

## **Heiglo - Higher Education Institutions' Responses to Europeanisation, Internationalisation and Globalisation. Developing International Activities in a Multi-Level Policy Context**

### Background

Higher education institutions (HEI) are among the most internationally embedded institutions in modern societies. In the last decades of the 20th century, higher education went from a typically national to an increasingly international activity. Increased resources, technologies and transports contributed to the expansion of the search for knowledge across borders.

The Heiglo project analysed how higher education institutions respond to the challenges of internationalisation, Europeanisation and globalisation trends.

### Work undertaken

The research activities conducted by Heiglo were divided in two main phases. The first phase consisted of an analysis of national and European policies for the internationalisation of higher education activities. Institutions were studied in seven European countries: Austria, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and United Kingdom. The second phase of the project included a detailed analysis of how different HEIs in the seven countries implemented and adapted to the national and European policies.

More specifically, Heiglo aimed at:

- developing a theoretical understanding of the concepts of Europeanisation, internationalisation and globalisation;
- analysing the views and rationales behind national higher education policies, the existing regulatory frameworks and extent to which they foster or impede the development of internationalisation activities in HEIs;
- analysing the perception of HEIs on the challenges of internationalisation and their responses and organisation;
- comparing the different national policies and their impact on internationalisation activities, and all other factors at national and organisational levels which foster or impede internationalisation processes;
- formulating recommendations, on the basis of the above analysis, for policy-makers, to enable a more effective policy coordination and management of international higher education.

Heiglo built on the findings of a previous study on national policies for internationalisation of higher education, published in 1997, which predicted that in the medium term policies for internationalisation would become fundamental elements of national education policies. That study also found that economic rationales were becoming increasingly important in the context of internationalisation activities. During the initial stage, the aim of the project participants was to identify, analyse and compare the rationales behind national policies, as well as the actual policies and regulatory frameworks and means available. This study highlighted the factors

fostering or impeding the successful implementation of policies and management of activities.

Phase two of the project saw the preparation of case studies, illustrating how HEIs respond to organisational, institutional and policy contexts to shape internationalisation activities. At least five cases studies for each country were performed, for a total of 36. The studied HEI were selected according to size, age, location, mission, range of disciplines offered, and categorised into five groups. For this part of the research, HEIs provided documents explaining their organisation and missions, and interviews were conducted with staff members, academics and students. National reports then presented the characteristics of each national higher education system, particularly with regards to the approach and perception of internationalisation activities.

#### Key outcomes / conclusions

Heiglo project found that the main drivers of internationalisation activities are global, regional and national aspirations of HEIs. Some institutions want to raise their profile and reputation, whereas others focus on sharing knowledge with international partners. Nonetheless, other HEIs are managed with the objective to generate income from international activities, and this economic rationale is becoming more common.

The project team identified two main internationalisation approaches: competition and collaboration. Competition is linked to the concept of globalisation and to the economic trend towards liberalisation and commodification of education. Collaboration is associated with internationalisation and Europeanisation and seen as a process of convergence between higher education institutions, encouraging the mobility of students and staff. These two approaches, however, are not watertight, and often they go hand in hand.

The Heiglo study also found that despite national differences, English is becoming the principal international higher education language, for example in the context of student or teacher exchange programmes (Erasmus or Socrates, respectively).

In terms of regulatory frameworks, the Bologna Declaration and the European credit transfer system (ECTS) have contributed to the convergence of degree structures (Bachelor and Masters) and quality assurance mechanisms. Nevertheless, and because the implementation of European frameworks remain a national responsibility, education systems are not identical and national policies remain influenced by history and characteristics of each country.

The Heiglo team recommended national policies to promote deregulation, which would enable institutions to build on their strengths to make the most of the opportunities created by international activities. In certain circumstances, it was added, incentives should be given to institutions to encourage these activities, backed up by policies in areas such as immigration, to encourage students to move from one institution to another.

Participants in the Heiglo project pointed out that the articulation between European cooperation and international competitiveness needed to be better understood. The

project team also suggested that the impact of internationalisation on participation, access, funding and quality needed to be further assessed, to ensure the transparency of higher education processes for students. Another recommendation focused on managerial challenges, referring to the necessity of better understanding the demands for effective management of international activities.

### Dissemination

From the outset, Heiglo participants played an active part in dissemination activities promoting the project findings. For instance, project seminars were organised to present the project to external policy actors and researchers (Joint ACA-CHEPS seminar Brussels, 9 December 2003, Joint ACA-CHEPS seminar Brussels, 25 November 2004).

Papers were prepared for a wide range of conferences and seminars. Throughout the project, information was regularly published online ([www.utwente.nl/cheps/documenten/heigloupdate.doc](http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/documenten/heigloupdate.doc)). These regular online publishing activities were complemented by individual or joint publications, in journals or books.