

## **BACKGROUND NOTE FOR SESSION 1: INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

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### **Introduction**

Since its beginnings, the Bologna Process was meant to strengthen the competitiveness and attractiveness of the European Higher Education by fostering the students' mobility and creating the framework for the international dimension of higher education. These two themes were both very high on the agenda of the Bologna Process Ministerial Conference held in Bucharest, Romania, in 2012. Discussions on these subjects resulted in adopting a "*Mobility for better learning*"<sup>1</sup> Strategy – as annex to the Ministerial Communiqué –, thus agreeing that all member countries will develop and implement their own internationalization and mobility strategies with concrete aims and measurable mobility targets, contributing to the achievement of the EHEA objectives.

Converging with this document, the European Commission has launched in 2013 "*The European higher education in the world*"<sup>2</sup> strategy that aims to promote mobility and cooperation between the member states and the non-EU countries. According to this policy document, "a comprehensive internationalisation strategy should cover key areas grouped into the following three categories: international student and staff mobility; the internationalisation and improvement of curricula and digital learning; and strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity building. These categories should not be seen as isolated but as integrated elements of a comprehensive strategy." (EU Communication, 2013)

This background note provides the context for the papers and programme on the theme of internationalisation at the Second Bologna Researchers Conference, Bucharest, 24-26 November 2014.

### **Its development**

The strategic notion and concept of 'internationalisation' dates from the 1990's. Before, there was already a substantial tradition of research and practice on the international dimension of higher education, in general under the term 'international education', or under terms that reflect some kind of international activity. Basically these traditional terms were either related to mobility, such as study abroad, exchanges, international students or academic mobility, or related to curriculum, such as multicultural education, international studies, peace education, area studies. These terms described a concrete element of international education and later internationalisation, and in many cases were used as pars pro toto and as a synonym for the overall term.

The use of 'internationalisation' in relation to higher education already can be noticed in publications in the 1970s. But it is only in the 1990s that the term 'internationalisation' really takes over from 'international education' as describing the different ways the international dimensions in higher education are taking shape. This shift is a reflection of the increasing importance of these international dimensions in higher education and of the related transfer from a marginal set of programs and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/2012%20EHEA%20Mobility%20Strategy.pdf>;

<sup>2</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/NOT/?uri=CELEX:52013DC0499>;

activities to a more comprehensive process. In Europe, this shift was very much stimulated by the research programmes and mobility scheme ERASMUS of the European Commission.

Internationalisation over the past forty years, from since the first initiatives for European programmes (following initiatives in some countries like Sweden and Germany) started, has moved from a reactive to a pro-active strategic issue, from added value to mainstream, although in many cases still more in intention and discourse than in practice. It also has seen its focus, scope and content evolve substantially. Increasing competition in higher education, the commercialisation and the increased cross-border delivery of higher education, have challenged the value traditionally attached to cooperation: exchanges and partnerships. At the same time, the internationalisation of the curriculum and the teaching and learning process (also referred to as 'Internationalisation at Home') has become as relevant as the traditional focus on mobility (both degree mobility and mobility as part of the home degree).

Over the past forty years internationalisation of higher education has taken several forms and accents. In the nineteen seventies and early eighties, internationalisation in many countries was primarily focused on the development cooperation and aid. In the second half of the nineteen eighties, internationalisation took a different direction. In most of continental Europe, thanks to the development of scholarship programmes and mobility schemes, in particular the ERASMUS programme, the emphasis focused from aid to exchange of students and teachers as well as curriculum development. In countries like the United Kingdom and Australia, on the contrary, the emphasis shifted from aid to trade. Instead of scholarships, universities were forced by their governments to charge full cost fees to international students. Against all expectations, it has been surprising to see that this did not result in a decrease of international students but in a substantial increase, making the United Kingdom the number 2 and Australia the number 5 country in receiving international students who want to pursue a full degree abroad, behind the United States and close to Germany and France.

In the nineteen nineties, influenced among others by the Asian economic crisis – as the large majority of their international students come from these countries – Australia and the United Kingdom took the lead in a new direction of internationalisation, referred to as transnational education, cross-border delivery of education or offshore education. Their universities developed branch campuses and franchise operations in countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, South Africa and so on. A shift in movement from students to the movement of programs and universities. Together with the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom are the leading nations in international higher education by their inflow of international students and their offshore activities. This shift in internationalisation in the nineteen nineties and further evolved in the past decade, is referred to as a shift in paradigm from cooperation to competition, a more commercial approach to international higher education.

