



International Briefs *for* Higher Education Leaders

Higher education leaders today recognize the urgency of developing an international strategy for their institutions but often lack the knowledge and perspective needed to inform good decisions. Students are graduating into an increasingly integrated international environment that, while offering exciting opportunities, also presents many challenges. Institutions must create educational environments where students will begin to appreciate the complexity of global integration but also develop skills to navigate it successfully. Faculty are seeking opportunities to collaborate with colleagues in other countries, to develop globally-attuned academic programs, and to expand research networks and collaborative projects. International outreach and initiatives enrich institutional culture but must be based on good information and analysis.

This series reflects a strategic collaboration between the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) at Boston College. Each *Brief* is designed to provide a succinct overview of current issues in international higher education and features articles written by leading scholars, policymakers, and practitioners. Ultimately, this series is designed to help senior leadership develop cumulative knowledge to inform institutional strategy.

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ENGAGING WITH EUROPE:

Enduring ties, new opportunities

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Introduction

This edition of *International Briefs for Higher Education Leaders* focuses on European higher education. To a significant degree, it is about the European Union (EU) and its catalytic role for higher education reform and development. The rise of the EU has been an extraordinary regional development. Starting as primarily an economic idea in the mid-1950s, it blossomed into a larger political phenomenon in the early part of the 21st century. The bonds that formed the EU have been tested in recent years by fiscal crises and the solvency of some of its members. Currently, its policies have been challenged by a massive inflow of refugees to the region. While these developments and others have led to a new generation of “Euro-sceptics,” there is much to admire in terms of the EU’s achievements.

The integration and advancement of a remarkable set of higher education initiatives are among its most notable achievements. As has been pointed out in the *Brief’s* lead article, an impressive set of building blocks, such as the Erasmus Program and the Bologna Process, have been key to the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The authors also note that, as a by-product of internationalization strategies in Europe, there will be increasing opportunities for broader and more innovative engagement with European higher education for US institutions.

As we consider these opportunities, other articles in this *Brief* provide background and insight on how EU initiatives are supporting greater outreach to the rest of the world. For example, in the article that examines Erasmus+ (E+) the author points out that, as of 2015, for the first time in the history of Erasmus-supported mobility, there will be opportunities that extend beyond Europe. She indicates that this will provide important incentives for greater flows of students and staff between Europe and other partner countries. Importantly, there is a long-term horizon for E+, which will run through 2020 with a budget of EUR14.7 billion.

Graduate education and research opportunities are also an important outgrowth of the EU’s focus on higher education. The article on Horizon 2020 and the EU’s research agenda not only outlines the high priority research topics that will be pursued, but also discusses the possibilities for collaborative research projects, joint training of graduate students, and opportunities for early career researchers. While the historic relationship between the United States and Europe with respect to research activities has been robust, this initiative shows great promise for building upon that relationship through EU investment in a well-defined research agenda.

Finally, in addition to the eight full-length articles, this edition of the *Briefs* includes a number of shorter features. The “Postcards” provide a focus on different country contexts, with information about how region-wide programs and initiatives are playing out at the national level. We have also included “snapshots,” boxes highlighting key issues, such as financing and quality assurance, which are topics that are referenced in various articles but merited further consideration for US-Europe engagement.

We hope this *Brief* will help higher education leaders make informed decisions about how to build upon and sustain existing US-Europe higher education ties, and explore new opportunities for even deeper collaboration going forward.

Patti McGill Peterson

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21st Century European Higher Education: Responding to Dynamic Change

Fiona Hunter and Hans de Wit

At the beginning of the 21st century, a more unified Europe appeared to be emerging as a stronger reality, as the European Union (EU) extended its membership from 15 to 27 countries and the euro was introduced as a single currency. However, the sense of integration, and related economic and political security, of a single European space soon came under threat. The tragic attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, the rejection of the European Constitution by Dutch and French voters in 2005, the global and European economic problems triggered by the 2008 world financial crisis, and, more recently, the refugee crisis of 2015 and the forthcoming UK referendum on EU membership, have all served to highlight the increasing complexity and vulnerability of the European project.

The start of the 21st century was also a period in which universities felt the first winds of a crucial period of change, with the notion of ‘competition’ entering the discourse of European higher education and universities beginning to engage in the global search for talent, partly to overcome local demographic decline but also to position themselves beyond their national borders. Global rankings began to impact the way universities thought about themselves and how their role was perceived by society and industry at large. Globalization and the emergence of the knowledge economy, shifts in economic dynamics and demographics, and an accelerating information technology revolution put powerful pressures on higher education institutions, requiring them to change at an unprecedented pace.

An Emerging Identity for European Higher Education

The European higher education response to these massive pressures was embedded in the 2000 Lisbon Strategy—the guiding document for EU development through 2010—that strove, perhaps over-ambitiously, to make the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. An integral part of this vision was the creation of a European Research Area, which aligned specifically with the Bologna Process and its key goal of building the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The Bologna Process began with only four countries signing the Sorbonne Declaration in Paris in 1998 but it rapidly gathered momentum, reaching a

total of 48 countries representing around 5,600 universities and 31 million students by the time it reached the end of the decade in 2010.

The Bologna Process was able to build upon the extremely positive experience and influence of cooperation under Erasmus—the European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of European Students—established in 1987 and hailed as one of the most successful European initiatives ever. Initially, the principal focus of the Bologna Process was on the internal dimension of putting the European house in order—through greater commonality in degree structures, credit systems and quality assurance—but it quickly acquired an external dimension. Convergence of structures and tools was aimed not only at increasing mobility and cooperation within Europe, but also to make Europe more competitive and more attractive to the rest of the world.

Initially, the principal focus of the Bologna Process was on the internal dimension of putting the European house in order...but it quickly acquired an external dimension.

The external challenges meant that shared problems now called for shared solutions, and the Bologna Process developed very quickly into an unprecedented landmark reform, achieving in ten years what many national governments had failed to achieve in decades. The emerging European Higher Education Area not only created an external identity for European higher education institutions, but it also generated a strong interest for similar types of reform in other world regions.

The various action lines of the Bologna Process did not evolve along an identical path in all signatory countries, and there was significant variation in the speed and scope of change. The current economic and political crisis in Europe has meant that many of the necessary national reforms to complete the process have been put on hold, but nevertheless, a solid foundation in European higher education reform had been laid, and the European Higher Education Area emerged as a reality.

The Many Uncertainties of the New Europe

Five years into the post-2010 phase of the Bologna Process, the world has changed dramatically yet again. The future that lies ahead of Europe is one of uncertainty, as the region finds itself in the grips of a global economic crisis, and with the

emergency of a massive refugee crisis, and ensuing political tensions, unfolding at its many borders. The issues have become bigger, the climate tenser, and a discernibly less cooperative spirit can often be felt. The European dream is being seriously challenged. The creation of European citizenship, a key objective in European programs such as Erasmus, seems to be slipping into the distance.

The Bologna Process was undoubtedly the greatest higher education reform ever undertaken in Europe, bringing about unparalleled change. However, by the time it drew to its conclusion, it was apparent that it was already insufficient to provide adequate solutions to the emerging challenges of the new and increasingly globalized environment.

Today, European higher education faces an environment in which global competition for talent and knowledge is increasingly fierce and the pressure to become globally positioned, or rise in the rankings, more intense. In the global race for prestige, talent, or revenue, there will not only be winners but also losers. Not all institutions and higher education systems in Europe are in the same position to take advantage of the new environment, and not all are willing to undertake the necessary responses to the new challenges or threats. The traditional divides between North and South, East and West, and between research universities, universities of applied sciences, and other types of higher education institutions, will continue to influence the development of higher education in Europe.

New Understandings of Internationalization

The many global pressures affecting European higher education are inevitably altering European universities' understanding and enactment of internationalization. Increasingly, internationalization is shifting its approach from being marginal to mainstream, from focusing mainly on the exchange of students and staff to a broader range of activities, and from being located exclusively in "international offices" to becoming a more integral part of university strategy and greater stakeholder involvement. European universities are called upon to become key players in the global knowledge economy, to respond to shifting immigration and demographic patterns, and to participate in the advancement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Internationalization can play a key role here.

These shifts are leading to a re-thinking of internationalization, as universities (ideally) seek to interpret internationalization in the specific context of their own missions. Developments such as the advent of internationalization at home (IaH) and internationalization of the curriculum (IoC); the increased focus on the intercultural, international, and global

competencies of students, faculty, and administrative staff; the link between internationalization and employability, as well as citizenship—all require new approaches and strategies, new ways of thinking, and a stronger focus on desirable outcomes for (and impact of) internationalization.

Implications for US Higher Education Engagement

The picture painted above suggests many challenges and threats in the current environment. However, in crisis there is always opportunity, and this is true also for US higher education engagement with Europe.

As more comprehensive strategies for internationalization evolve in Europe, they are providing opportunities for broader and deeper relations with US higher education that go beyond the traditional flows of students and scholars. Stronger partnerships for joint and double degree programs, innovative research, capacity building, and online international learning initiatives are some of the new forms of international engagement that are based on a more contemporary cooperative model. The current global challenges should not lead to a decrease of activity between European and American higher education institutions, as surveys such as the 2014 *Global Survey on Internationalization of the International Association of Universities* (IAU) have indicated. On the contrary, they require—and offer new spaces for—stronger and broader transatlantic engagement.

Bologna and the EHEA: A Primer

Lucia Brajkovic and Robin Matross Helms

Building on the Sorbonne Declaration of 1998 (European Higher Education Area, 2014), the 1999 Bologna Declaration launched the Bologna Process, which focused on the harmonization of the signatory countries' higher education systems by creating a framework of standardized programs and degrees, and enhancing quality assurance procedures across Europe. The overall goals of the process were to strengthen the competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education on the global stage, and to foster student mobility and employability within Europe.

