

A kaleidoscope of internationalisation in European higher education

1 | INTRODUCTION

The Treaties of Rome (European Union, 1957), Maastricht (European Union, 1992), and Lisbon (European Union, 2007), as well as other policies and documents initiated at the European level in recent decades have led to a number of significant changes, and consequently influenced internationalisation activities, including in the higher education sector. In this context, as recognised by various actors and stakeholders, important initiatives and higher education reforms, so called *milestones*, have been carried out in Europe.

1.1 | Three decades of change—The context of higher education reforms in Europe

Initiated by the academic community, the first milestone was the *Magna Charta Universitatum* (Rectors of European Universities, 1988), which articulated the idea of creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and outlined the importance and value of academic freedom and university autonomy.

The second milestone, which tremendously influenced the higher education landscape in Europe and irreversibly changed it, was the *Bologna Declaration* (European Ministers of Education, 1999), a document signed by a large number of European countries, both EU member states and non-EU members. Characterised by six main principles and goals, the aim of the *Bologna Declaration* was to reform and harmonise a variety of European higher education systems by 2010. Additionally, it specially highlighted the importance of mobility and the free movement of people across Europe, and fostered internationalisation activities.

The *Bologna Declaration* gave signatory countries a common framework for gaining “leverage for reforms in their [...] countries [and to ...] improve the problem-solving capacity of their institutions” (Martens & Wolf, 2009, p. 88). In addition to this, the document also initiated the implementation of the Bologna Process that is still considered to be *the most important reform to “have taken place in the 900 odd years of the history of the University in Europe”* (Neave & Maassen, 2007, pp. 138–139).

As it represented a common reform framework, the Bologna Process that followed the adoption of the *Bologna Declaration*, also influenced the passing of new legislation for national higher education systems and the implementation of new policies and documents at the university level, including strategies that reshape institutional organisational structures and decision-making processes.

Over twenty years, in the framework of the Bologna Process and through other higher education and research policies, new goals, recommendations, and principles were developed, and new programmes and schemes financed by the European Commission were introduced. Starting with the multi-year Framework Programmes (FP)—Socrates, Erasmus, Tempus, and other programmes—the Bologna Process and other supranational policies together influenced internationalisation activities in higher education. As one of the consequences, a need for redesigning and unifying the governance sphere in higher education in Europe has been recognised. The last

initiative, the European University Initiative (2017), which was focused directly on higher education, was aimed at bringing Europeans together and increasing the international competitiveness of European higher education.

A long-lasting impact of the Bologna Process is the variety of implementation models created at national levels. Indeed, very different higher education reforms have been carried out in different national contexts more or less committed to the adaptation of their higher education systems to Bologna principles. While some countries passed through several partial reforms and upgraded higher education policies at the national and institutional levels, others remain critical of prevailing higher education policies and perceive the Bologna Process to be a major cause of slow development and segmented adoption of changes—including changes in the governance model. Although the Bologna Process was supposed to end by 2010, the wave of financial and economic crises across the world since 2007, as well as other factors, prolonged its full implementation in parts of Europe, due to different political, social, and economic contexts of governments.

Additionally, besides the Bologna Process, globalisation is a powerful force that changed higher education in Europe and worldwide. The literature offers an array of globalisation definitions and scholars have analysed three waves of globalisation (Held et al., 2003). Defined as “a growing magnitude or intensity of global flows such that states and societies become increasingly enmeshed in worldwide systems and networks of interaction” (Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 3) the last wave of globalisation accelerated in higher education the development of new technologies, communication and exchange of knowledge, experiences, and ideas among students, faculty, and administrative staff; and fostered competition at individual, institutional, and regional levels, as well as globally.

1.2 | Historical paths of European universities

The history of the university as an institution is a very long one. The University of Bologna, perceived as the oldest university, was established in 1088 as a research institution by a guild of students (University of Bologna, 2021). The University of Bologna presents a certain *ideal type*, that of the medieval era university, and provides an exemplar model of the historical European university. Its foundation was followed by universities such as Oxford, Salamanca, Cambridge, Padua, and Coimbra. Arising from their traditional autonomy in research and in creating their curricula, universities as institutions have always presented a certain *free zone* for scientists and students who travelled from one university centre to another across Europe. This represented an early form of internationalisation (Ridder-Symoens, 1992).