In continental Europe, this more commercial approach was originally watched with rather negative eyes. Free or low tuition fees higher education was and still is more common there, and that applied until recently also to students from outside the European Union. We see in the past few years also in continental Europe (Denmark, Sweden, The Netherlands in particular) a move to full cost fees for international students from outside of the EU, and there is an increasing pressure on national tuition fees.

Recently though, we also notice a reaction on the strong commercial focus in international education. The higher education sector has understood that too much of a commercial approach will jeopardize the quality of education, the reputation of the institutions, and by that the future inflow of national and international students. This implies: more selection on international students, accreditation and quality control of their offshore operations, transfer of revenues to better facilitate, council and guide international students, and more emphasis on the internationalisation of their curriculum and on study abroad of the own students.

Last but not least we also see a shift in geographical sense. The traditional divide between North and South and East and West of the past century is no longer to be taken for granted. The increasing importance of Asia, the developments in the Middle East, Latin America and Africa change also the higher education landscape and by that its international dimension. They bring in new values, new approaches and new relationships.

It would be too easy, however, to assume that everything has changed over the years with regard to the internationalisation of higher education, and that this change is primarily from a more cooperative model to a more competitive model. There are different accents and approaches. Internationalisation strategies are filtered and contextualised by the specific internal context of the university, by the type of university, and how it is embedded nationally. Internationalisation strategies are shaped at the programme level by the different relationship these programmes have to the market and society. An internationalisation strategy can be substantially different for a teacher training programme than for a school of dentistry or a business school. And internationalisation strategies may be different by level: PhD, master and bachelor.

In this context it is not surprising that we see a call for a change of thinking about internationalisation, a move to mainstreaming it within the overall quality of education, a move to a more comprehensive approach and less revenue based. Several indications of this call are at the same time emerging. The essay with the title 'The end of internationalisation' by Brandenburg and de Wit (2011) might have functioned as a wakeup call, but other initiatives developed at the same time. In particular worth mentioning was the initiative of the *International Association of Universities* (IAU) to start a discussion about the need to re-examine the concept of internationalisation and define a call for action based on it (IAU, 2012a and 2012b, [www.iau-aiu.net](http://www.iau-aiu.net)). The group addressed three questions: Is the concept and the definition of internationalisation keeping up with developments in higher education? Is there a shared understanding of the concept? Has internationalisation lost sight of its central purposes? A call for action has been formulated by IAU based on their work. (IAU, 2012b, [www.iau-aiu.net](http://www.iau-aiu.net)) The Global Surveys on internationalisation of higher education of IAU, like the 4<sup>th</sup> one of 2014 (Egron Polak and Hudson, 2014) provide valuable input on the perceptions of university leadership in different parts of the world and on trends in benefits and risks of internationalisation for higher education.

## **Impact**

More than in numbers of mobile students, the impact of programmes like ERASMUS has been on the internationalisation and the reform of higher education. ERASMUS has paved the way for the reform of European higher education under the Bologna Process, has been a pilot for its study point scheme ECTS, and was an initiator for the opening up to countries in Central and Eastern Europe to EU-membership, as it is for current aspiring candidate members. The programme stimulated both national governments and institutions of higher education to develop European and international strategies. The new 'ERASMUS+'

programme reflects this global approach to ERASMUS and the ambition of the Commission to extend the scope and targets of the programme: an additional 5 million students studying abroad between 2014 and 2020.

In the Bologna Declaration of 1999 and the Lisbon Strategy of 2000 the two dimensions of internationalisation meet: cooperation and competition. On the one hand both processes emphasise that there should be more cooperation resulting in a European area for higher education and research: 'A Europe of Knowledge'. On the other hand, there is strong emphasis on the argument that this cooperation is required in order to cope with the competition from the United States, Japan and, increasingly, China and other emerging economies. Also the Communication, 'European Higher Education in the World', in which the European Commission presents its internationalisation strategy, reflects these two dimensions in the three pillars: mobility, internationalisation at home and cooperation and partnership.

