



INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ROMANIA AND PORTUGAL — STRATEGIES AND TRANSITIONS AT THE PERIPHERY

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WHY STUDY INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION?

From a trend reserved for systems with an already existing competitive position in the global arena to a priority for most institutions and governments, due to globalization, demography, decrease in public funding;

A declared top priority for higher education institutions (HEIs) across the world;

Can be seen, especially in countries transitioning from a totalitarian regime to a democracy, as both an international norm diffusion process and as a distinct policy process in a wider context of transition;

Teichler (1999) argues that internationalization reinforces the status-quo (which makes more powerful actors its primary beneficiaries);

Driver for policy change (Enders, 2004).

WHY ROMANIA AND PORTUGAL?

- Recent transitions from totalitarian regimes to democracy, in a wider European environment (1989 – Romania and 1974 – Portugal);
- Similar massification and democratization of HE trends in Portugal and CEE countries (Neave & Amaral, 2012);
- Historical, cultural and ethnic trends influence foreign policy and HE international cooperation;
- Heavy use of EU funds, while also internalizing the European discourse focusing on competitiveness and internationalization (albeit from a lower competitive position in comparison to UK, France, Germany etc.);
- Binary HE systems (though Romania gave up in 2000).



ROMANIA

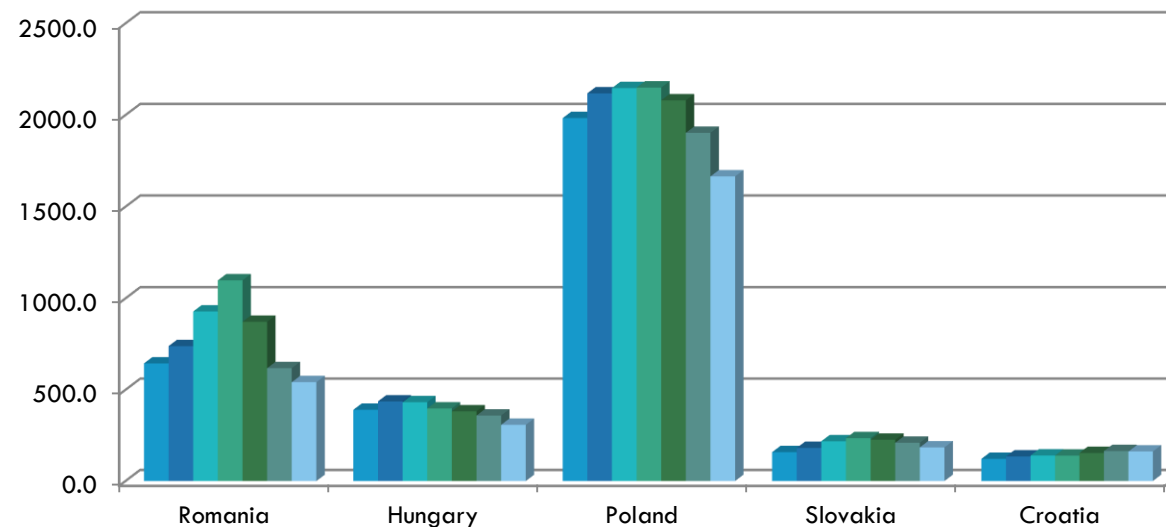


CONTEXT

- Massification of HE and the private sector;
- The distinct academic tradition and the double centralization effect (Napoleonic model and communist centralized governance system);
- The openness to Europeanization trends and the presence of international actors (especially UNESCO-CEPES, the World Bank and the European Commission);
- The domestic actors' configuration.

STEEP DECLINE IN HE STUDENT ENROLMENT

Thousands of students enrolled (Eurostat)								Decline
Year	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2015 vs peak
Romania	643,9	738,8	928,2	1098,2	871,8	618,2	541,6	-50,7%
Hungary	390,5	436,0	431,6	397,7	381,9	359,0	307,7	-29,4%
Poland	1983,4	2118,1	2146,9	2150,0	2080,3	1902,7	1665,3	-22,5%
Slovakia	158,1	181,4	218,0	235,0	226,3	209,5	184,4	-21,5%
Croatia	121,7	134,7	140,0	139,1	154,0	164,6	162,0	-1,6%



THE IMPACT OF CONTEXT

Impact on regulation: a focus of quality assurance practices on capacity-related issues.

