



Internationalisation

Francisco Mendes-Palma is Institutional Coordinator for *Transform4Europe* at Universidade Católica Portuguesa and Invited Professor of the Executive Programs of Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics

Internationalisation: to travel and to learn

In 1426, in the Bruges Letter written by Prince D. Pedro, Duke of Coimbra, to his brother D. Duarte, the Portuguese Crown Prince, the former urges the latter to understand international realities, including those of universities. Drawing on such experience, those who must make decisions can be prepared for the world, knowing why they do – or do not – take a given course of action. This letter, a true “Treaty of Princes”, so characteristic of the Renaissance, is the basis of what I understand by internationalisation: to travel and to learn.

Internationalising is a way of living. It means recognising that every activity has an international dimension – whether in its origins or its impact – and that this dimension is always present. Everything is universal, even when we cannot perceive it.

Internationalisation should begin by identifying the talents – both tangible and intangible – that are available. These talents are the substance of internationalisation: the assets we take “out of the house” so that others may know and benefit from them.

Internationalising is a form of innovation: greater diversity in sources of knowledge enables us to go beyond the ordinary.

Internationalising, in its fullest sense, implies movement: leaving and going elsewhere – by everyone and in every area. It also entails costs, which require both funding and resilience, personally and from those around us. Internationalising is inclusive, because it is grounded in our ability to live with difference.

Internationalisation depends on leadership that brings out the best in us and energises groups with many ideas, including utopian ones.

Internationalising, however, begins at home. The people who will make it happen must have a strategy and a clear, targeted route that can be adjusted. That means doing the groundwork, so that the outcome will not be like going to the supermarket without a shopping list: we come back with many things, spend resources, but end up with a set of options (purchases) that do not suit us.

Internationalising is not a neutral stance; it involves interests and is pursued to generate reciprocal benefits. This non-neutrality provides purpose and objectives; it encourages careful attention to decisions, so that externalities are more positive than negative; and it helps ensure that no one is left behind and that everyone has a role.

Internationalising happens both bilaterally and through networks, and it is crucial that it is embedded in the institution's paradigm. It cannot be the preference of a group that may later disappear, bringing the process of internationalisation to an end.

Internationalising in the university world encompasses all of this – and more.

So where, then, is internationalisation within the university?

Everywhere – rooted in teaching and research on internationalisation, and in supporting those who join us by nurturing and creating talent. We prepare the *Homos Internationales* that we are: every person in the social, political and economic landscape, whose activity affects – and is affected by – the international context.

However, universities' role in internationalisation goes further. Their international relations both sustain and build bridges – connections and reasons to support contact between agents and entities whose relationships are fragile, and who would otherwise have no reason to connect. This bridging role, the one of Science Diplomacy, is an institutional function that mobilises knowledge, scientific practice and academic capability to promote cooperation, trust and understanding between people, communities, organisations and states. It is a cross-cutting mechanism linking science, society and public policy, driven by the university.

In summary, the international dimension means contributing – through all these dynamics and dimensions – to knowledgeable citizens who recognise that reality, the space and time in which we make decisions,

extends beyond the end of the street. It is about ensuring a more holistic vision, generating a virtuous cycle that better empowers agents and strategies and makes fuller use of everyone's talents. It is about ensuring that just decisions are made – and, in doing so, creating hope.

References

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