### **The Future**

The global higher education landscape and its international dimensions is constantly changing. The global competition for talent, the emergence of international branch campuses, growing complexity in cross-border activity and the debate in the United States on the payment of agents to recruit students are just some of the issues that until recently were not at the forefront of higher education debates. However, these are now high priorities, not only for international educators but also for university presidents, associations of universities, politicians and other key higher education players around the world.

The emergence of a global higher education space has implications for our way of looking at internationalisation. As the international dimensions of higher education have developed their own momentum and become a global topic of interest, the growing 'globalisation of internationalisation' requires a more nuanced approach to its interpretation and delivery than has hitherto been the case.

Western countries have tended to dominate research and discussions on internationalisation, and the flow of students has been largely in their direction. However, as more countries attract inbound students and open up to internationalisation, their experiences offer new perspectives and issues for consideration.

Some of the same questions arise that have long been debated in the West, yet these different contexts offer insights that can inform practice elsewhere, whether related to the student experience or to institutional concerns. Over the past few years East Asia and South East Asia have become key recruiting regions, with Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, for example, all declaring themselves international education 'hubs'. To this list can be added China, Japan, Korea, India, Brazil, South Africa and the Middle East, among others, and many more if we include international branch campuses of Western universities.

Notions of importing and exporting countries are being turned upside down as students choose study destinations in countries once seen as merely sending students to the West to study. Global mobility flows are increasingly complex, then, offering new opportunities for those able and willing to access them.

Voices from countries with more recent international engagement should be heard as offering new perspectives and dimensions to the existing landscape of international education.

In essence, internationalisation efforts in higher education need to be focused on moving away from input and output to more of a process and outcome approach to internationalisation, ensuring that students and faculty are prepared and competent for an increasingly global and interconnected society.

In this process of globalisation of internationalisation to be effective, ethical, responsible and sustainable, the following priorities are according to Jones and de Wit (2012) essential:

- Learn from other, non-Western national and cultural contexts, not only through collaborations and transnational programmes but also through perspectives on internationalisation itself.
- Ensure that no single approach or paradigm dominates the discourse, but take into account the nature of internationalisation as a comprehensive process.
- See internationalisation not as a goal in itself, but as a contribution to the quality of students' education and research.
- Be more explicit about institutional and individual motivations so that internationalisation objectives and outcomes are clear and measurable.
- Pay more attention to faculty and student perspectives.
- Understand better the impact of international and intercultural learning outcomes on student employability, taking into account the perspectives of employers.
- Continue research on the benefits of internationalisation and the impact on students, faculty and administrators.
- Better understand the link between internationalisation and multiculturalism.

### **Input from the papers**

The thematic coordinators of the theme have accepted seven papers for the Conference:

1. Internationalization of Higher Education: Navigating between Contrasting Trends, *Sarah Guri-Rosenblit (The Open University of Israel)*
2. Internationalization Strategies and Policies in Second-Tier Higher Education Institutions, *Hans de Wit (Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI) at the Università Cattolica Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy), Miri Yemini (School of Education, Tel Aviv University, Ramat Aviv, Tel Aviv, Israel), Randall Martin (British Columbia Council for International Education (BCCIE), Canada)*
3. Internationalisation as a lever for change, *Dr. Fiona Hunter (Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI), Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy)*
4. Conceptualising internationalisation of the curriculum, *Jos Beelen (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences School of Economics and Management), Elspeth Jones*
5. The Impact of a University's Social Environment on the Development of Intercultural Competence in First Year Master Students, *Jeanine Gregersen – Hermans (Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore)*
6. Balanced mobility – a reachable objective?, *Irina Ferencz (Academic Cooperation Association)*
7. CoSMiCE – Challenges of Student Mobility in a Cosmopolitan Europe, *Janine Wulz, Florian Rainer*

These seven papers reflect both the ongoing conceptual debate on and the diversity in internationalisation in higher education in Europe and beyond: diversity by focus (abroad and/or at

home), diversity by country and diversity by level and type of institution. Two papers are focused on mobility, two on curriculum and learning outcomes, one on the second tier universities, one on a country (Italy) and one on internationalisation in the global landscape.

## References

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