Early Milestones

A key initial accomplishment in the Bologna process was the introduction of a three-cycle degree structure (bachelor, master's, PhD), and a three-year bachelor degree. Previously, there was significant structural variation across Europe; while some countries had bachelor and master's systems in place,

Snapshot: Origins of the European Union

Ellen Hazelkorn

The European Union (EU) was established in the aftermath of World War II, with the aim of ending frequent wars between neighboring countries. A series of treaties, beginning in 1950, eventually led to the formation, in 1957, of the European Economic Community (EEC) or Common Market. The original six members (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) were joined, in 1973, by Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. Now with 28 members, and seven countries—including Kosovo—waiting to join, the EU is a political project, often referred to as the European Project. The euro replaced many national currencies, starting in 2002. Today, the euro is used in 19 countries—so not every EU member is a member of the “euro zone.” In 2012, the EU received the Nobel Peace Prize for having “contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy, and human rights in Europe.”

Fundamentally, the *European Project* is about creating an integrated social market economy, which ensures the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital, while introducing strong social policy measures to guarantee social justice and balancing regional disparities (Andor, 2011). EU member states retain all powers not explicitly handed to the European Union, under a concept called “subsidiarity.” For example, the EU does not have a common defense policy or direct taxation policies. On the other hand, recent years have seen a coming together on a variety of policy fronts, most recently with regard to economic and foreign policy, and migration. Education is within the “competence” of members but this has not stopped the EU from playing a significant role in research and innovation policy, also introducing initiatives with respect to employability and institutional profiling and rankings, e.g., U-Multirank (2016).

Some member states desire greater integration and harmonization, while others—such as the United Kingdom—want EU treaties renegotiated to avoid any further moves towards federalization. From a US perspective, a parallel can be drawn between on-going tensions between states’ rights and the rights of the federal government.

For anyone seeking to understand the European Union, and its various initiatives and policies, it can be daunting to make sense of the complex set of structures and institutions—and an alphabet soup of concepts and terms. However, for US higher education institutions and actors stepping into this context, it can be extremely helpful to have a basic understanding of the key organizations, initiatives, and guiding principles that frame the overall European Project, and the unique experiences of member states within this framework. A demonstrable awareness of European dynamics by American counterparts is also highly appreciated by European colleagues in the process of developing mutually beneficial programs and initiatives.

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others had long (four- to six-year) “first degree” programs leading to a diploma that was roughly equivalent to a master’s degree in other countries, while still others had several levels that were completely incompatible with the bachelor-master’s structure. This lack of alignment posed challenges for collaboration within higher education, as well as more broadly for graduate employability across borders. The introduction of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) shortly after implementation of the new degree structure further enhanced comparability of students’ educational attainment throughout the region (as well as with the United States).

Drawn by the possibility and promise of an eventual European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as a result of the Bologna Process, as well as the specific modernization reforms embedded in the process, the number of Bologna signatory countries expanded steadily over the subsequent decade and a half, eventually reaching 48 in 2015. Ministerial Conferences were (and still are) held approximately every two years to discuss progress, set objectives, and plan projects. Over time, the focus of efforts expanded to include lifelong learning, improving access to higher education for diverse populations, research and innovation (including linking the EHEA to the European Research Area), and enhancement

of doctoral programs, among other areas. Management and support structures—including a Bologna Follow-up Group, Board, and Secretariat—were also established, leading to the official launch of the EHEA as an entity at the 2010 Ministerial Conference in Budapest-Vienna.

Consolidating Gains

Since 2010, the Bologna Process/EHEA has entered a new phase of consolidation and operationalization, with a push to increase consistency of implementation across member countries. Key focus areas established for the next decade include: equitable access and degree completion; lifelong learning; employability; student-centered learning; research and innovation; international mobility for students and faculty; optimization and improvement of data collection methodologies; and diverse funding models. Each signatory country is responsible for setting specific goals within each of these areas, and collaborating with other members to accomplish them.

In recent years, the EHEA has also become more outwardly focused. The 2012 Ministerial Conference was accompanied by a Bologna Policy Forum meeting that centered on the EHEA's engagement with the rest of the world. In addition to members and heads of delegations from 47 EHEA countries, representatives of 19 non-EHEA countries and international organizations from the field of higher education attended the Forum, which was titled "Beyond the Bologna Process: Creating and Connecting National, Regional and Global Higher Education Spaces." Four key topics emerged to guide future Policy Forum discussions and spur collaborative activity:

- Public responsibility for and of higher education within national and regional contexts;
- Global academic mobility—incentives and barriers, balances and imbalances;
- Global and regional approaches to quality enhancement of higher education;
- The contribution of higher education reforms to enhance graduate employability.

Yerevan, Armenia was the setting for the most recent (May 2015) Ministerial Conference, during which Belarus (after discussions about academic freedom in the country) was welcomed as the newest member of the EHEA. Among other topics, the discussion focused on employment and labor market outcomes, and recognition of prior learning. As noted in Fiona Hunter and Hans de Wit's article in this *Brief*, European higher education faces an array of new challenges as it responds to the current economic and political environment.

The EHEA provides a solid foundation for this endeavor, but will likely require on-going adaptation and adjustment going forward.

Competition or Collaboration?

The launch of the Bologna Process and the EHEA raised a number of initial concerns in the United States. First and most immediately, the three-year bachelor degree posed challenges for US admissions offices and credential evaluators, who had to determine whether to accept the shortened degree as equivalent to the US four-year undergraduate degree for admission of European students to US graduate programs, and assess what modifications to existing admission policies and procedures might be necessary. The shift was also seen as potentially problematic for existing joint and dual degree programs, which in some cases would require a realignment of structures and curricula.

European higher education faces an array of new challenges as it responds to the current economic and political environment.

A second concern was that, even if the challenges of the admission process could be overcome, the EHEA's emphasis on increasing (via funding and programmatic support) intra-European mobility would translate into fewer European students attending US colleges and universities. More broadly, the development of the EHEA also raised questions about the long-term competitiveness of the United States on the global higher education stage, and in particular, its ability to continue to attract large numbers of international students from around the world in the face of concerted efforts on the part of the EHEA to make Europe a premier study destination.

For the most part, these initial concerns have been allayed as the EHEA has taken shape over the past decade and a half. On the admissions front, various tools—such as the Diploma Supplement jointly developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe, and UNESCO—have allowed US admissions professionals to understand and interpret European students' credentials. Although standard practices are still evolving, it is clear that institutions and credential evaluators are committed to working through the process and ensuring that admission of European students is not negatively impacted.

In terms of numbers, as Simon Morris-Lange points out in

his article in this *Brief*, while the number of degree-seeking European students in the United States has indeed declined in recent years, the decrease has been off-set by steep in-

creases in the number of European students pursuing English language training and other short-term study in the United States. On the other side of the mobility coin, Morris-Lange

Snapshot: International Student Fees in Europe

Ariane de Gayardon

Historically, Europe has been generous in its higher education tuition fee policies. In Western and Northern Europe, this trend can be attributed largely to the predominance of the welfare state ideology. In Eastern Europe, it is a heritage of the communist ideology of the former USSR. Even today, Europe largely remains an inexpensive continent when it comes to what students pay for higher education.

In recent years, however, several forces have put these policies in jeopardy. First, the higher education enterprise has become increasingly expensive (in Europe and around the world); per student costs have risen significantly. Second, the massification of higher education across Europe has resulted in an average gross enrollment ratio that now approaches 70 percent. With costs going up in tandem with burgeoning demand, there have been substantial increases in higher education spending at the system level. Finally, governments are facing an ever-greater number of demands on public funding; Europe's aging population, for example, requires increased expenditures for pensions and medical care. All told, it is not clear that government funding will be sufficient to support European higher education going forward.

In light of this situation, solutions have been sought to generate more revenue through cost-sharing—i.e., through shifting some or all of the cost of higher education to students and their families. Such initiatives, however, have faced strong public resistance due to cultural and societal expectations, and the historical legacies noted above. Currently, the United Kingdom is the only country in Europe that charges tuition fees above EUR 2,000 for all students. Germany and Austria both introduced small tuition fees in the 2000s, only to abolish them subsequently. These political U-turns show how sensitive the subject of tuition fees is in Europe.

Given the perceived infeasibility of raising tuition for domestic students, many European countries have begun allowing institutions to charge international students higher tuition fees than are charged to students from the home country. The most recent example is Finland, which announced that its universities will start charging international students—in an otherwise free system—as soon as September 2016. More than half of the countries in the European Higher Education Area now allow differentiated tuition fees for international students—i.e., for students from outside the European Union, the European Economic Area, and Switzerland, as (by law) students from these areas must be offered the same financial terms as domestic students.

These new policies show a change in mentality. While European countries still conceive of higher education as a public good for their domestic students, marketization is acceptable when it comes to international students. The main rationale is that taxpayers should not pay for the education of students who ultimately will not stay in the country, and therefore will not contribute to the national economy.

There has been some resistance to international student fees. Students, in particular, have argued that international students bring diversity, multiculturalism, and quality to the tertiary system. Additionally, reports such as *Open Doors* in the United States have highlighted the contribution of international students to the local economy. In some countries, the debate has also touched on the notion of global public good. For instance, half of the international students in France come from Africa, and it has been argued that providing these students with a quality education will enable them to contribute to the economic development of their home countries.