Collaboration among researchers from different universities, as well as the mobility of individual students and prominent scientists for the purpose of further learning and research, foreshadowed the importance of internationalisation (Knight & De Wit, 1995). Medieval Europe defined by a common religion with Latin as the academic language, and by a commitment to the teaching and testing of knowledge (Neave, 1997), is considered to be a forerunner of today's EHEA, in which English has replaced Latin as a kind of *lingua franca* (De Wit & Hunter, 2015a). Consequently, it is not surprising that thinking today is still led by those “universities that have been among the most ‘globalised’ institutions” (Marginson & Considine, 2000, p. 8).

The development of universities as modern institutions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was inextricably linked to the formation of nation-states (De Wit, 2002) and was also the result of industrialisation. In terms of governance, two models that tremendously influenced the development of the university as an institution were the Humboldt University in Germany (1810) and the American research university, that is, the ‘multiversity’ (a model initiated in the late nineteenth century) (Kerr, 2001). Due to excellent universities which developed doctoral studies, “by the end of the 19th century, already 10,000 Americans had studied in Germany” (Powell, 2010, p. 16 cited in Finger, 2011, p. 7). The introduction of national languages in teaching and a general decline in interest in studying abroad affected change in the missions of European universities that were strongly oriented towards the development of national identity and the foundation of strong scientific centres, such as Vienna, Prague,

Berlin, and Paris. Still, the Humboldtian university model that accelerated the development of research centres of excellence in Germany in the nineteenth century was attracting

[...] a large number of researchers, not only from other European countries but also from the United States and Japan [who] travelled to Germany—later to transfer the Germanic tradition of a research university and its mode of knowledge production to their own national institutions, at least up until the outbreak of the First World War. (Kim, 2009, p. 390; see also Clark, 1983; Tanaka, 2005)

The twentieth century, and especially the period between the two World Wars, re-focused the internationalisation and mobility concept in higher education through the development of various soft-power models (such as the establishment of Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, DAAD, in Germany and the British Council in Great Britain). This trend was further strengthened after the end of World War II by the establishment of programmes such as the Fulbright (1946) and Humboldt (1953) fellowships, which supported the exchange of scholars across the globe. Internationalisation in higher education gained special momentum during the Cold War, when the United States launched programmes in the field of foreign language studies, which was a form of technical assistance in building the capacity of developing European countries after the Second World War (De Wit & Hunter, 2015b).

1.3 | Present challenges of European universities

Due to powerful globalisation forces that affect higher education, together with supranational higher education and research policies, European universities have encountered new challenges brought on by changes in the higher education landscape. In the creation of new policies and strategies, and in reconsidering their missions and goals, universities have had to take into account the following effects of the new higher education setting.

First, due to the new policies and programmes created and financed at the EU level, an inter-governmental approach of *soft-law* policymaking in higher education gradually came under the indirect influence of a *European community-method* by the introduction of new directives and policies that tackle higher education (Fink-Hafner & Dagen, 2017). Second, as a result of these changes, higher education systems and higher education institutions passed through an extensive process of adaptation and continuous transformation of their purpose and mission, strategies and policies, and organisational and governance models. Besides globalisation, internationalisation, and Europeanisation, growing competition and marketisation contributed to extensive changes in the social surroundings in which European public universities operate. Third, apart from the Bologna Process, the newly perceived necessity to be globalised and internationalised and to be recognised for their quality, strengths, and special niches have motivated universities to follow new programmes and schemes initiated at the European and global levels and to design and develop a high number of excellent activities in different areas of functioning, including the creation of new areas of specialisation. Motivated by expectations for good rankings by internal and external stakeholders, universities had to turn to the creation of policies that adapt to the competitive surroundings—which include the reduction of what are perceived as less successful activities—and carry out a rapid transformation and modernisation. Fourth, the purpose of higher education has changed in the new social surroundings. While society still proclaims its ongoing and ever-expanding need for highly educated people who can create new knowledge, high unemployment rates in some European countries show that an academic degree is no longer a guarantee for a good job, nor even for employment in general. More and more young talents and holders of PhD degrees go abroad searching for employment, often moving from Eastern European countries to the West, since whole sectors of national economies are not prepared to recognise them in their own countries, which contributes to *brain-drain*. Fifth, as the variety of stakeholders who take part in higher education is increasing and responsibilities are changing at every level, formal and informal relations among different actors who have contributed to the new higher education landscape in Europe require different university actions.