Impact on discourse: public perception of “excessive” participation, despite Romania placing last among EU and accession countries for tertiary education attainment for the 30-34 cohort (national target for 2020: 26,7%).

Ill-suited distribution of state-funded “places” (study grants).

A renewed rise in the share of public universities in overall enrolment, as well as a growing share of tuition-free places in total enrollment.

Political shortcuts impacting HE: e.g. use of investment funding to keep politically heavy regional universities afloat and postpone key decisions regarding the reform of the funding system.

A HISTORY OF CONSTANT CHANGE

Policies on higher education have changed frequently over the past 40 years, with each decade having a distinct flavour.

1980s: crackdown on generalist universities and focus on industry-related fields. Capacity rolled back in several institutions.

1990s: adapting universities to extreme massification and the emergence of a private sector. New governance practices and policy download from perceived best practice models and international actors recommendations.

2000s: end of the massification era, focus on quality, Bologna structural implementation, but only incremental changes for funding and structure.

2010s: internationalization as a priority, attempts at system rationalization, most of which fail amid political pressure, plagiarism scandals, political and legal instability.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS — NATIONAL LEVEL

Internationalization — as a “fruit of context”;

Rationales for internationalization:

- Europeanisation imperative;
- Economic gain;
- Foreign policy (Moldova) and cultural diplomacy (Francophonie).

Actors and interests:

- Mainly technocrats and experts in European cooperation (IEMU);
- Researchers' associations;
- University administrators;
- Students organizations.

Over-reliance on international actors (EC, UNESCO-CEPES and World Bank) and EU funds;

Internationalization of HE never reached the stage of policy formulation

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS – INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

“World of dead letters” (Falkner and Treib, 2008);

Rationales for internationalization:

- International standing and prestige;
- Demography;
- Financial loss (in close link with demographic downturn due to the funding formula);
- Faculty career advance and networking.

Actors and interests:

- Extremely varied (but policy entrepreneurs and leadership have a strong role);
- Crucial role of expertise and continuity.

COMPARATIVE FINDINGS

Potential future drivers:

- further European integration,
- demographic decline and funding cuts (little push from long-term planning processes). Little continuity if European funding would suddenly stop or if key policy entrepreneurs disappear.

Internationalization – a legitimate (and legitimized) discourse in HE policy, but without a real commitment for comprehensive internationalization policies;

Not a problem of policy misalignment, but rather of:

- Lack of coordination between different areas of public policy (e.g. HE and foreign or economic affairs, as well as immigration policies);
- Lack of capacity as a key issue in advancing to a real policy formulation and implementation stage.