International student tuition fees are a sensitive subject, but they are increasingly sought as a source of revenue in Europe, despite cultural resistance. As higher education's financial fragility increases, it is reasonable to forecast that more countries will charge international students in the near future. While this probably will not lead to a dramatic decrease in the number of international students in Europe immediately, in the long run it could very well have consequences for the attractiveness of the region to cost-conscious internationally mobile students from other parts of the world.

notes that the number of US students studying for degrees in Europe is on the rise; the most recent *Open Doors* data also indicate an increase in the number of US students doing short-term study abroad in Europe. And a 2014 study by ACE found that many joint and dual degree collaborations between the United States and Europe are thriving, suggesting that equivalency issues and other curriculum matters are being navigated successfully. Overall, Europe-US mobility appears to be going strong.

As for global stature, both the United States and many European countries are seeing continued growth in the number of international students they attract, perhaps negating concerns about fierce competition between them. And, the evolution of the EHEA's mission and goals over time indicates an emphasis on collaboration over competition, suggesting that the continued strengthening of the EHEA is likely to present opportunities for—rather than threats to—US higher education.

Expanded Opportunities

Looking forward, the priorities set forth by the EHEA in recent years suggest a number of areas for new and expanded collaboration between European and US higher education. The EHEA's emphasis on lifelong learning may open the door for more European engagement by US community colleges, given their expertise in educating non-traditional students. The shared EHEA and US focus on employability of graduates sets the stage for exchange programs that provide students with transatlantic internship experiences and other avenues for engaging with the corporate sectors on both continents. And, given the EHEA's interest in student-centered learning, creative, technology-based collaborations that connect European and US classrooms and allow for substantive student interaction are likely to be welcomed and supported. Programs under the Erasmus+ program, described in Leasa Weimer's article in this *Brief*, may be a source of funding for such initiatives.

Beyond programmatic collaboration, the EHEA's stated priorities indicate a variety of shared challenges faced by Europe and the United States. Both are wrestling with quality assurance, evidenced in the United States by on-going debates about accreditation procedures. On both sides of the Atlantic, public responsibility for higher education is an important concern, as perceptions shift about whether a university education is a public or a private good. Funding is also a critical issue in both contexts. Dialogue around these issues by European and US higher education leaders and scholars will potentially lead to mutual learning, development of best practices, and shared solutions.

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Erasmus+... “Plus” what?

Leasa Weimer

In 2014, the European Union (EU) introduced Erasmus+ (E+) (European Commission, 2015), a new umbrella initiative bringing together seven existing programs focusing on education, training, and youth. The intention behind this new architecture was to streamline activities and make them more international. However, for those outside of Europe, the jargon and multiple opportunities can be somewhat of a maze. This article highlights the international dimensions of the E+ program, focusing on activities that are likely to be of interest to US higher education institutions.

The E+ program runs through 2020 with a total budget of EUR 14.7 billion. Key aspects of the program encourage European higher education institutions to participate in more international exchange/mobility agreements, strategic partnerships, and joint creation of curriculum and degree programs. The aim is to further harmonize and modernize European higher education. E+ as a regional funding instrument shapes how the internationalization of higher education continues to evolve in Europe. A continued emphasis on partnerships within Europe encourages key individuals at institutions to work together and forge meaningful partnerships within the region. Simultaneously, E+ places an increased emphasis on collaboration outside of Europe, resulting in the activation of existing (or establishment of new) international partnerships between higher education institutions. As indicated in Figure 1, the new program offers numerous opportunities for institutions, faculty, staff, and students located around the globe to collaborate with European higher education institutions on student and staff exchanges, strategic partnerships, and joint degree programs.

For institutions outside the region, pursuit of these opportunities begins with taking stock of existing and potential strategic partners in Europe, as most of the funding opportunities are only available through European higher education institutions submitting applications to their respective national agencies. This decentralized structure means that a network of national agencies in those European countries that are considered

Figure 1. International Dimensions of Erasmus+

E+ opportunity	Potential international (non-EU) beneficiaries
Erasmus short-term exchanges to/from Europe	students staff host institutions
Erasmus Mundus joint master's degree programs	students scholars institutions (must be invited to join consortium)
Strategic partnerships and knowledge alliances	institutions (must clearly demonstrate that their involvement in a consortium brings significant benefits to Europe)
Jean Monnet EU studies	institutions engaged in EU studies

“program countries” manages the Erasmus+ programs. Such national agencies have become integral to the overall structure and process of regional internationalization efforts. (see Irina Ferencz and Laura E. Rumbley’s article in this *Brief*). There are 33 program countries, including the member states of the EU, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Countries outside of these 33 are considered to be “partner countries” (such as the United States). However, some activities—such as the capacity-building projects—are restricted to *targeted* partner countries.

An exciting innovation of E+ is the extension of student and staff mobility outside Europe. Since its inception in 1987, the Erasmus program has offered funded opportunities for short-term mobility within European borders. For the past 28 years, over 3 million European students have benefited from these exchanges. As of 2015—for the first time in the history of Erasmus—mobility opportunities extend beyond Europe, allowing both students and staff from program and partner countries to participate in exchange to and from Europe. The 2015 selection results indicate a focus on incoming international mobility, as 70 percent of the 25,000 selected students and staff will come to Europe for short-term study or teaching arrangements, whereas 30 percent will exit Europe for a sojourn in a partner country. The first round of selections shows that the numbers of students and staff coming to the United States and those going to Europe from the United States are quite balanced; 429 Americans will go to Europe and 398 Europeans will go to the United States. With just 827 participants overall in the first round of selections, the numbers to and from the United States are admittedly small. However, this new flow of short-term mobility strengthens partnerships between US and European institutions and opens up new possibilities for study abroad offerings.

E+ adopts and extends the Erasmus Mundus joint master’s degree programs, an initiative that was launched in 2004. The

aim of Erasmus Mundus is to attract top talent to Europe from around the world and support the design of high quality joint master’s degree programs involving European and non-European higher education institutions. Since its inception, over 16,000 students (including those from the United States) have participated in Erasmus Mundus programs, and under the E+ program an additional 25,000 students will be added.

In terms of logistics, higher education institutions from at least three program countries form consortia, and additional institutions from both program and partner countries can join after the minimum consortium is established. Each

An exciting innovation of E+ is the extension of student and staff mobility outside Europe.

consortium develops an integrated master’s degree program (ranging from 12 to 24 months in duration) with study in at least two of the countries where the institutions involved are located. There are also opportunities for consortia to invite international scholars to teach in the program and conduct related research. Selected students receive a high-level scholarship covering participation costs, travel, subsistence, and insurance. Under the new E+ umbrella, 11 Erasmus Mundus programs were funded in 2014, 15 in 2015, and the 2016 budget will fund 27 new programs. Joint doctoral programs are no longer part of the Erasmus Mundus offerings under E+; rather, joint doctoral programs are now supported via the separate Marie Skłodowska-Curie program, to align with Horizon 2020 funding opportunities (for further information on Horizon 2020, see Ellen Hazelkorn’s article in this *Brief*).

Another fundamental feature of E+ is the focus on, and fund-

ing for, strategic cooperation. Within this area, capacity-building activities, strategic partnerships, and knowledge alliances are funded. Capacity-building includes transnational projects aimed at strengthening higher education systems in targeted world regions. These funding opportunities are not available to institutions in industrialized countries, such as

the United States. The strategic partnerships and knowledge alliances foster cooperation and innovation between higher education institutions, research centers, social partners, and industry within Europe. Institutions from partner countries can join these consortia, but must clearly demonstrate that their involvement brings significant benefits to Europe.

Snapshot: Quality Assurance and Accreditation for Internationalization

Axel Aerden

Quality assurance (QA) and accreditation are key policy concerns for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Characterized as it is by a diversity of approaches to these activities, the EHEA relies on compliance by the QA and accreditation communities with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for this field. The ESG can be regarded as a common set of principles for quality assurance in Europe and are used by European higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies as a reference document for internal and external quality assurance systems. They were adopted in 2005 by the European Ministers responsible for higher education, following a proposal prepared by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), in cooperation with the European Students' Union (ESU), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the European University Association (EUA)—then revised in 2015. A key goal of the ESG is to contribute to the common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and among all stakeholders.

Every five years, each quality assurance and accreditation agency is externally reviewed against the ESG. In order to be included on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), this review should demonstrate an agency's substantial compliance with the ESG. EQAR can therefore be regarded as an authoritative information tool on trustworthy and robust quality assurance and accreditation agencies in the European context.

Since its inception in 2007, EQAR has been advancing the internationalization agenda for quality assurance in the EHEA. A major achievement in this vein was the 2015 adoption of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (EQAJP). A joint program is understood to be "an integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions and leading to double/multiple degrees or a joint degree." Joint programs are regarded as a hallmark of the EHEA and are set up to enhance the international and intercultural competencies of students and staff, to facilitate research cooperation, and to create programs of excellence. Since joint programs are offered by institutions from different higher education systems, they can be subjected to quality assurance and accreditation by several different quality assurance agencies. EQAJP was developed to streamline these approaches. It can be considered a European accreditation framework, as it includes standards and underlying criteria, and puts forward an assessment methodology. EQAJP is fully supranational, since national requirements are deemed obsolete. If a joint program is accredited by an agency included in EQAR, this accreditation decision will be recognized by the authorities and agencies of the relevant higher education systems where the joint program is offered.

