked with, from university deputy rector to dean of economics and management school, are all working hard to make it a more prestigious university and to establish international collaborations.

The economic development in China is a topic not new to students. During my lectures on (1)China-US exchange rate issue: what are Chinese concerns? (2)Economic reform in China: driver, routine and future; many insightful feedbacks were received. Those who raised the questions about China know China so well that their comments just hit the point. Although their views on China diverge, it's still provocative to know their impression about China.

It's too short to know a school well within a month, yet the one month stay is still an eye-opener as it gives me an overall impression on Spain.





### Conference in China

A conference about cooperation in higher education between China and Europe will be held at Peking University on 16-17 May. The conference is a cooperation between EMECW China, EMEA, Peking University, The European University Centre and the European Commission. The topics that will be addressed are Global trends in education, Funding possibilities, Joint programmes, How to use networks, and Internationalization indicators, and the European Commission will make a presentation on the results of the EU-China joint studies on "EU-China student exchanges" and "New Skills for New Jobs". A preliminary invitation has been sent out, and all partner universities will soon receive an official invitation. We would like representatives of the partner universities to spread the information about the conference among colleagues as well as the University's management.

### Survey of the first part of the programme

A survey has been sent to all scholarship holders regarding the first part of the programme. They answered questions regarding the website, the application procedure, communication with the coordinating team as well as the partner universities etc. We received 156 replies, and in general they have all been very positive. The scholarship holders have been satisfied with the website, and with all help they have received during the application process. Most scholarship holders have stated that they received replies to their e-mails between 1-4 days after they sent it, which is a great result. A more detailed presentation will be made during the EMECW China consortium meeting on 18 May in China.

### Final mobility outcome

The number of nominated scholarship holders was 205 students and staff. After a number of very late drop-outs that could not be replaced, 186 scholarship holders have started their mobility. The Chinese scholarship holders amount for 72 % of the total number of scholarship holders. The remaining are European citizens.

#### *EM ECW, statistical summary*

	From China	From Europe	Total	% of total mobility
Undergraduate	10	9	19	10
Master	42	8	50	27
Ph. D	36	9	45	24
Post-doctorate	18	3	21	11
Staff	28	23	51	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>100</b>