



University sector outlines emerging trends in international higher education

EUA Autumn Conference, Justus-Liebig University Giessen, Germany (8-10 October)

Internationalisation has become a central component of every university's strategy, a moral imperative in the drive to improve the quality of teaching and research in Europe's universities. This is why more than 300 university leaders and policy makers from over 40 countries around the world gathered this week at the EUA Autumn conference in Giessen, Germany for three days of lively debate and discussion on emerging trends, challenges and strategies in international higher education.

Speaking in the final conference session this weekend, EUA President Professor Jean-Marc Rapp summarised a number of the emerging trends and issues that had been raised during the meeting which covered a wide range of areas including transnational education, mobility, research collaboration, joint programmes, and international student and staff recruitment. These included:

- Universities in the future will need to be **better educated on international issues**, and this should be seen as one of the purposes of cooperation and partnership with international universities. At the same time, university leaders should **not neglect their national, regional and European missions**
- **The Bologna process outside of Europe**: the know-how and instruments developed under Bologna should be used to stimulate international cooperation outside of Europe but this does not mean that the Process itself should simply be exported to other regions
- Internationalisation can only succeed if **international students and staff are truly integrated in the university community** (also with regards to employment). Integration is not a one-way process
- **Transnational education (TNE) provision: National approaches to TNE differ considerably** and have a strong impact in moulding the programmes provided. A true "European dimension" to TNE has not yet emerged, but it might, if there was European-level funding. Concerns were raised about the **danger of a growing commercialization and "Mac-Donaldisation of higher education"**. Participants stressed that internationalization should not only be about "business opportunities and entrepreneurial risks".
- The **importance of internationalisation for the quality of teaching and research** was stressed, but many participants asked how best quality can be ensured and assessed? Quality cannot mean that universities only trust those who take up the same standards and programmes
- **Physical mobility** is essential for an international mindset, and there should be consideration of getting more students mobile (both incoming and outgoing students). A number of means for improving mobility were suggested including improving information provision to potential students and a code of conduct on mobility issues. Participants also pointed out that vertical mobility (between degree cycles) should be improved by more flexible admission procedures particularly at the master level.

To find out more about the conference, please visit the conference website: www.eua.be/giessen

The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.

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