Most European accreditation agencies regard the international dimension of higher education as part of their quality assurance remit. Fourteen agencies took this further in 2015 and developed Frameworks for the Assessment of Quality in Internationalization. These provide a methodology for assessing programs and institutions, focusing on the impact internationalization has on teaching and learning, and award the Certificate for Quality in Internationalization to programs and institutions that have successfully completed such an assessment. These certificates are awarded on behalf of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), and demonstrate the integration of a significant international and intercultural dimension into the purpose, function, and delivery of education.

E+ also acquired the Jean Monnet program, which funds EU studies around the globe, including academic teaching and research, cooperation projects, conferences, and publications. The Jean Monnet program is exceptional in the sense that institutions from partner countries can apply directly for support from this program and do not need to partner with program country institutions. In 2015, 261 activities were funded, of which 128 were located in partner countries.

Along with all of the higher education actions currently being supported, the EU also plans to cultivate the potential for an extensive international network of alumni. Thus, the E+ program includes an initiative aimed at fostering on-going connections between students and alumni and the European higher education institutions with which they have come into contact. In the spring of 2014, the Erasmus+ Student and Alumni Association (ESAA) was founded to act as an umbrella organization to four existing organizations: the Erasmus Student Network (ESN); the Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association (EMA); OCEANS (the Organisation for Cooperation, Exchange and Networking among Students);

Along with all of the higher education actions currently being supported, the EU also plans to cultivate the potential for an extensive international network of alumni.

and garagErasmus, an initiative which “brings together and empowers over 3 million of the Erasmus Generation to boost work mobility and circulation of ideas in Europe” (garagErasmus, 2015). ESAA is intended to serve as a platform for joint programming, networking, and professional development opportunities.

The E+ funding instrument contributes significantly to the internationalization of European higher education institutions. More broadly, it also strengthens the role of national agencies, cultivates the European identity of Erasmus students, and nurtures positive perceptions of European higher education among non-European students, staff, and institutions. While enthusiasm for the program continues, the uneven realities of some EU funding mechanisms among member countries is important to recognize and monitor as the program further develops. There are still five years for the program to mature, which means there is ample time for US institutions to work with existing or new European partners to forge E+ agreements.

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Horizon 2020: The EU Research Agenda

Ellen Hazelkorn

What is Horizon 2020?

Higher education has been a key component of European Union (EU) policymaking since its formative days. In the early 1990s, European policymakers promulgated the benefits of the “information society.” Then, in the aftermath of the Lisbon Strategy, enacted in 2000, EU policy embraced the “knowledge economy.” Responding also to deep concerns about the position of European universities in global rankings, higher education and university-based research have become central to EU policymaking.

The Bologna Process, being a voluntary intergovernmental process now comprising 48 countries plus the European Commission, has remained outside formal EU structures. Bologna’s success in harmonizing educational practices and quality assurance has underpinned the formation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The European Research Area (ERA) is the EHEA’s “sister” policy. It is the research and innovation equivalent of the Common Market, and has the specific goal of creating a coherent and competitive research system across member states. It has encouraged and strengthened research excellence, critical mass, researcher mobility, and collaboration between universities and industry. The ERA was formalized in 2000, although the EU has been funding research under the rubric of so-called “framework programmes” (FP) since 1984. The European Research Council (ERC) and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) were established under the EU’s 7th Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP7), in the period 2007-2013. Each program has had a particular policy emphasis, and is coded according to its iteration, e.g., FP7 being the seventh version.

Horizon 2020 (commonly referred to as H2020) is the name given to FP8. It represents Europe’s biggest research and innovation program to-date, with total funding of almost EUR 80 billion from 2014-2020. H2020 corresponds to the other big European initiative, *Europe 2020*, which together seek to reposition the EU as (one of) the world’s most competitive economies. This had been the aim of the *Lisbon Strategy*,

2000-2010, but that was before the Great Recession intervened. Now, caught in an increasingly multi-polar geo-political environment, the EU has ratcheted up its determination to “drive economic growth and create jobs.” Research and innovation are key to this.

The H2020 Program

H2020 is organized around three pillars:

1. **“Excellent Science”** funds basic science across all disciplines. It has a budget of EUR 24 billion, of which the European Research Council is responsible for EUR 13 billion. It also funds the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions—a researcher mobility program—with a budget of EUR 6.1 billion, and now open to researchers anywhere in the world.
2. **“Industrial Leadership”** has a budget of EUR 14 billion. The objective is to identify ways to modernize European industries. The emphasis is on European technology platforms and key enabling technologies; there is special focus on strengthening research and innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SME).
3. **“Societal challenges”** addresses the policy concerns of *Europe 2020* and seeks to strengthen teams of cross-national expertise. The goal is implementation of practical solutions, rather than technology development. Research is funded under the following thematic “challenges”:
 - Health, demographic change, and wellbeing;
 - Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research, and the bio economy;
 - Secure, clean, and efficient energy;
 - Smart, green, and integrated transport;
 - Climate action, environment, resource efficiency, and raw materials;
 - Europe in a changing world—i.e., inclusive, innovative, and reflective societies;
 - Secure societies, focused on protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens.

There is also funding for two special initiatives, “Science with and for society” and “Spreading excellence and widening participation.”

H2020 funding is organized around “Work Programmes” and formal “Calls,” which define a set of issues to be explored. The overall work programs are published in advance, which enables researchers to plan ahead.

Evaluating Societal Impact, Responsible Re-

search, and Gender

While research excellence may be critical for success under H2020, the EU is equally anxious to pursue other agendas. Accordingly, all proposed research projects are assessed according to societal impact, and quality and efficiency of implementation. Thus, receiving full marks for research excellence is not sufficient for final approval, except for ERC submissions.

“Science with and for society” particularly aims to encourage greater collaboration between researchers and citizens, policy makers, business, not-for-profit/non-governmental organizations, etc. It draws heavily upon concepts of co-production of knowledge, and societal impact and benefit, and promotes the idea that finding sustainable solutions to society’s grand challenges requires the active participation of all citizens. This approach is called *Responsible Research and Innovation* (RRI), and it is reflected in the fact that assessment of

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European projects requires researchers to submit an impact statement as part of their proposal.

US academics familiar with engaged scholarship will understand the type of approach now required in the European context. Formal inclusion in the project proposal and in the evaluation of “impact” represents a significant new emphasis for the EU, albeit it has been a part of the research policy discourse for quite a while, and was signalled in a 2010 EU Expert Report.

Applicants must also integrate gender issues. This should not just be about the gender composition of the team (male and female) but also the extent to which the gender dimension is considered in the structure and methodology of the project.

Social science and humanities projects are especially welcome. Indeed, the extent to which a project involves novel trans/cross-disciplinary approaches and how this aids the analysis and its outcomes, is considered an important criterion for success. Finally, evaluation considers implementation and encourages active public engagement. This could mean developing initiatives to test or implement aspects of the research in the community, or through policy interventions, or to engage the public directly in the project, e.g., designing the methodology or evaluating its relevance—all of which means

going way beyond traditional dissemination actions of websites and public lectures.

Getting Involved: Closer European-US Collaboration

International cooperation is a key element of H2020. EU-US research collaboration is underpinned by a joint Science and Technology Agreement dating back to 1998. Historically, areas such as environmental science, information and communication technologies, cleaner energy sources, biotechnology, and nano-science have dominated, but new areas are opening up. The ERC launched an international awareness campaign in 2012; that same year, an agreement was launched with the National Science Foundation (NSF) to allow early career NSF researchers in the US to join the teams of ERC grantees in Europe; some team members can be based overseas.

There are also opportunities under research mobility initiatives, most notably as post-doctoral fellows under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action (MSCA). Other programs specifically mention US partners, for example: *SME opportunities for*

The key message is to forge strong international partnerships with European partner institutions, and think and plan ahead.

EU-US collaboration in Horizon 2020 (European Commission, n.d.-a).

As national funding wanes, competition for EU funding has risen. Anyone interested in applying for H2020 funding is strongly advised to read the documentation carefully, because the way in which H2020 works may differ from research programs with which people are familiar. There are lots of opportunities for international collaboration and many preparatory training programs available (European Commission, n.d.-b). The key message is to forge strong international partnerships with European partner institutions, and think and plan ahead.

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Europe's National and Regional Higher Education Associations

Irina Ferencz and Laura E. Rumbley

Europe features a rich ecosystem of organizations connected to the higher education enterprise. Beyond higher education institutions (HEIs) strictly speaking, there are a range of organizations that play key roles in relation to matters of higher education policy and practice. For American colleges and universities—and indeed any actors from outside of Europe—interested in forging effective relationships with counterparts in the European context, an understanding of this broader ecosystem can serve to inform and enhance the development and implementation of meaningful strategies for engagement.

Within the constraints of this short article, we have chosen to focus on three main categories of relevant actors: national-level agencies and associations; regional organizations and related resources; and higher education consortia and networks.

National Organizations and 'Agencies'

Two types of national-level entities focused on (international) higher education are most commonly encountered in the European context: associations of universities and internationalization 'agencies.' (The term 'agency' is used loosely here, referring to a range of organizational profiles, some of which are tightly connected to government and others that are much more independent.) In terms of international cooperation, both types of actors are vital entry points into the national higher education systems they represent, providing fundamental information and offering multiple opportunities for engaging with and within the sector.

National University Associations. In Europe, national-level university associations, often called rectors' councils or presidents' conferences, are representative bodies bringing together the top leadership of higher education institutions in each country—not unlike the role the American Council on Education plays in the United States. Most countries have only one such association; however, some—e.g., the Netherlands—may have two such bodies, one representing comprehensive universities (i.e., doctoral granting institutions) and one for universities of applied sciences (which offer more professionally-oriented education).