Europe as a relevant world region, is facing the necessity to be more competitive, especially in relation to the rapid development of higher education in India and China and globally recognised universities in the United States and Asia. Therefore, the search for young talent, competitiveness in getting research funds and grants (both at the European and global level) and the transformation of the university as an institution, have intensified and have fostered the implementation of new strategies and activities, for which the further professionalisation of administrative and support systems is needed, as well as the further development of highly skilled professionals for specific areas of work in higher education. Furthermore, due to the impacts of the global financial crisis that started in 2007, some countries reduced public funding for universities, which directly influenced education in general and encouraged the revision of university mission statements and strategies. Economic dimensions and labour market needs became more important—at supranational, national, and institutional levels—and some universities recognised internationalisation as a key strategic niche. In order to adjust successfully to new circumstances and demands, universities are faced with the need to develop adequate governance models.

2 | THE AIM OF THIS PAPER

Based on an analysis of the literature, this perspective paper considers internationalisation as a powerful force that stands at the disposition of universities, giving them the opportunity to adapt to ongoing change in their surroundings. With a kaleidoscope of multiple lenses, internationalisation is analysed as a process that has different roles in the transformation of universities and which therefore might be used for meeting institutional strategic goals or for creating different policy effects.

While previous research has focused on the analysis of internationalisation policies and practices, fewer studies have analysed the various roles of internationalisation in university governance and its transformation processes. Therefore, in this perspective paper, internationalisation is observed through its various roles in higher education: as an element for the development of university policies; as a driving force that might be used in the development of new governance forms and models; as a trigger for institutional change; and as a tool for overcoming social needs and challenges.

3 | DISCUSSION

According to Neave and Maassen (2007), three elements have significantly influenced changes in European higher education systems and universities. The first of these elements are changes related to a reduction in the role of the university, especially as a carrier of European humanism and in the creation of European civil society. The second element consists in changes related to the need for developing new professional skills and ethical principles, as well as the need to strengthen the technical competencies of students, which has forced universities to reform study programmes and to broaden their activities in different fields. The third element is the development of information and communication technologies, which has accelerated inter-connectedness due to the impact of globalisation and has required European public universities to transform themselves from a traditional model into modern higher education institutions, ready for challenges brought about by the new millennium. A fourth element, as we see it, is the tremendous growth of various initiatives and activities in the field of internationalisation at all levels, which some higher education institutions now see as a new broad policy area to develop.

As a concept, internationalisation in higher education has slowly come into focus since the 1970s (e.g., De Wit, 1993; Harari, 1972; Knight, 1994; Van der Wende, 1997), and from the 2000s it became more and more present in the academic literature. Internationalisation causes much discussion among scholars, especially when debating the linkages between internationalisation and globalisation, and, less frequently, between internationalisation and Europeanisation (e.g., Altbach et al., 2009; De Wit, 2002; Knight, 2003; Marginson & Van der

Wende, 2007; Scott, 1998; Teichler, 2004). In reality, internationalisation takes different forms, with varying intensity and motivations; there is no consensus on how the term should be understood. Differences among scholars and stakeholders are caused by a mix of different factors, including, for example, academic contexts and institutional environment, academic milieu and discipline, the position of individuals within academia, geographical positions of countries, regional and/or national contexts, historical traditions and development levels of higher education systems, and the particular characteristics of specific higher education institutions (e.g., Dagen & Fink-Hafner, 2019; Seeber et al., 2016). Internationalisation is implemented for different purposes and with different goals in various parts of the world, and with instruments that sometimes favour larger countries with more resources and capacities.

