

# GLOBAL MASTER SANS PORTUGAL? <sup>1</sup>

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On February 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008, a general workshop for students of the “European Master in Computational Logic” – the EMCL – of which I am the national coordinator, took place at the campus of “Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia” – FCT/UNL – of “Universidade Nova de Lisboa” – UNL. The event was organized by the Computer Science Department. For more information: [http://centria.di.fct.unl.pt/~jja/EMCL\\_Workshop](http://centria.di.fct.unl.pt/~jja/EMCL_Workshop)

This Master of Science program is an official Bologna 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle. It is one of the first 14 supported by the Erasmus Mundus Program, since 2004, due to its high quality, and is run by a consortium of 5 European universities: U. Nova Lisboa, U.P. Madrid, T.U. Dresden, F.U. Bolzano, and T.U. Vienna.

42 students (over 60% of the total) and several professors from all 5 universities attended the workshop. The students came from 22 different countries of origin, spread throughout the 5 continents, but just 1 was Portuguese:

**Europe** (18): Germany 6, Italy 2, Macedonia 1, Portugal 1, Russia 6, Serbia 2; **Africa** (1): Nigeria 1; **Asia** (13): Bangladesh 1, China 1, Georgia 1, Yemen 1, India 2, Israel 1, Nepal 1, Pakistan 1, Thailand 1, Vietnam 3; **America** (7): Argentina 1, Bolivia 1, Brazil 2, Mexico 3; **Oceania** (3): Indonesia 3. If one also counts the professors, we need to add Spain and Austria, making it a grand total of 24 nationalities.

During the workshop 9 students presented their theses and projects. There was also a small ceremony for the delivery of the best 2007 thesis award. The winning thesis was chosen among 10 candidate ones by a consortium jury. The award was delivered by the Dean of FCT/UNL, Professor Fernando Santana. Additionally, an IBM internship was awarded to a student. It will take place at the IBM's research center in Rome, and we wish to thank IBM for that.

At the workshop, professors from the 5 universities involved presented the study opportunities of their local courses and theses themes for the next year, in order to facilitate 1<sup>st</sup> year students' choice of the university where they will spend their next year. Indeed, each student goes to two universities, one in each year of the MSc.

There were also discussion sessions amongst the students, to identify their common problems and, subsequently a session with the professors responsible for this master program, in which the problems were presented and discussed. Furthermore, some alumni came to share their own experience during the master program, especially

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of an opinion article published 6 March 2008 in Portugal's “Diário Económico”. See: <http://diarioeconomico.sapo.pt/edicao/diarioeconomico/opinion/columnistas/pt/desarrollo/1097373.html>

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concerning the preparation to follow on towards a PhD program, and also to give a word of advice to the younger colleagues about this academic track choice, namely explaining what PhD student life is like, and how to choose a university and a supervisor.

Finally, the workshop was also an opportunity for a personal get-together amongst students from the various universities, with an attractive social program organized by the EMCL students currently staying at UNL.

It is worth noticing that the majority of students coming out of EMCL continue on to a PhD degree in a variety of countries (some are at UNL), thereby certifying the quality of this master program, while the rest go out to industry. The number of students that give up is indeed very small. Actually, the students are chosen among the best candidates from all over the world. Around twenty grants per year are awarded by a European Erasmus Mundus program to the best of them, but only to non-European ones. Hence, not every such student gets a grant, and besides there are also European students. Apart from the ones already mentioned earlier, there are or have been also other nationalities present in the EMCL: Austria, Belo-Russia, Bulgaria, Spain, Ethiopia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Montenegro, Czech Republic, Ukraine, USA, and Turkey.

The master program has also had non-EU professors coming from several nationalities such as: South Africa, Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Uruguay, USA, and Vietnam.

The lingering question is “Why, in 5 editions of this international master program, have we only had 1 Portuguese student?”

The EMCL is taught totally in English, it has been approved as a 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle by our Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education and already complied with the Bologna requirements even before that. The UNL professors teaching EMCL courses lecture on its topics the world round, and in Lisbon teach students from all around the world. Paradoxically, our country pays its professors to provide this global and high quality 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle degree which opens up international opportunities, but the Portuguese students don't take advantage of that. Can it be for fear?