These associations serve principally as platforms for discussion, tackling critical matters for the sector and bringing

forward the ‘university voice’ at the national level, especially in the policy-making process. In the specific area of international engagement, most national university associations in Europe have a formal ‘internationalization forum’ or ‘committee’—i.e., a dedicated structure that deals with international issues, generally bringing together the member institutions’ most senior administrators for international affairs. These international committees offer opportunities for mutual learning and, equally, for advocacy.

Notably, the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK) has, in recent years, become actively involved in the evaluation of internationalization processes and strategies among its member institutions. This is accomplished via a special instrument—called the ‘internationalization audit’—designed to assist member universities in evaluating their internationalization processes and providing advice on how to further strengthen their degree of internationality (HRK German Rectors’ Conference, n.d.). Similar processes have emerged in other countries, although not driven by rectors’ councils, such as Mapping Internationalisation (MINT) by EP-Nuffic in the Netherlands, and Indicators for Mapping & Profiling Internationalisation (IMPI) by a consortium consisting of CHE Consult, the Academic Cooperation Association, and other European partners. The European Consortium on Accreditation (ECA), based on a pilot project undertaken by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), has developed a Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation (CeQuint) at both the program and institutional levels. Therefore, measuring internationalization has become a key European trend.

National ‘Internationalization Agencies.’ Today, most European countries have at least one agency for internationalization of (higher) education. There is great variety with respect to their status, degree of influence, roles, and modus operandi. For example, some internationalization agencies are government entities—e.g., the Danish Agency for Higher Education is a unit *within* the Ministry of Higher Education and Science—while others operate at arm’s length from government. Regardless of the degree of affiliation (or not) with government, almost all such agencies receive some public funding, but are supported to varying degrees and by a range of ministerial sources, depending on their specific tasks and activities. Many agencies also receive part of their operational budget directly from the European Commission. This comes when their remit includes acting—in part or in full—as the national agency for the European Union’s (EU) programs in the field of education in their respective country.

Along with diverse funding realities, national agencies play unique roles in different national contexts. Some are tasked

with attending to the internationalization of *higher education* only, while others deal with internationalization in *all educational sectors*. Some deal with internationalization alone, while others focus on educational matters more broadly. Still others have mandates going far beyond education, being tasked with the promotion of education *and culture* abroad, as is the case for the British Council and the Swedish Institute.

Along with diverse funding realities, national agencies play unique roles in different national contexts.

Despite this great variety, these national level agencies also tend to shoulder many common responsibilities *vis-à-vis* internationalization. These include implementing national higher education internationalization policies and strategies; administering grants and scholarships (from multiple sources, often including the European Union); supporting institutional collaborations and various aspects of internationalization at home; promoting their respective higher education systems abroad; and engaging in development and capacity-building projects.

Many of these agencies (along with several, largely non-European associate members) come together under an umbrella association, the Brussels-based Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), which—among its many activities—provides an active forum for exchange and peer learning between member entities.

“European” Organizations, Associations, and Resources

Beyond the national level, many regional organizations are actively addressing different aspects of the wide-ranging conversation around (international) higher education in the European context today. We have chosen here to group examples of these various organizations into three broad categories: member organizations, thematic organizations, and key resources.

Member Organizations. Across Europe, as elsewhere in the world, individuals and institutions seek connections with peers for the purposes of pooling resources, cultivating professional knowledge, and advancing particular agendas. Key examples of such member organizations are the European University Association (EUA) and the European Association for International Education (EAIE). EUA provides a forum for the leadership (presidents, rectors, etc.) of Europe’s universities to explore matters of collective interest and concern. It

Postcard from Italy

Giancarlo Spinelli

As an original signatory to the Bologna Declaration, in 2000, Italy legally changed its higher education system to align with the principles of the Bologna Process. Prior to these reforms, there was no bachelor's degree in Italy (as was the case in many other European countries). In most disciplines, a unique title was awarded after four years of university study (or after five years of study in architecture and engineering, and six years in medicine). The university system was very demanding with very selective examinations for each course (particularly during the first years of the curricula), resulting in extremely high drop-out rates. Moreover, actual time to degree completion was often much higher than the four-, five-, or six-year nominal timeframe.

Introduction of the Bologna Process's three-cycle degree structure, and a standardized credit structure based on the European Credit Transfer System, has had a positive impact in these areas. It has also been beneficial for engagement between Italy and the United States. In terms of student exchange, it is easier to find clear academic entry points, prepare program agreements, and understand students' transcripts. Curriculum design for joint and dual degree programs, which are most common at the master's level, is less complicated. European Commission initiatives and funding helped jump-start a number of collaborative programs between Italian and US institutions; the ATLANTIS program, jointly funded by the European Commission and the US Department of Education, was particularly instrumental on the joint and dual degree front, though the number of such projects decreased when the United States ended its support of the program after 2010.

On the research front, collaborations between US and Italian scholars are common, often originating from personal contacts. Some projects are supported financially by programs like the European Union's Horizon 2020, or initiatives of the National Science Foundation and other agencies in the United States.

In terms of challenges, with 13 years of education before entering university, Italian students—particularly in science and technology programs—are not required to take general education courses as part of the undergraduate curriculum. This can make it difficult to design joint undergraduate programs that allow students to complete the requirements of both the Italian and US institutions. On the other hand, for example in engineering, it is easier than before to establish joint or double degrees at the master's level. Overall, however, the major obstacle is financial. Reciprocity becomes an important concern; in compliance with the guidelines for European Commission programs, many public Italian universities require exchange agreements with partners abroad to stipulate that students pay only the tuition at their home institution. This system is financially viable only when there is a balanced flow of students between the two institutions.

Although Italy, according to 2015 *Open Doors* data, is the number two study abroad destination for US students (after the United Kingdom), students who complete a full degree at an Italian institution represent only a fraction of this population. Some of this may be explained by the fact that there is both a long tradition of 'island' programs for US students in Italy and that most Italian universities are traditional in their approaches to teaching and learning and, sometimes, bureaucratically complex. However, the main issue is that US students generally ask for periods abroad much shorter than the ones that are common in Europe and, in the majority of cases, too short to complete a full degree.

In order to increase its attractiveness to US and other international students, in 2011 the Politecnico di Milano made the decision to switch the language of instruction of all its graduate programs to English only. While this change has been widely accepted by students, a small minority of faculty pursued legal action to preserve Italian-taught programs, citing a 1933 royal decree pertaining to university education. After four years in the courts, a final ruling still has not been made. In the meantime, however, the Politecnico di Milano is now teaching approximately 90 percent of its graduate programs in English. Overall, the trend toward English language instruction is growing, though most other public Italian universities are opting to teach only some, rather than all, of their programs in English.

produces studies and reports on key issues, conducts surveys of its members, and endeavors to serve as a common voice for Europe's university community in a variety of contexts. For its part, the EAIE is the professional organization for Europe's international educators, offering "a combination of training, conferences and knowledge acquisition and sharing" services (EAIE, n.d.), and providing excellent networking opportunities for individuals and institutions looking for European partners for all manner of international collaboration.

Thematic Organizations. Many European higher education organizations are strategically focused on specific issues or themes of concern. Some coalesce around cross-cutting matters, such as ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), the European Council for Student Affairs (ECStA), and the slowly emerging European First Year Experience (EFYE) movement (University of Bergen, 2014). Others provide windows on developments in particular fields or disciplines, as seen in EFMD (which originally stood for European Foundation for Management Development). Still others connect around the realities of specific institutional or program types, such as ECOLAS, the consortium of European Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Key Resources. As the need to enhance interconnectedness and transparency across the European higher education landscape has grown in recent years, a large number of resources—notably, databases and websites—have been developed to collate information about higher education institutions, programs, and national higher education systems. Notable examples in this vein include two European Commission-sponsored initiatives:

- Eurydice, a network of 41 national units in 37 different countries, with the mandate "to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work" through the provision of "descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics" (European Commission, n.d., n.p.); and
- European Tertiary Education Register (ETER), which currently contains publicly accessible data on over 2,600 individual institutions across 36 European countries (European Commission, 2015).

Higher Education Consortia and Networks

Europe's higher education ecosystem also includes a variety of university networks, most often bringing together universities from different European countries with specific profiles and traditions. Examples of such networks are the Coimbra Group, consisting of "long-established European

multidisciplinary universities of high international standard;" the UNICA Network, linking higher education institutions from the European capital cities; and the Utrecht Network, a network of universities cooperating on internationalization-related matters. The League of European Research Universities (LERU), a grouping of research-intensive universities that promotes itself as a "prominent advocate for the promotion of basic research at European universities," represents another distinct grouping of institutions organized to advance a common agenda.

While such alliances work primarily with and for their members, they are not exclusively inward looking; indeed, many such consortia seek to establish formal links with similar entities in other corners of the world. A notable example here can be seen in the biennial "Transatlantic Dialogue" meetings of the EUA and the American Council on Education (n.d.).

A Unique Role for European Students

Although with significant differences across countries, European students are highly active stakeholders in many national systems, and at the regional level. Quite different from what is seen in the US context, national student unions and associations are visible actors in a wide range of policy dialogues and may take on substantive roles in governance, decision-making, provision of student support services (notably for internationally mobile students), and academic evaluation and accreditation exercises. The European Students' Union has been particularly outspoken in its views on the shortcomings of the Bologna Process over the years. As their names imply, the Erasmus Student Network and the Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni Association have been dynamic forces in the evolution of EU-supported academic mobility programs.