In this paper, we use a recent definition in which internationalisation is considered to be one aspect of globalisation in higher education: “a steerable process of greater cooperation and cross-border formal relations between states, institutions and organisations in higher education, which includes an international and/or global dimension in the teaching, research, service functions, purpose and delivery of higher education” (Dagen et al., 2019, pp. 653–654). Accordingly, internationalisation is an important process that influences overall institutional functioning, it has a direct impact on university governance on one hand, and a significant effect at the operational level and on day-to-day management on the other. We see both top-down and bottom-up processes to be of equal importance, as all the stakeholders need to contribute and play their part for internationalisation to take place.

3.1 | Internationalisation—An important element of modern institutional policy

Contrary to the individual approach that was characteristic of higher education institutions before the Bologna Process, new institutional top-down internationalisation policies include students and both academic and non-academic staff, and tackle all segments of the university. Institutionalised schemes and strategically developed concepts of internationalisation, with specific goals, instruments, and outcomes, have become a primary interest of university management in recent years. Consequently, internationalisation puts forward new organisational and governance models and strengthens the need for a new generation of university leaders—rectors, university presidents and university management.

As internationalisation is present today in all aspects of university life and activity, national governments and higher education institutions worldwide create strategic documents related to internationalisation. However, implementation sometimes remains superficial. In some cases, strategic documents can be perceived only as a list of good *intentions*, without sufficient management focus or capacity for implementation. While some higher education institutions focus strongly on internationalisation policies and prioritise internationalisation goals and activities, others do not fully recognise the developmental capacity for internationalisation, and therefore, there is little strategic linking of the different segments related to the broad concept of internationalisation.

Internationalisation in a modern university requires a high level of performance synchronisation among all stakeholders, where each needs to be well acquainted with their roles and responsibilities. And last, but by no means least, to achieve a high performing institution in which internationalisation is a relevant function, it is not enough to have internationally active and motivated academic staff. Professional staff that can assure adequate support across the whole institution and for a variety of stakeholders is also needed.

3.2 | Internationalisation—A driving force in university governance

Historically, universities have had to adapt to changes in their surroundings. Changes due to “*industrial, democratic and scientific revolutions and the development of the nation state*” (Olsen, 2007, p. 45) largely influenced the development of universities as institutions. The transformation of the traditional university into a modern higher

education institution in Europe was fostered by the impact of various effects and processes that include the gradual massification of higher education and the welfare state policies established in many European countries in the 1960s. The Bologna Process was one of the milestones in the higher education reform process in Europe, there were also other higher education and research policies created at the supranational level.

Although higher education institutions across Europe differ in many ways, scholars generally speak of different models among universities from the German, French, Scandinavian, American (and other English-speaking countries), and Eastern European political, administrative, and educational traditions. Accordingly, researchers from different contexts use a variety of approaches in their analysis of the transformation and institutional changes in higher education, the modernisation of higher education systems, and the conceptualisation of models and categorisations of university organisational structures and governance (e.g., Bleiklie & Kogan, 2007; Christensen, 2011; Clark, 1998; Larsen et al., 2009; Maassen & Olsen, 2007; Olsen, 2007). Additionally, there are various approaches to the analysis of particular issues related to university governance; for example, the influence of public policies on university reform (Dill, 2014), international trends in university governance (Shattock, 2014), and the role of institutional autonomy in the university reform process (Maassen et al., 2017).

Different approaches to the analysis of university governance models show the complexity that characterises the transformation of the university as an institution. While scholars have presented various categorisations that are considered to be basic ideal-types, in reality there is a variety of models created by the mixing and selection of various characteristics. Different historical paths, traditions, cultural peculiarities, values, sizes, types, geographical locations, and many other characteristics show that there is no single, *pure* model for a modern public university. Looking at Europe, there is a prevalence of particular characteristics and organisational and governance models; similarly, some characteristics are predominant in some regions. In that sense, partial overlapping and some compatibility of social systems and institutions of higher education is present.

