

# Mobility Flow of Students & Academics Between Countries in Asia

## Key to Achieving Long-term Solidarity of the Region

By Naoyuki HARAOKA

### Increasing Importance of Regional Integration Initiative in World Governance

Regional integration is now an important trend in the world. Not only the EU and NAFTA, but also many smaller regional economic cooperation frameworks that feature regional trade liberalization as their most important part are now playing a pivotal role in stabilizing the regional economies of Latin America and Africa. In Asia, ASEAN plus 3 or 6, China-Japan-Korea FTA, TPP and FTAAP (APEC-wide economic integration attempt) are being discussed. Since the global governance represented by the WTO, IMF, G20, UN, etc. does not work well, regional communities can be considered a practical solution for resolving international economic and political issues such as trade, global climate, macropolicy, and security. Even though a multilateral rule-making framework such as the WTO may still be considered an ultimate goal, regional integration schemes should be considered building blocks to achieve a multilateral mechanism.

Regional communities are created on the basis of spontaneous economic and historical relations among neighboring countries. However, in the long run, we should think about how to strengthen the solidarity of the region in order to achieve a credible contribution by the region to global governance. Not only the mobility flow of goods and services and capital but also human resources can play a crucial role to achieve this. Human networks would contribute to consolidating the unity among the members of the community and their closer ties would enhance the credibility of their contributions as a regional community entity to global governance.

### ERASMUS Plays Core Role to Strengthen European Unity

The EU has a special European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) Programme, a European Union student exchange program established in 1987. The Programme is named after the Dutch philosopher Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, who lived and worked in many places in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries to expand his knowledge and gain new insights. Erasmus is known as an opponent of dogmatism, with a wide range of experience of cultural diversity; thus this program seeks to raise Europeans who are open to cultural diversity and

contribute to the unity and solidarity of the European nations.

Currently, more than 150,000 students, or almost 1% of the European student population, take part in this program. It is also to be noted that the proportion is even higher among university teachers, where ERASMUS teacher mobility is 1.9% of the teacher population of Europe.

It is necessary for students to study for a degree or diploma at a tertiary-level institution and complete their first year in order to participate in the ERASMUS Programme. Students who join the ERASMUS Programme study for a period of from at least three months to an academic year in another European country, and the program ensures that the period spent abroad is recognized by their university when they come back. Students do not have to pay any extra tuition fees to the university that they visit. An ERASMUS grant is also available to help students cover the additional expenses of living abroad. Students with disabilities can also apply for an additional grant to cover extraordinary expenses.

For many European students, the ERASMUS Programme is their first time living and studying abroad. Therefore, it has become very popular among European students. The program provides an opportunity not only for them to learn about and understand the host country, but also to develop their career and above all to create a human network among the students of different nationalities. ERASMUS students are considered a potentially powerful force in creating a pan-European identity, in particular in terms of their multilingual capacity.

TV5, a French TV channel, highlights students' life in the ERASMUS Programme as follows. Heidelberg, a small medieval and romantic city, is the oldest university town in Germany. One-fifth of the inhabitants of the city are students. Emile, one of the French students in the ERASMUS Programme, is studying history at the University of Heidelberg. He said, "First, I wanted to go to Spain, since I liked the movie 'L'auberge espagnole,'" which, it is claimed, has led to an increase in potential ERASMUS students in Barcelona, Spain. "But I am enjoying being here, in particular, meeting with people from all over the world and mixed cultures. I also like the high-quality teaching staff."

Another French student, Jean-Marie, lives in a university dormitory at 300 euros per month, and shares meals with five other foreign students. When he came to Heidelberg, he spoke only German as a foreign language. But now, thanks to his friends from many other nations, he can also speak other languages than German, such as Greek. According to him, German is not the most frequently used language here, though the location is in Germany.

The ERASMUS students at Heidelberg are obliged to attend only less than 10 hours of class per week, which

means the ERASMUS Programme provides a sort of sabbatical year for students. All depends on their motivation, according to a German professor of history. He said, "There are few exams here, which could give the program a concept of liberty. However, this means a year-long program to learn independence rather than enjoying a vacation."