Seeing the Forest for the Trees

In light of the extensive developments in European higher education over the last 20 years, it can be challenging for non-European counterparts to make sense of the array of national realities and institutional variety. One way to begin to order this complex landscape is to pay some attention to the organizational ecosystem that exists beyond the level of specific higher education institutions. National university associations and 'internationalization agencies', regional level organizations, and university networks and consortia, can all provide useful insight into the many opportunities and practical considerations inherent in 'engaging with Europe' today.

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Postcard from Croatia

Lucia Brajkovic

Croatia's higher education system is regulated on a national level and has undergone intensive reforms since 2003, driven in large part by the Bologna Process (which Croatia joined in 2001). In terms of international collaboration, the majority of Croatia's activity involves other European countries. Although examples of institution-level partnerships between US and Croatian institutions are few, the University of Georgia's (UGA) long-standing and fruitful relationship with Croatian higher education illustrates the impact of one such endeavor, and may serve as a platform for additional collaboration between the two countries.

The focus of UGA's engagement with Croatia is higher education capacity development. Efforts began in the early 2000s, with UGA's Institute of Higher Education (IHE) hosting delegations of faculty and administrators from Croatian institutions for workshops and various training sessions. Since then, IHE faculty and graduate students have traveled to Croatia to collaborate on numerous activities with Croatian universities, and with Ministry of Education and Science officials. The US Embassy in Zagreb has provided funding for some of these activities.

Building on a decade of engagement, in 2012, the IHE became a founding partner of the Higher Education Initiative for Southeastern Europe (HEISEE). The HEISEE initiative is an alliance of several organizations in Croatia: the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb and its Centre for Educational Research and Development, the Institute for the Development of Education, the Government Agency for Science and Education, and the University of Rijeka.

HEISEE operates as an independent entity and offers opportunities for networking, regional consultations, communications, conferences, and meetings. Its overarching goal is to build capacity and enhance postsecondary education throughout the region. Each year, several IHE faculty visit Croatian institutions to participate in information-sharing sessions on topics such as change management strategies, student services, faculty affairs, finance, and institutional research. In addition to Croatian members, faculty and administrators from neighboring countries—such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Slovenia—have participated in these sessions.

In line with its focus on capacity building, HEISEE has spurred the development of a new master's program in higher education management at Croatia's University of Rijeka. IHE faculty and doctoral students have been involved in the development of the program—the first university program in higher education in the region—which was launched in the spring of 2015. Once the program's accreditation process is complete, IHE faculty will teach several courses in person and on-line.

Going forward, UGA intends to remain an active HEISEE participant. Now, HEISEE's main objectives are to expand the initiative to include other countries from the region; establish partnerships with their higher education institutions, ministries of education, and education-related non-governmental organizations; develop additional graduate degree programs; and offer an expanded array of workshops and other training opportunities for policy-makers and institutional administrators. In addition, HEISEE hopes to engage scholars and practitioners in the region to study key higher education issues, and devise integrated and sustained strategies for regional improvement and development. Student and faculty exchanges and additional research collaborations across the region—as well as with UGA and other US institutions—will also be part of HEISEE's scope of activity.

The UGA's fruitful collaboration with Croatian higher education institutions may serve as an example for other potential US-Croatia partnerships, as well as a venue for the exchange of expertise and acquisition of valuable international learning experience on the topics and issues facing diverse higher education systems, both in the United States and Europe (particularly the southeastern/Balkan region).

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Shifting Paradigms? Reflections on Student Mobility Between Europe and the United States

Simon Morris-Lange

Academic mobility between Europe and the United States has served as an important building block in the transatlantic relationship. However, since the late 1990s, geopolitics, budget cuts in higher education, and the rapid growth of the international education market have been changing long-established mobility patterns between the United States and the 28 member states of the European Union (EU). This change is most pronounced in the mobility of degree-seeking students—national data from Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and other EU countries suggest that more and more Americans are receiving their diplomas from a European university. At the same time, the number of European students in US degree programs has declined by close to 15,000 since the early 2000s. To learn more about this new phenomenon, this article discusses salient trends and the factors that contribute to (re)shaping mobility dynamics.

New Trends in Transatlantic Student Mobility

Student mobility between Europe and the United States dates back more than a century when the first groups of American and European students boarded the mighty ocean liners to learn more about the world outside of their homes. For decades, European students crossed the Atlantic to master the English language and obtain a degree from a renowned US institution. In contrast, American students were rarely interested in spending more than a semester abroad. Fast forward to 2016, we find these historic patterns to be increasingly challenged by a new generation of students who do not always follow in the footsteps of their predecessors.

More US Students Pursue Degrees in Europe. Despite the emergence of new student hubs, such as China, most US students continue to see Europe as the prime destination for study abroad. Apart from a well-established tradition of short-term mobility (155,304 US participants studied abroad in Europe in 2014), a growing number of Americans choose to enroll in full degree programs in the United Kingdom (16,485 in 2014) and other Western European countries. Remarkably, this new generation of students is increasingly heading toward countries where English is not the official language: In Germany for instance, the number of US students in English-taught degree programs has grown by 72 percent in just five years,

totaling 2,376 in 2013. Notable increases have also been recorded since 2008 in Denmark (up 92 percent), Italy (up 50 percent), and the Netherlands (up 29 percent). However, this trend is not witnessed across the board. Many European countries, especially those in Eastern Europe, continue to be off the radar for most degree-seeking Americans.

Fewer Europeans in US Degree Programs. While more Americans explore full-time study options in Western Europe, their European counterparts have become less interested in US degree programs. Compared to the 2001 total of 58,456 degree-seeking Europeans in the United States, the latest numbers are down by 25 percent (43,913 in 2015). In the case of Eastern European students, the decline has been as high as 56 percent since 2001. This downward trend runs counter to the substantial overall growth in European students going abroad. According to the latest comparable data available, in 2012, close to 900,000 Europeans were experiencing student life outside of their home countries, a near twofold increase since 2001. The majority of these educational nomads chooses to stay within the region and is found in lecture halls across Germany, the United Kingdom, and other Western European countries. In comparison, US-bound students now account for

While more Americans explore full-time study options in Western Europe, their European counterparts have become less interested in US degree programs.

only 7 percent of border-crossing Europeans, down from 13 percent in 2001.

Possible Explanations

The above data emphasize a divergent mobility trend between two educational “superpowers”: On one side of the Atlantic, more degree-seeking Americans are falling in love with academic life in Europe, while on the other, this love remains increasingly unrequited. So far, only a handful of studies have investigated the roots of these asymmetries. Nevertheless, English-taught study programs, financial constraints, and policy initiatives appear to have a substantial impact on transatlantic student mobility.

English-taught Study Programs. The steady expansion of English-taught programs in Germany, the Netherlands, and other non-English speaking countries has been a boon to degree-seeking American and European students alike. With more than 3,000 programs on offer in France, the Netherlands,

and Sweden alone, Western Europe (non-anglophone) has emerged as a viable destination for English-speaking students. Today, thousands of young Americans are no longer

required to learn a foreign language in order to obtain their degree in Continental Europe—an opportunity that more and more students are taking advantage of. The same is true for

Postcard from Germany

Michael Steinberg and Barbara Gügold

Academic ties between the United States and Germany date to the early nineteenth century when dozens of Americans traveled to Germany to study. Before the development of PhD programs in the United States, Germany was the chief source of doctoral degrees for American scholars.

Student mobility in the 20th century owes much to Carl Joachim Friedrich, a student from the University of Heidelberg, who worked with the Institute of International Education (IIE) to arrange fellowships for 13 German students to study the social sciences in the United States in the early 1920s. Friedrich's initiative led to the establishment of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in early 1925.

The German Fulbright Commission, the largest Fulbright program in the world, has substantially enlarged its portfolio over the years and annually awards more than 750 grants across 30 different programs. Many of these are new projects, funded entirely with money raised from foundations and donors, focusing on students from diverse or underprivileged families and backgrounds, or students normally underrepresented in study abroad programs.

German is the third most studied language in the United States, and Germany is the sixth most popular destination for US study abroad (10,377 students in 2013-2014). Of this group nearly 4,300 students enrolled directly in German university courses, according to the DAAD. American students also participate in exchanges and study abroad programs, such as the IES Abroad programs in Freiburg and Berlin, and programs sponsored by US universities.

An almost equivalent number of German students (10,193) were studying in the United States in 2014-2015, and the United States is by far the most favored destination for German scholars. Indeed, according to IIE *Open Doors* 2015 statistics, Germany ranks fourth in the number of research scholars in the United States. Meanwhile, German universities have recently developed master's programs that include English-taught courses, opening new opportunities for US students. A website for the state of Hesse, for example, lists 84 master's programs in English, including programs in business, humanities, social sciences, engineering, the arts, and the natural sciences.

Many German organizations actively foster research opportunities for Germans in the United States, as well as research collaborations between Germans and Americans. Examples include the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, which was established by the German government in 1953 and granted 944 awards and fellowships to foreign scholars for research in Germany in 2014, with the largest number (172) going to American recipients. The Stiftung Deutsch-Amerikanische Wissenschaftsbeziehungen (Foundation for German American Scientific Relations) offers grants for collaborative research projects between the United States and Germany. The German Center for Research and Innovation in New York opened in 2010 to foster interest in German research in the United States. The Center works with American universities to develop research partnerships with German institutions and offers workshops for graduate students to acquaint them with German research. The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation) has developed close ties with the American National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and National Endowment for the Humanities agencies, and The Helmholtz Association, Germany's largest scientific research association, also works closely with American partners.

Both the DAAD and the German Ministry for Education have developed funds to support university partnerships. Germany is an active, globally engaged country and its collaborative energies in the higher education and innovation spheres are focused on a variety of countries and regions around the world. Still, there is a strong and privileged relationship between the United States and Germany when it comes to academic engagement and exchange. These ties are on firm footing and appear likely to continue to strengthen.