Additionally, organisation and governance of higher education institutions might differ among public and private universities. Since the late 1990s, when Clark (1998) introduced the pioneering idea of the entrepreneurial university that is organised and managed like a large company, scholars and practitioners have critically questioned the entrepreneurial narrative in higher education, as well as the organisation and governance of higher education institutions depending on their main purposes and goals, and especially in relation to market rules and possible profit from higher education. In some of his following works, Clark stressed that "*entrepreneurial character in universities does not stifle the collegial spirit; it does not make universities handmaidens of industry; and it does not commercialise universities*" (Clark, 2001, p. 10). However, during the last two decades, the world has faced the emergence of a high number of higher education institutions, among which are also those founded by various international companies and providers, mostly financially motivated and eager to enter the global higher education market. All this makes higher education globally even more complex, which is seen in higher education institutions' governance models as well. However, all the differences among various models of higher education institutions reflect a mixed landscape of *real-life sub-models*, especially when looking from the perspective of internationalisation.

Universities today operate in very complex academic, economic, social, and political surroundings. Bearing in mind the fact that universities themselves are very stratified organisations, which rely on critical thinking, the questioning of the present, and the search for new knowledge and solutions, their complexity make their governance functioning even more challenging.

Looking at the university as an institution, various factors impact upon its adaptability to change and its willingness to accept specific processes and policies. Institutions have followed many different historical paths and have different traditional and cultural characteristics, including differences in purpose, principles, motivations, norms, and values; differences in missions, goals, policies, strategies, capacities, resources, and internal dynamics; and in addition, differences in organisational and governance models. The distribution of power within the institution among different stakeholders also influences the motivation for change, which may be internally driven, pressured from outside academia or fostered by competitiveness for potential students. Furthermore, "*change*

is affected by how strong the university is as an institution" (Olsen, 2007, p. 46), which is reflected by the setting of short- and long-term goals and by the formulation of specific strategies and their successful implementation through the whole university organisation and structure.

In that sense, we see internationalisation as a two-fold concept: (1) a process that fosters cooperation between states, institutions, and organisations in higher education in order to bring global, international, and European dimensions to all functions of universities; and (2) a broad framework at the disposal of universities for creating new policies and activities that positively affect their capacity development.

Institutional differentiation in the field of internationalisation can be seen through three levels of realisation at universities. On the first level, higher education institutions are capable of defining needs and goals related to internationalisation, create sufficient policies and strategies in this area, and implement specific activities. On the second, there is a gap between declared institutional orientation to internationalisation as a concept and in policy, on one hand, and reality, in which its operationalisation is missing or weak. On the third level, higher education institutions do not recognise internationalisation as a driver, as a tool for transformation and modernisation, and as a possible framework for further development. This level is often characterised by a dominant orientation towards the needs of national and local society, resistance against foreigners, and a limited range of internationalisation initiatives and activities that rely mainly on individual efforts.

However, institutional readiness for self-reflection is the first precondition for institutional change. Institutional willingness to opt for change, and to risk moving away from well-known, established structures, procedures and rules at the individual and collective levels, requires competent leadership and visionary thinking. Open academic reflection on the present position and on a vision for the future needs to be perceived as a part of further university development, not as a threat. Discussions among academic leaders and university members with broad international experience need to contribute to these deliberations, while university governance must take full responsibility for adequate policies that will affect generations to come.

With respect to all the various characteristics of the university as an institution, in-depth and broad empirical research may give more specific answers regarding the reasons for different transformation and modernisation outcomes within higher education institutions. Further research may help explain the different speeds of transformation at European higher education institutions, especially regarding the adjustment of their governance models to the present changes.

3.3 | Internationalisation—A trigger for institutional change

Universities function in a globalised world. Even when they are locally, regionally, or nationally oriented, they are still in a position to take into account a more global approach. Various initiatives and activities in internationalisation, therefore, represent a framework for further development and modernisation. While research at the majority of European universities follows supranational and global mechanisms that foster internationalisation, more specific educational activities at some individual universities need further institutional encouragement and development.