PORTUGAL

Portuguese empire

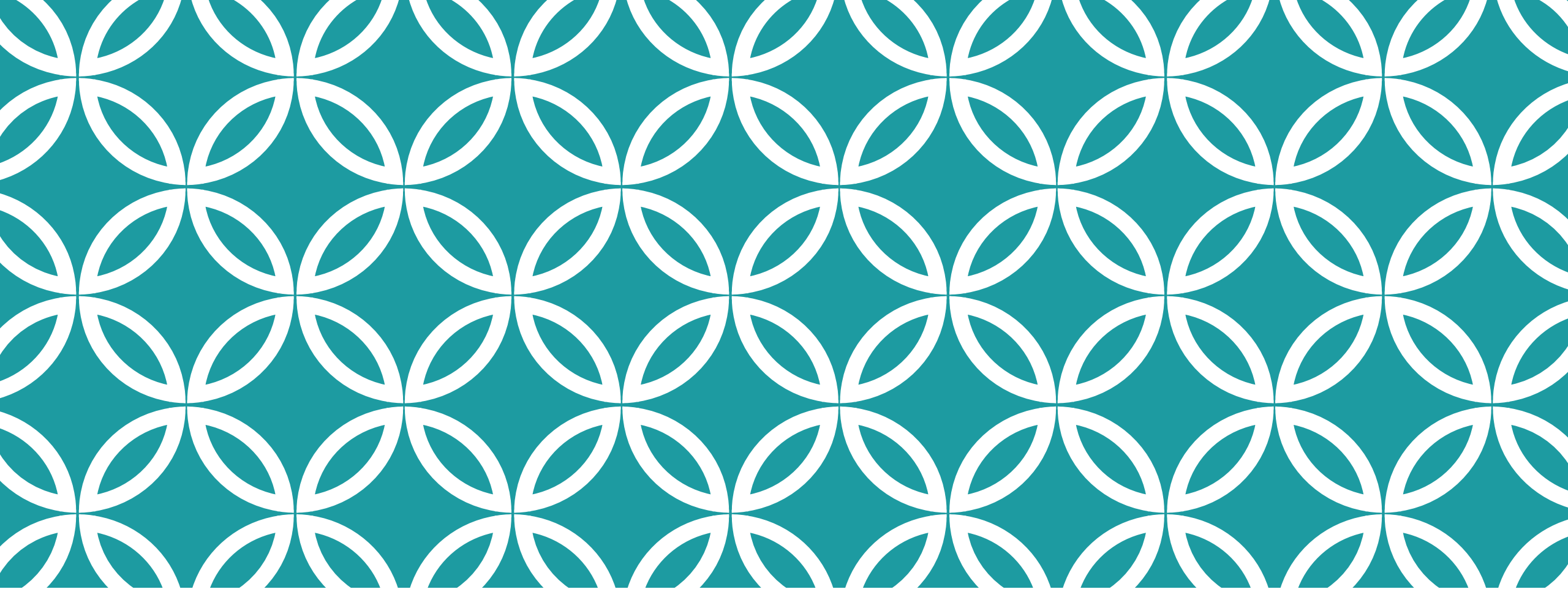


CONTEXT

- former colonial empire (longest standing, until the handover of Macao in 1999);
- “last of the old and first of the new” (with an ideological peculiarity);
- massification of HE (from 81,582 in 1978 to 349,658 students in 2015);
- battle between a left leaning ideology in HE (following the Salazar regime and the Carnation Revolution) and neoliberal tendencies;
- previous strategy of maintaining influence in CPLEP countries through HE provision;
- 2014 - government strategy for the internationalization of Portuguese HE + Statute of the International Student (which allowed both public and private univ to charge non EU/EEA students higher fees, despite coming from CPLEP countries);
- 2016 - resolution of the Portuguese Council of Ministers (78/2016), which established a few principles to build on the aforementioned 2014 policy, including an emphasis on action and policy evaluation, recommended at four year intervals, and a new theoretical framework which is expected to be expanded.

DRIVERS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

- the financial and demographic crisis “created a new interest in the recruitment of foreign students [...] and the government came under increasing pressure to create more attractive conditions for the internationalization of educational activities” (Sin et al., 2016: 179);
- Universities Portugal – initiative of the Portuguese Rectors Conference (CRUP), tasked to market Portuguese HE programs abroad;
- International relations – former colonial power, whose former colonies are now of interest to one of the biggest international players (China);
- National interest for increasing research performance;
- Portuguese – one of the most spoken international languages in the world.



COMPARATIVE REFLECTIONS



COMPARATIVE REFLECTIONS

- in the Romanian case, internationalization did not yet reach the stage of policy formulation at the national level, while Portugal is ahead (despite the lack of coherence after the Government change);
- similar push for internationalization generated by internal drivers (rural/urban vs coastal/inland divide, resource scarcity due to decreasing public investment and demographic downturn);
- different academic traditions and history may have an impact on the potential for internationalization at the institutional level (oldest univ in Portugal, Univ of Coimbra – 1290/ oldest univ in Romania, Univ of Iasi – 1860);
- significant impact of dominant internationalization models (the Bologna Process, rankings, EU agenda);
- obstacles related to: administrative red tape, language barriers, financial support, internal (discipline) resistance, non-alignment of discourse and action (E.g. in terms of immigration procedures);

COMPARATIVE REFLECTIONS

- key role of policy entrepreneurs in both cases (educated abroad, socialized in European structures, changed multiple hats);
- importance of historical political and cultural links (Moldova and east of the Iron Curtain for Romania vs. CPLP countries for Portugal);
- similar selling points when marketing HEIs or the HE system abroad (EU membership, safety, quality of life, low cost of living, touristic attractions/ lifestyle), with the extra language highlight for Portugal) – perhaps a sign of the emergence of a European HE brand;
- there is a discussion to be had regarding the usefulness of using “big player” tactics when a HE system is in fact more suited for a “niche” strategy for internationalization of HE;
- interesting comparison between the diffusion of international norms in the context of transitions from different ideological totalitarian regimes.

THANK YOU!