European students who intend to participate in a degree program in another EU member state. For them, English-taught programs have become an attractive alternative to the oftentimes more costly study options in the United States and other anglophone countries. Among them, medical students have been particularly mobile. Ineligible for or unable to afford medical studies in their home country, these students flock to programs all over Europe, and in particular to Poland, Hungary, and other Eastern European countries, where a number of programs are taught in English.

Financial Constraints. The sharp decline in the number of degree-seeking Europeans on American campuses is in part due to the considerable rise in US tuition fees. In most European countries, state grants and student loans are not available at all (or are only partly available) to students who pursue a full degree in the United States. Hence, the vast majority of Europeans are required to pay tens of thousands of dollars out of their own pockets. So, without a generous scholarship, US

...university leaders and policy-makers are encouraged to improve their understanding of this new generation of young 'transatlanticists'.

degree programs remain unaffordable for most Europeans, who by and large are not accustomed to spending substantial sums for college.

For American students, financial constraints may also be a driving force, albeit in other ways. Given the ongoing US debate about tuition fee hikes and public concerns about the affordability of college, a growing number of Americans are looking for study opportunities on the other side of the pond. After figuring in additional costs for travelling and living overseas, some prospective students find that Europe provides better value for money, while others see a better deal in staying home. Part of this equation includes tuition fee waivers and living stipends offered in popular destination countries, such as Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, which may further decrease the financial burden of an education abroad.

Policy Initiatives. In order to attract and retain top talent from around the globe, policy-makers in Europe have supported legislation and marketing efforts that promote student mobility. First and foremost, the Bologna Process (now the European Higher Education Area) and its harmonization of degree structures have made studying in Europe more appealing for Americans. Furthermore, tens of thousands of Americans have benefitted from student-friendly visa policies, which are

in the process of being (further) harmonized across EU member states (as agreed upon by EU Justice and Home Affairs ministers in November 2015). In contrast, European students have faced enhanced scrutiny when trying to obtain a US student visa after September 11, 2001. However, these and other post-9/11 security measures can be assumed to play only a small role compared to the aforementioned cost of degree studies in the United States.

New Realities Require New Knowledge

So far, the divergent trend in transatlantic student mobility has been less talked about than the above numbers suggest. In fact, some European higher education systems have been unaffected by American students' newfound interest in European degrees. Similarly, in the United States, the decline of degree-seeking Europeans has been obscured, in part, by the growing number of European students enrolled in language training, student exchanges, and other non-degree programs (up 129 percent since 2007) and, in particular, by the increase of international students from other parts of the world, especially Asia. Despite, or precisely because of this subtlety, university leaders and policy-makers are encouraged to improve their understanding of this new generation of young 'transatlanticists' and their motives behind choosing a European degree program over an American one, and vice-versa.

Regional Perspectives on Higher Education in Europe: Diversity and Cooperation

Manja Klemenčič

National and Regional Differences: Strength and Weakness

Europe is not one single, homogenous region, but rather a highly diverse continent with immense economic, cultural, and academic differences from country to country and also within countries. The rich and complex European heritage is built on national idiosyncrasies as much as it is built on linkages among European nations and on common intellectual foundations. Yet, Europe also has a darker side when it comes to diversity; religious wars and ethnic conflicts have tainted its history, as have conflicts between neighboring countries.

In the higher education realm, the European Union (EU) and the Bologna Process (now the European Higher Education Area, or EHEA) have served as powerful converging forces in Europe. National differences certainly still persist, but they

co-exist with intense regional cooperation around an array of higher education issues and initiatives.

Regional Cooperation in European Higher Education

Formal intergovernmental alliances exist among the Nordic states, the Baltic states, the Visegrád Four (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary), France and Germany, the Benelux Union (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg), and the Western Balkan states. The governments in these regions have signed formal agreements to strengthen their cooperation and create joint institutions. Intergovernmental regional cooperation is extended to regional networks of universities and student unions. All regional alliances coordinate their knowledge policies (touching on research, innovation, and higher education), although to different extents. The most intense knowledge policy coordination is seen among the Nordic states, which also stand out in terms of the scope of their collaborative education and research programs. France and Germany have a long history of cooperation, although with less developed structures and fewer joint programs. The Visegrád Group and Baltic cooperation efforts are comparatively younger and still developing. The Western Balkan cooperation, within the framework of the Regional Cooperation Council, is unique, in that it was not endogenously initiated, but rather encouraged by the European Union and various donor agencies.

Awareness of these regional alliances is important for overseas institutions. First, regional alliances add another layer of policy coordination, and several of these alliances have jointly developed international partnership priorities. For example, there is longstanding cooperation between the Nordic States and Southern Africa. Nordic cooperation also seeks to enhance partnerships with the leading research countries and with emerging economies (the so-called BRICs countries). A number of joint declarations of the Visegrád Group have affirmed strengthening transatlantic relations, including in research and education.

Second, funding mechanisms of the EU—such as the European Structural and Investment Funds, combined with the two flagship research and education funds (Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+) explicitly favor regional collaboration projects. Accordingly, collaborative research projects demonstrate regional embeddedness, although to varying degrees across regions. As a rule of thumb, the more policy coordination within the alliance, the more research collaboration is achieved. Some of the alliances state explicitly that improving access to EU funding is one of the purposes of regional cooperation.

Regional Characteristics and Trends

The North. For the Nordic countries—Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland (all but Norway and Iceland being EU members)—higher education and research are among the priority areas of cooperation and have resulted in a number of joint programs, such as an intra-Nordic mobility program (Nordplus), a regional network of quality assurance agencies (NOQA), and joint study programs in the Nordic region (Nordic Masters). These countries share a common commitment to a “universalist” welfare state aimed at promoting equality and social mobility, which translates into a firm stance in favor of providing tuition-free higher education to their citizens. At the same time, the countries embrace free-market capitalism and see an important role for higher education in economic development. Other common Nordic features are policies

Regional alliances add another layer of policy coordination, and several of these alliances have jointly developed international partnership priorities.

that encourage gender equality, social mobility, and the full involvement of student and faculty representatives in higher education governance. Finally, the Nordic countries continue to champion international development aid and North-South solidarity, but are also interested in cooperation with the leading research countries, such as the United States.

The South. The countries of Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus, and Malta) have all been particularly affected by the global financial crisis, notably registering unprecedented levels of youth unemployment. These countries also do worse than the rest of Europe in terms of drop-out rates from education (especially among males). Meanwhile, all of these countries have been experiencing significant growth in immigrant populations, given their situation as entry points from the global South into the EU. Despite various challenges that have hindered efforts to attain excellence in research and education, these countries continue to be fairly attractive to foreign students, even though the number of programs offered in English is fairly low. Spain and Portugal, especially, benefit from access to Latin American markets, while Spain and Italy attract very large numbers of US study abroad students. A common feature of countries in this region is their special relationship via higher education to the Mediterranean region, in particular North Africa as well as the Middle East. There are several projects and initiatives supported through Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020, as part of

the EuroMed Partnership of the European Union.

The East(s). The east of Europe consists of several regional groupings. In Central Eastern Europe, the Visegrád Four is a formal intergovernmental alliance. In the northeast, the political alliance of Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) has links to Nordic cooperation. Both alliances are also highly active in the EuroEast Partnership of the European Union with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, which supports (among other areas) reforms and capacity building in higher education and research in this region. In the Southeast, cooperation among Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia) is now supported through the Regional Cooperation Council, which coordinates activities and helps streamline development aid. With some exceptions, Eastern European countries tend to be highly amenable to cooperation with the United States, given the aid provided by the United States during the democratic transition of the 1990s.

The West. “The Six”—i.e., the founding members of the EU: Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, France, Germany,

When we look at US-European collaboration in higher education from a regional perspective, we find that all regions in Europe maintain strong links with the United States.

and Italy—have a special relationship to each other and to the EU. In many ways, these countries still exert significant influences on the EU and EHEA policies, although their significance as a bloc is somewhat diluted in today’s enlarged and more differentiated EU. Several innovative avenues of cooperation in higher education have emerged here, such as the joint accreditation organization, NVAO, between Belgium and the Netherlands. The founding Six, together with the United Kingdom and Ireland, represent the “West” of Europe—a ‘center,’ in terms of success in attracting talent, European research funding, and status in global university rankings. They also struggle with a common set of challenges: how to balance between supporting select centers of excellence versus enhancing quality across entire systems; how to ensure sustainable funding for higher education; how to combine research excellence with excellence in teaching and learning; and how to strengthen the social impact of higher education. These countries are attractive destinations for US students, despite increases in tuition fees, which are still much lower

than in the United States.

Cooperation and Competition

European higher education faces a mix of competitive and cooperative forces. Regional cooperation has been an important feature. However, between regions there is also fierce competition for talent, research funding, status in international rankings, and symbolic prestige derived from international partnerships. International cooperation with institutions outside of Europe is highly valued. This kind of global engagement stands as a proxy for quality and advancement, promising wider opportunities for academics and students, and providing evidence of a global outlook.

World-class universities from anywhere are naturally highly desirable partners for Europeans. While intra-European cooperation has become so common that its symbolic power is withering away, cooperation with “third countries” is attractive. US partners have a lot to offer. For one, they have ample expertise in fostering quality of teaching and learning, and student affairs, areas now central to the EHEA. Europeans also aspire to build entrepreneurial universities, a concept born in the United States. There are ample historic ties, cultural affinities, and shared concerns on which to build transatlantic partnerships. US institutions will encounter increasing similarities in modernization agendas across Europe. When we look at US-European collaboration in higher education from a regional perspective, we find that all regions in Europe maintain strong links with the United States. In addition, for all regions, the United States is still one of the highly preferred destinations for study abroad and for inter-institutional cooperation in student exchange, faculty mobility, research, and so forth, even though those relationships are uneven, due to elements of quality, reputation and funding.