Some European universities have reached a level where there is a noticeable *matching* of governance models and internationalisation, both related to the broad concept and to policies for implementation, with strategic and structural documents that clearly elaborate the goals and activities of the institution. By contrast, some universities still lag behind in these processes. Generally, looking at the European and global higher education landscape, there are three different institutional approaches towards internationalisation. The first approach tries to interconnect general university policy and internationalisation, and includes all organisational units in initiatives and activities in the field by using both top-down and bottom-up principles of governing, decision making, and operation. The second, transitional approach, considers internationalisation as an important part of the university, but still as one of many aspects in its functioning. The third approach is characteristic of universities that continue

to view internationalisation as a challenge. In these institutions, the internationalisation policy is insufficiently structured and not operationalised, associated with a lack of professional administration that can implement new concepts and with activities that rely on internationalisation at the middle and lower organisational levels, and is limited to isolated activities. In addition, there is no connection between governance and internationalisation; goals in this area of functioning are not determined and elaborated, while intra-institutional communications are not sufficient. In such institutional contexts, internationalisation policy stays at the university middle management level, the top-down approach is weak, and the initiation of implementation processes is only superficial. A good example of this phenomenon is the assembling of a large number of institutional agreements, but without any further follow-up.

However, internationalisation today should not be treated as merely one of several policies of university management, but rather as an important driving force that permeates all the segments of the functioning of higher education institutions and fosters transformation and modernisation. In that sense, it seeks in parallel new models of university leadership, as well as various models of communication, professionalisation of administration, and operationalisation at the middle-management level. All in all, internationalisation has also become a factor in increasing internal controls within institutions, as it carries risks, both financial and reputational. Many higher education institutions, therefore, have created procedures and processes with the aim of evaluating specific activities and policies, which include internationalisation as well (e.g., partnerships and memberships in various international organisations, programmes and projects). All these controls directly or indirectly impact the work and freedom of academic staff (e.g., Braun et al., 2015; Maassen, 2017).

Even *locally* focused higher education institutions should opt for internationalisation, at least as one part of general university policy. In that sense, the *local character* is not in contrast with the need to be (more) internationalised. However, an institution in this position still needs to have a specific functioning rationale and should pursue the operationalisation of specific goals and activities.

Internationalisation as a concept and as a policy cannot be shaped in one form only and pursued by all higher education institutions worldwide. While, for some higher education institutions, internationalisation is an important necessity and is fully embraced within the system, others opt for some specific aspects of internationalisation, and finally, there are universities that treat internationalisation only at a superficial level, in words alone, mainly as some form of institutional *decoration*. There is certainly no one model for internationalisation that fits all, but institutions should search for the type of internationalisation that best fits their needs and capacities. University governance models should be aligned both horizontally and vertically and must apply both top-down and bottom-up approaches in order to help embed institutional internationalisation. In that sense, it seems that the most challenging task is to find the intersection between the governance model and internationalisation, for promoting university modernisation in a way that permeates through the whole organisational structure of institutions.

University governance is expected to develop policies and to introduce mechanisms and tools in order to enable the operationalisation of internationalisation for which professional staff will be needed. Well-designed organisational structures, strategies, documents, and procedures rely on the professional management and administration necessary for successful implementation of an internationalisation policy. Depending on their specific goals, modern higher education institutions need educated and well-trained professionals with specific skills.

The university internationalisation process has been dramatically affected by digital transformation in higher education, which has established new options for change and management and, at the same time, has raised new kinds of concerns of institutional competitiveness and sustainability. In order to enhance the quality of the internationalisation process, a proper digitised environment is needed (Lääts et al., 2019). A particular aspect of internationalisation in research is related to data management and changes brought about by digitalisation. A significant shift in the last decade has revisited priorities in data management and sharing, emphasising that research data need to be managed and open, but also findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable (FAIR) (Higman et al., 2019). A digital revolution has accelerated research and brought many changes to how research is organised and conducted and how data is managed, and has started the process of the fundamental transformation

of the entire research lifecycle (European Commission, 2018). Additionally, digital transformation covers three different elements within each higher education institution: (1) technological, which encourages (even) more use of new digital technology; (2) organisational, which is oriented towards changes in organisational processes and the creation of new governance models; and (3) social, which requires openness and reduces resistance to change (European Commission, 2018). All in all, the development of new technology requires that universities adopt, and change, their organisational structures and governance, which includes adjustments of their internationalisation strategies and corresponding activities as well. How this will affect the present forms of internationalisation, and whether it will actually reduce international physical movement of researchers, students, and administrative staff and replace it with online activities, will depend on the individual higher education institution's policy and its management.

