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University Networks – Can They Dynamise Intercultural Dialogue?

Marijke Wahlers, German Rectors' Conference
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The Answer is...

...yes

...but how?

Universities have become increasingly aware of their role in intercultural dialogue

Universities are Actors and Drivers of Intercultural Dialogue

Intercultural dialogue within the university:

- Catering to the needs of an multicultural and diverse student body
- Catering to the needs of an multicultural and diverse staff body
- Addressing diversity and multiculturalism in teaching & studies (curricula design) and research
- Teaching diverse languages and intercultural skills
- Offering platforms for (intercultural) dialogue between student body and staff (meetings, events, conferences)
- Offering opportunities for intercultural learning (lectures, seminars, but also study and work abroad)

Universities are Actors and Drivers of Intercultural Dialogue

Intercultural dialogue with the wider society:

- Offering platforms for intercultural dialogue (meeting, events, conferences) between (a multicultural and diverse) student body and (a multicultural and diverse) society
- Offering training and continuing education programmes on issues of diversity and multiculturalism
- Cooperating with national and regional partner institutions worldwide (joint study programmes, joint research projects, capacity building, ...)

International Strategy of the German Rectors' Conference (adopted by the HRK General Assembly on 18 November 2008)

“The universities of the future are universities in the world and for the world.”

- As a consequence of globalisation, a university must, in all the conceivable elements of its work and business, perceive of itself as a creative part of a world higher education system that is in the process of forming.
- Thus, a sustainable and forward-looking university will define itself as a transnational university.

International Strategy of the German Rectors' Conference (adopted by the HRK General Assembly on 18 November 2008)

“It is key is for each university to develop its own internationalisation strategy that appropriately considers the specific features of that university as well as the regional and national context in which it is embedded.”



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How about university
associations?

National and Regional University Associations

- University associations serve as an umbrella for individual higher education institutions in a national or regional context.
- Varying (legal) status:
 - Governmental vs. non-governmental entities
 - State-funded vs. privately-funded bodies
 - Compulsory vs. voluntary membership
- Core mission: lobbying and service provision for member institutions
- University associations represent a national or regional university system towards national and international politics as well as national, regional and international university associations.

Rectors' Conferences in Europe (I)



- Association of Rectors of Slovenia
- Association of Swedish Higher Education
- Association of Universities in the Netherlands
- Austrian Rectors' Conference
- Bulgarian Rectors' Conference
- Confederation of Hungarian Conferences on Higher Education
- Conference of Heads of Irish Universities
- Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland
- Conferencia de Rectores de las Universidades Espanolas
- Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane
- Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Pontificie Romane
- Conférence des Présidents d'Universités
- Conférence des recteurs des universités suisses
- Conseil Interuniversitaire de la Communauté française
- Croatian Rectors' Conference
- Czech Rectors' Conference

Rectors' Conferences in Europe (II)



- Estonian Rectors' Conference
- Finnish council of University Rectors
- Greek Rectors' Conference
- Hochschulrektorenkonferenz
- Latvian Rectors' Council
- Lithuanian Universities Rectors' Conference
- National Rectors Conference in Iceland
- Norwegian Council for Higher Education
- Portuguese National Conference of Rectors
- Rektorkollegiet
- Romanian Council of Rectors
- Russian Union of Rectors
- Serbian University Association
- Slovak Rectors' Conference
- Turkish University Rectors' Conference
- Universities UK
- University of Luxembourg
- Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad

Member Institutions

The **German Rectors' Conference** is the voluntary association of state and state-recognized universities and other higher education institutions in Germany.

The HRK currently has **257 member institutions** which account for 98 per cent of matriculated students in Germany.



International Strategy of the German Rectors' Conference: Ten Goals for Internationalisation

- IZ 1 Asserting the interests of Germany's universities in the development of international standards
- IZ 2 Shaping the European Higher Education Area
- IZ 3 Shaping the European Research Area
- IZ 4 Representing the German universities' interests at key strategic locations abroad and establishing German study programmes und universities abroad
- IZ 5 **Improving the mobility and interculturality of students, researchers and scientists**

International Strategy of the German Rectors' Conference: Ten Goals for Internationalisation

- IZ 6 Publicising opportunities for doing studies, doctorates or research at Germany's universities
- IZ 7 Providing professional advice and support for foreign students, doctoral candidates and researchers
- IZ 8 Making internationality transparent, benchmarking and comparing it, and setting university-internal incentives for the internationalisation process
- IZ 9 Managing internationalisation professionally at executive level and developing an institution-own internationalisation strategy
- IZ 10 Making foreign universities into strong partners of Germany's universities and taking on international responsibility

Good Practice I: The First ASEM Rectors' Conference

Long-Term Goals and Vision

The Asia-Europe Rectors' Conferences shall

- Provide a platform for an Asia-Europe dialogue on higher education policy and higher education systems development;
- Bring together university leaders and higher education experts from ASEM countries;
- Enhance higher education cooperation, e.g. student and staff mobility and recognition, between ASEM countries; and
- Develop common recommendations on higher education policy issues to be submitted to national governments and regional bodies.