European Higher Education and Research: A Global Perspective

Lesley Wilson, Thomas Ekman Jørgensen, and Tia Loukkola

One of the aims of the Bologna Process—officially referred to since 2010 as the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)—has been to contribute to the global competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education through more comparable, compatible, and coherent systems of higher education across Europe. Since the London Ministerial Communiqué in 2007, in particular, positioning the EHEA, and thus also European universities, in a global context has been constantly on the agenda. This has included establishing a working group focusing on how

Postcard from Belgium

Erica Lutes¹

Belgium is a relatively small country with a uniquely complex cultural, linguistic, and political history and contemporary landscape. Home to major European and international organizations—including the European Commission, the European Parliament, and NATO—Belgium presents itself as both a microcosm of, and gateway to, “all things Europe.” As such, it stands as a potentially rich and rewarding focal point for international engagement by American higher education institutions.

Higher education in Belgium consists of a two-tier system: universities and university colleges. Universities primarily offer bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees, advanced master’s degrees, and doctoral degrees. University colleges, on the other hand, mainly offer professional training and specialized degrees, which involve practice-oriented courses of study that include periods of work placement and internships.

The national government of Belgium is not responsible for higher education; rather, this responsibility rests with the country’s two main language communities: the Flemish (Dutch-speaking) and the French-speaking. In the Flemish community, there are 6 universities and 22 university colleges, whereas the French-speaking community consists of 6 universities and 20 university colleges. Throughout the country, many universities have made significant commitments to internationalization in recent years. The University of Antwerp’s International Relations Office, for example, is focused on facilitating international education projects, enhancing teacher exchange services, and growing the university’s networking capacity (University of Antwerp, n.d.). The Catholic University of Louvain has, likewise, put an emphasis on internationalization by building exchange programs into their degree requirements and offering several dual degree opportunities with top tier universities outside the country (Université Catholique de Louvain, n.d.). Other universities have made significant new commitments to internationalization and have expressed an interest in having more international students on their campuses.

According to the Institute of International Education’s (IIE) 2015 *Open Doors* Report, the number of Belgian students studying in the United States increased by 5.6 percent over the previous year (IIE, 2015b) while the number of US students in Belgium increased by 12.4 percent (IIE, 2015a). Americans study at a variety of institutions in Belgium, including satellite campuses of the University of Missouri and American University. The University of Missouri program is exclusively for journalism students, but encourages its students to take advanced courses in other fields at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. The campus of American University includes a Center for European Studies, which offers coursework for American University graduate and undergraduate students, as well as enrollment options for students from other US universities.

Given the low cost of higher education in Belgium (the average tuition for Belgian and EU citizens is around EUR 890 per year), significant increases in the number of Belgian students studying abroad at the undergraduate level are probably unlikely—particularly in the United States, where tuition is considerably higher. However, there may be more potential for growth at the graduate level; Belgian students often see a US graduate degree as having considerable value and being a very good investment. Similarly, while there is room for growth in the number of American undergraduate students studying in Belgium, the graduate level may also hold the most potential for increased numbers, as Belgian universities already offer quite a few English-taught graduate programs and are looking to grow foreign student numbers.

There are a number of resources available to support student mobility and other higher education collaboration between Belgium and the United States. Belgian students can learn about studying in the United States by attending information sessions and college fairs hosted by EducationUSA, the Belgian Fulbright Commission, and other institutions and organizations. EducationUSA and the Belgian Fulbright Commission also provide information for US students seeking to study in Belgium, and can also help facilitate broader institution-level partnerships between colleges and universities in the two countries.

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¹ Nia Dickens, Rens Crevits, Marijke Hendrickx, and Nathan Hoffman also contributed to this piece.

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to better position and advocate for European higher education globally. Since 2009, Bologna Policy Fora have been organized regularly in conjunction with ministerial meetings to foster interaction between European higher education leaders and their counterparts from around the world.

Complementing EHEA efforts in this vein, the European Union (EU), as part of its foreign policy, supports regional dialogues between the EU and other parts of the world, also as a means of promoting European higher education. In 2013, the EU launched a specific strategy entitled *European Higher Education in the World*, setting out Europe-wide priorities for higher education institutions and member states, as well as the specific EU contribution to an enhanced global profile (and performance) for the sector (EU, 2013). The European Commission's funding programs—in particular the present Erasmus+ and its predecessors—have provided significant support for higher education cooperation both within Europe and beyond. However, there are also other support mechanisms for promoting European dialogue with other world regions. Through its European Neighbourhood Policy, for example, the EU works with its southern and eastern neighbors to achieve closer political and economic ties.

The various instruments and tools initially developed to facilitate cross-border cooperation within Europe over the last 20 years serve as a solid foundation for collaboration outside the region, as well.

These high level policy commitments, structures, and funding programs have provided a framework for cooperation and dialogue between European higher education actors—from individual universities to networks and consortia to region-wide stakeholder organizations, such as the European University Association (EUA)—and their counterparts in other

parts of the world. The various instruments and tools initially developed to facilitate cross-border cooperation within Europe over the last 20 years serve as a solid foundation for collaboration outside the region, as well.

A Model for Harmonization

With the success of the Bologna Process and the EHEA, other regions have become interested in launching their own harmonization and integration processes. Often, they look to Europe as a model, and in some cases are engaging with European organizations as partners in the process. The following examples are based on projects in which the EUA has been involved in recent years and illustrate the increased interest in exchange of practice and experiences across different regions:

- Between 2011 and 2014, the Alfa PUENTES project (co-financed by the European Commission's Alfa Programme) was led by university associations from Latin America and Europe and aimed at improving mechanisms to modernize, reform, and harmonize education systems in Latin America, and to enhance collaboration between European and Latin American universities.
- In 2015, an EU-funded project, SHARE, was launched, with the overarching objective of strengthening regional cooperation, and enhancing the quality, competitiveness, and internationalization of higher education institutions and students in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Another main objective is to enhance cooperation between the EU and the ASEAN Economic Community.
- In the future, higher education will have a central role to play in the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, with a focus on harmonization, quality, and accreditation. The European Commission, with the support of the African Commission, has recently launched a new three-year initiative to take this forward. The activities will be carried out by a bi-regional consortium that involves organizations with expertise in regional processes on both continents.

Such inter-regional activities contribute to a better understanding of the similarities and differences between regional systems, and of common challenges faced. They also increase trust between systems and individuals, which can in turn facilitate greater collaboration at the institutional level.

Research Connections

Successive EU research framework programs have provided support for collaborative university research since 1984, creating incentives for researchers to build international projects and consortia (within and beyond Europe), furthering collaboration, networks, and mobility. One measure of the success of these funding streams is that successful European researchers are often very mobile, moving between countries and institutions to a larger extent than their counterparts in the United States and other areas of the world (Science Europe, 2013).

Recently, however, the political discourse has often taken on a defensive tone in light of a growing focus on innovation and entrepreneurialism: Europe lacks the Googles, Amazons, and Facebooks of the United States, despite being the birthplace of the internet, and faces competition from China and other emerging economies. European research is not sufficiently commercialized, it is often said, and the continent's many national research systems hinder the efficient use of resources.

One way of addressing these challenges has been to focus on the creation of a European Research Area (ERA), based upon removing obstacles to mobility, allowing researchers to move to where talent is needed, and promoting increased collaboration between European systems and institutions as a means of unlocking Europe's full potential.

Consortia and Partnerships

European institutions have a long tradition of hands-on experience working through international consortia and partnerships. Within Europe, such structures underpin major scientific research infrastructures, such as the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland, or the Square Kilometre Array with headquarters in Britain. Beyond the region, Europe's historic global ties are reflected in networks such as the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie and the Association of Commonwealth Universities, which facilitate connections and collaboration between member institutions. Illustrating the power of these organizations, in a 2011 survey of developing and emerging countries, the EUA found that many countries engaged in more collaboration in doctoral education with Europe than with North America (Jørgensen, 2012, p. 23).

At the institutional level, European universities are well equipped for global partnerships as a result of their intra-European experience with credit recognition and cost-sharing.

While the United States is frequently seen as a very attractive partner, university systems in Asia and Africa often mirror European models, which eases the development of partnerships of various types with European counterparts.

Looking Ahead

At this point in time, European research and higher education are threatened by uneven financing and heavy cuts in the wake of the financial crisis. And, despite the capacity for working together, there is still a good deal of fragmentation between the national research and higher education systems, and their full potential is still to be reached.

Nonetheless, EUA's recent *TRENDS Report 2015* (Sursock, 2015) confirms that Europe's higher education institutions are becoming more globally oriented and engaged. For example, 85 percent of respondents to the survey had an internationalization strategy, and 8 percent were in the process of developing one.

Globally, Europe has a number of important strengths to play to. A part of this strength comes from the long experience of European higher education and research systems working to overcome diversity in the European context itself. Concretely, international offices in European universities have developed a culture and capability to engage with different administrative and academic systems from beyond their own borders and find compromises and pragmatic solutions. Another considerable strength comes from the structures that have been set up in Europe to facilitate comparability and collaboration. These structures give a template and a conceptual framework for similar attempts across the world, and they have the potential to make the European system a global reference point for international collaboration in higher education and research.

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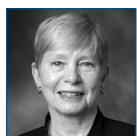
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