As has already been pointed out, no higher education institution can develop all modes of internationalisation; in fact, there is no need for that. Europe as a region shows a variety of specific approaches to internationalisation. From the point of view of institutional governance, these differences could also be correlated with the capacity of university management for institutional self-reflection. At present, this is not overtly in place in every academic milieu. The development of specific strategies, goals and activities, with a special niche and parallel capacity-building, as well as the introduction of new governance models, further professionalisation, and implementation of new procedures and tools in the field of internationalisation, will probably become a necessity in the years to come. While all higher education institutions, even at the superficial level, are eager to follow general trends in internationalisation, due to a lack of operationalisation, especially in some regions, it is expected that differences in the (successful) implementation of internationalisation policies and activities will create even more diversity among higher education institutions in the future.

The introduction of new procedures and rules that follow the rationale of internationalisation include, for example, a changed role for decision-making bodies such as university senates; the international recruitment of rectors or presidents and other university leaders; the presence of international experts on university boards and internationally experienced management; the introduction of more skilled professionals into university structures; the strong involvement of internationally oriented researchers; and the parallel introduction of more skilled professionals into university structures, together with further development of new organisational and governance models. These are only some of the mechanisms and tools that can continuously contribute to the transformation and modernisation of the university.

3.4 | Internationalisation—A tool for meeting society's needs and challenges

Internationalisation might be jeopardised by social pressures, as seen in 2020, arising from the global COVID-19 pandemic or as a result of the deep economic and financial crisis. Such pressures require a revisiting of present models, policies, and activities and the initiation of new ones. Internationalisation is not an exception; indeed, it is significantly affected by the new reality, and institutions will need to make careful decisions about what kind of internationalisation will be optimal for their local and national needs in the very near future. Competition related to internationalisation will increase, and universities that have gained *policy-learning lessons* from previous transformation stages might adapt more quickly to new circumstances. The new reality has already encouraged higher education institutions to start carefully analysing all the aspects of internationalisation and their realisation, from the baccalaureate to the doctoral level and especially in the area of research, and to rethink their policies and organisational models. Although some aspects of internationalisation may change, it will not vanish from higher education. Internationalisation will be transformed into different shapes, forms, and effects, but it will remain an important part of the university's functioning. Since internationalisation places additional demands on the governance of the modern university, it seems the whole model should be adjusted, especially by building capacity and giving more authority to the middle management level in university policy implementation processes.

It is expected that the global financial and economic crisis caused by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 will prompt a reduction of staff, but at the same time, will increase the institutional need for more skilled professionals trained for new and more complex university activities.

Unfortunately, while globalisation still represents an important force in higher education, parallel de-globalisation tendencies, such as growing nationalism and populism in some countries, already cause, and will continue to cause, even more powerful effects on society, higher education, and universities. Therefore, it is not surprising that the intertwining of all these phenomena will continue to influence university policies and governance. Bearing in mind all the effects presented here, both national governments and university management will simultaneously need to take into account national and institutional needs. This could potentially cause some tensions and contradictions in the shaping of policies, requiring experienced leaders to balance these contrasts. As much as they will need to have good skills for academic leadership, they will also need to be very sensitive to the pulse of society. In that sense, internationally experienced individuals who understand social context should recognise the advantages of internationalisation and its role in the faster and successful transformation of university policies.

In the years to come, the rethinking of demographic change and societal needs, as well as their connection with the concept of internationalisation, will be a demanding challenge for university leaders and management, especially when taking into account the changing priorities within and across generations that will follow. With increasingly ageing populations, we can expect further movement of people towards cities, increased inter-connection and a growing need for more interaction between academia, business, and the economy. Those who opt to work in research will need to be even more internationally oriented, the world circulation of the best talents will be even more present, and head-hunting activities will increase. Simultaneously, brain-drain will remain a major challenge, especially significant for less developed countries and less attractive academic environments. Internationalisation in the context of institutional change and social demand is already, and will continue to be, a relevant component of the modernisation process.

4 | CONCLUSION

As presented in this perspective paper, it is increasingly likely that we are entering an era when universities will have an important role as a stabiliser in society. Universities will probably not disappear, as some experts speculate; rather, they will play an increasingly important role, but they will also need to transform and adapt to all the changes in their surroundings. To know how to manage a complex matrix of different missions and roles and how to have a positive impact on society, universities will need to interact with their environments across all their functions.