Elie, who is also a French student in the program, has decided to stay one more year rather than going back to France after one year's study at Heidelberg, as that will be good for her CV. Today, the ERASMUS students prefer going to sunny cities such as Grenada, Madrid, and Valencia. However, Heidelberg is still a good choice in terms of job searches, since Germany can give them the best job opportunities in Europe.

This TV report describes very well the essence of the ERASMUS Programme, namely, the joy, the usefulness, and above all the fraternity among the students from the different nations, all of which are brought to the students participating in the program. In particular, the story above highlights French students in Germany and thus shows us that the program has contributed to ensuring friendship between France and Germany, which used to be enemies during World War II and are now rivals in the EU. The EU is very ambitious about the internationalization of its university education. It recently expanded the ERASMUS Programme to non-European countries, in the ERASMUS Mundus Programme. This supports academic excellence and the attractiveness of Europe's higher education worldwide, and fosters cooperation with targeted third countries with the objective of contributing to their development.

More specifically, the program offers joint masters and doctoral programs including a scholarship scheme and mobility flows of students and academics between European and non-European higher education institutions. The European Commission informs potential applicants about funding opportunities through a program guide and regular calls for proposals published on the ERASMUS Mundus website.

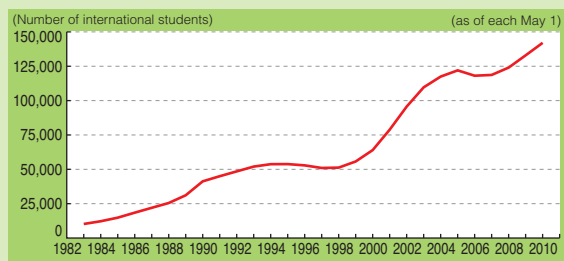
## Creating ERASMUS-like Program in Asia Important for Regional Peace & Prosperity

If we could create a program like ERASMUS in Asia, it would be extremely instrumental for realizing the solidarity of Asia in the long run. Japan, being equipped with good universities, should be one of the leading nations in Asia to create such a program.

Though the number of Japanese students who study abroad is declining, reflecting young Japanese people's diminishing interest in going abroad, the number of foreign students coming to Japan to study is increasing (Chart). The US is the most popular country for Japanese students. However, according to US statistics, in 2009 the number of Japanese students studying in the US was 29,264 persons, recording a 13.9% decline over 2008, and corresponding to only 4.4% of the total number of foreign students studying in the US.

As the Chart shows, the number of foreign students studying in Japan is steadily increasing and reached 141,774

## Increase in no. of foreign students coming to Japan



Note: "International student" in these statistics is defined as a student from a foreign country who is receiving education at any Japanese university, graduate school, junior college, technical college, professional training college or university preparatory course, and who resides in Japan and has a "college student" visa status.

Source: Japan Student Services Organization

## Number of international students by nationality

(as of May 1, 2010)

Country/region	Number of students	Country/region	Number of students
China	86,173	Nepal	1,829
Republic of Korea	20,202	Bangladesh	1,540
Taiwan	5,297	Mongolia	1,282
Vietnam	3,597	Myanmar	1,093
Malaysia	2,465	Sri Lanka	777
Thailand	2,429	France	705
US	2,348	Germany	554
Indonesia	2,190	India	546

Source: Japan Student Services Organization

persons in 2010. The Table shows us that the overwhelming majority of these foreign students come from Asia.

Taking advantage of this situation, by following Europeans' wisdom, Japan should play a leading role in achieving an Asian version of the ERASMUS Programme; thus mutual understanding and friendship would be created from the college campus, and the new leadership created there would lead Asia to solidarity. If we can create this now, Asia will be run by leaders with a completely different socialization from those of today within 20 years. In turn, this would give us a completely different picture of various Asian-Pacific economic integration ideas.

Many Japanese universities today have actually started blueprinting a plan to increase the number of foreign students on their campuses, and some have already implemented it. The Japanese government has also started a wide range of policies to double the number of foreign students studying in Japan.

We will introduce some of these attempts in our succeeding issues, believing that contributing to enhancing the mobility of students between nations is one of our missions. After all, we should not forget another benefit of enhancing the mobility of intellectuals, that is that under globalization, cultural diversity should be considered a strength rather than a weakness of the economy. Synergy between different cultures could create competitiveness overall.

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