Organising Institutions

- Asia-Europe Foundation
- ASEAN University Network
- German Rectors' Conference
- European University Association
- Freie Universität Berlin



Topics

Strand I: Dialogue on higher education policy

- Governance and Management of Universities
- Competition and Cooperation
- Impact of Rankings and Other Quality Indicators on QA in HE

Strand II: Dialogue on Higher Education Cooperation between Asia and Europe

- Strategic University Cooperation in Asia and Europe
- Research Cooperation between Europe and Asia
- The Global Dimension of the Bologna Process and the ASEM Process

Recommendations

University leaders in Asia and Europe

- support the strategic partnership between the two regions
- aim to contribute to the emerging ASEM education process
- regard this as the start of a concerted dialogue between governments and the higher education sectors
- highlight the importance of stakeholder participation at national and regional level, including students
- emphasise the critical role of universities, with regard to their complex missions and manifold tasks
- point out the need for a long-term perspective on higher education cooperation between the two regions

Good Practice II: The Bulgarian-Romanian Interuniversity Europe Centre (BRIE)

Good Practice II: BRIE

BRIE – The Bulgarian-Romanian Interuniversity Europe Center

- Cross-border network in education and research of:
 - Academy of Economic Studies Bucharest (ASE),
 - “Angel Kanchev” university of Ruse and
 - German universities: European University Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder, Chemnitz University of Technology and University of Bremen
- Located in the Bulgarian-Romanian border region Giurgiu/Ruse
- Initiated in 2000 by the HRK
- Offers bilingual Study Programmes for international students:
 - Master of European Studies (in Ruse, Bulgaria)
 - Master of European Public Administration (in Giurgiu, Romania)
- Realisation of the EU PHARE project “BRIDGE”



Good Practice II: BRIE

BRIE aims to bridge South-Eastern and Western Europe on the grounds of knowledge-based strategies for integration, economic prosperity and stability.



The BRIE mission is based on the belief that young professionals should possess professional competences, a culture of cooperation and the awareness of democratic structures and societal participation as well as cultural diversity.

Comment by Mikel Spiro, student of the European Studies Programme:

“For me BRIE is really a good opportunity to study in a multicultural and multinational environment. When I first saw the information about the master degree offered by BRIE, I liked it a lot, because as a Master of European Studies I have the opportunity to help my country Albania to integrate into the European Union. I am developing competences, which are appropriate for my future career and this makes me very optimistic.”

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How about university
networks?

National, Regional and International University Networks

- National university networks represent certain interest groups within a national university sector.
- Core mission: lobbying for member institutions (e.g. TU 9 in Germany, Group of Eight in Australia, Russell Group in the UK, etc.)
- Regional and international university networks represent certain transnational interest groups in the university sector (e.g. LERU, Coimbra Group, ASEAN University Network, etc.) or are based on a shared interest for strategic cooperation between the individual member institutions (e.g. ASEA-Uninet, Universitas 21, APRU, etc.).

What are the Driving forces for Establishing University Networks?

- Strategic advantage for members (→ getting ahead of national competitors)
- Exchange of information and know-how
- Enhancement of academic quality in teaching and research
- Access to national and international funding sources
- Promotion of student and researcher mobility
- Recruitment of excellent students and staff

Intercultural Dialogue through University Networks

What are the Driving forces for Establishing University Networks?

The pessimist's view:

It's all only about reputation and money.



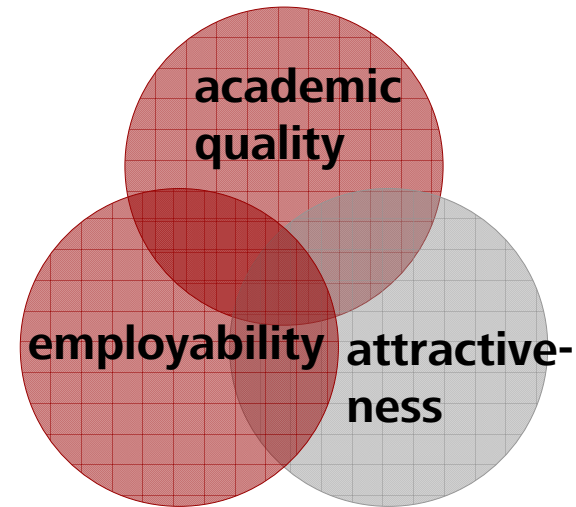
The optimist's view:

Intercultural sharing and learning will automatically follow as a „side effect“ and will be appreciated in the long term.



Driving forces of Bologna?

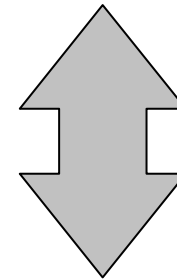
1. Enhancing academic quality
2. Preparing graduates for the European labour market
3. Competitiveness and attractiveness of the national systems of higher education



Excellence and Diversity Need to be Balanced...

„Academic and Competitive Agenda“

- Develop and support strong researchers/ fields/ departments
- Become internationally visible



„Academic and Social Agenda“

- Maintain and develop high level of research and teaching across wide range of subjects/ areas/ departments
- Cater for the needs of internal and external stakeholders (students, community, society as a whole)

Lessons Learned: How can University Networks be Successful and Sustainable?

- Shared Vision and common goals
- Focus on clearly defined areas of cooperation
- Long-term member representatives (with comparable standing in the university hierarchy)
- Shared infrastructure (staff, funding)
- Common language (English as lingua franca)?
- Manageable network size

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Vielen Dank!
Спасибо!

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