Different actors and stakeholders, experts and scholars have different opinions, from those who see this crisis as an opportunity for a radical change to others who think universities will become unnecessary in a rapidly changing global society. All these contrasting attitudes indicate the importance of finding effective new university governance models and organisational structures, and new forms of operationalisation for internationalisation policies in changed circumstances.

In a globalised world, Europe as a region has no option other than to consider internationalisation as an important aspect of higher education. Nevertheless, in Europe, as in other world regions, there are significant differences in the implementation of internationalisation policies and activities. Universities are differently motivated in the pursuit of internationalisation, and there is a wide variety in its implementation. There may even be some conflict between institutional orientations on internationalisation, with some actively committed to high levels of internationalisation and others more focused on their own national and regional capacities. Universities need to be in a position to appreciate internationalisation, its different forms, and its motivations and to perceive it as a means for enabling better connectedness, collaboration, and cultural and social development in general.

Furthermore, the new situation with the COVID-19 pandemic requires a rethinking of online communication in higher education and new forms of internationalisation; important questions are raised about whether virtual activities are sufficient to meet the needs of students and staff, how to organise and maintain the quality of educational processes, and how to organise mobility. Additionally, will all the adjustments we are now making in the system vanish once the pandemic crisis is over, or will we retain a whole new concept of university functioning in the future? Will the new reality bring changes in financing and in the number of students?

Looking at internationalisation diachronically, taking into account its role in the past and present, and its various institutional aspects in different university contexts as well, our kaleidoscopic perspective identified the key factors that might play an important role in the further development of internationalisation in higher education, and university governance in Europe and globally.

In the Discussion section, we presented different roles that internationalisation plays in the functioning of a university—policy making, governance, the transformation process, and answering to the needs of society. Due to the unavoidable impact of globalisation, as well as policies created at the supranational level, internationalisation has been confirmed as an inevitably significant force in the development of higher education and of universities as institutions. Based on our literature review and analysis, we found that internationalisation has multiple faces in the institutional framework of a university—it is used as an important element in the creation of new policies; as a possible driving force towards changing and upgrading governance forms and models; as a possible accelerator and trigger of institutional changes; and, finally, as a powerful tool in answering the society's ever-growing needs and challenges. Taking into account all of these aspects, our analysis confirmed that internationalisation might be used by university managements and policymakers as a positive driver for change, especially in milieus where inter-institutional forces are missing or are weak.

If we change the forms of internationalisation, further analysis is needed for informing how to adapt present university governance models, organisational structures, and operationalisation of university policies to meet the new reality permanently in the future. Additionally, it might be possible that the mobility concept, as a part of internationalisation, will change permanently, especially its cultural dimension. Indeed, the solutions for meeting the new reality cannot be considered separately from the rethinking of the future of the university as an institution. To this end, university governance needs to employ additional efforts in searching for the appropriate institutional solutions. Still, our analysis is not sufficient to draw more final conclusions. In that sense, further research should bring more detailed insights to internationalisation and university governance, and more reliable data on their mutual relations, taking especially into account the significance of various contexts and specific university traditions, and existing academic norms and values at a micro-level.

Finally, bearing in mind that the new reality will probably result in even larger gaps between centres and peripheries, a special concern will be the creation of less advanced, less complex academic environments in order to ensure more successful and efficient implementation of the newly adopted university policies. This raises the following question. Will less internationalised universities find it easier to adapt to new models appropriate for the new reality? Perhaps they will do so even more successfully than those that have already undergone transformation and modernisation processes and invested their resources in the development of specific internationalisation models?

One point is certain. Universities must rethink existing models and decide how to change and upgrade their activities. Internationalisation cannot be separated from university governance models and must permeate the entire organisational structure. Overall institutional functioning must be addressed in order to close the loop and to maintain an efficient and attractive university environment.

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How to cite this article: Kovačević, M., & Dagen, T. (2022). A kaleidoscope of internationalisation in European higher education. *European Journal of Education*, 00, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12492>