

Introduction

Internationalisation at home (IaH) is the new concept that actors in higher education have put forth as an alternative to regular and more familiar internationalisation. It can also be employed not as an alternative but as a component among others within the overall realm of internationalisation. The need for the implementation of IaH has been made more urgent, especially with the 3-year COVID-19 crisis that paralysed the movements between countries. This paralysis was even more imposing and heavy on students wishing to pursue an international experience highly desired for their future professional careers. Before this global crisis, these students used to have opportunities to study at universities abroad within the framework of learning and training mobilities and exchange programmes such as KA107 of Erasmus+. However, there is another type of student who suffers from a lack of physical mobility even outside of crisis times because of hard and costly visa requirements and the hard economic situations in their home countries. Therefore, IaH should not be developed as ‘another’ activity but has to be integrated into the university’s strategic plan in order to get the most out of it. It should be based on the intention of policymakers, management, and staff to integrate the international dimension into the overall policy of the institution. In other words, it should be a deliberate, not passive, process, hence translated into actions at different levels (management, academic and administrative staff, students) and areas (education, research, society). It should not be a purpose in itself but a tool to improve the quality of teaching and learning within institutions. IaH should therefore meet the needs of every society. Consequently, every university should have a strategy of internationalisation at home, and because this latter is based on intercultural sensitivity and communication, cultures should be valued for what they add to the global citizenry. It is also an overall process that involves every stakeholder in the institution: students, academic and administrative staff, and management. In this sense, inclusiveness is the basis for every successful IaH strategy. It should be an ongoing process to guarantee the sustainability of its outcomes.

The major focus in IaH is mainly inspired by the classical learning objectives in mobility learning agreements, namely the development of

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intercultural and global competences, which can be ensured through campus diversity and intercultural engagement and the internationalisation of both formal and informal curricula. It is following this philosophy that this book is written in two parts: internationalisation of formal and informal curricula and global skills development in a local context. Indeed, the first part of the book relates to the implementation of intercultural communication theories in the adaptation of the formal and informal curricula to the overall learning orientation towards intercultural communicative competence (ICC) development. To this end, the chapters in the first part present the theoretical framework of IaH in higher education as well as strategies and methods to insert the international and intercultural dimension in the curriculum and extracurricular activities in the universities. However, the second part offers suggestions of best practices to develop students' global competences in order to be good global citizens based on ICC theories and models.

This book provides experiments and attempts in the internationalisation at home within Mediterranean countries as case studies to be carefully scrutinised and replicated in other regions of the world. Data gathering was facilitated within the framework of the MED2IaH project (MEDiterranean Countries: Towards Internationalisation at Home), an Erasmus+ capacity building project co-funded by the European Commission within the period of 2020–2023. The MED2IaH project involves partnerships between the North and South Mediterranean universities. It is primarily designed to have an impact at system level and trigger reform processes at the national level in Mediterranean Partner Countries (PC). The overarching objectives of this project are threefold:

- To outline the internationalisation landscapes of PC HEIS and to identify levels of integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curricula of PC HEIS
- To improve the capabilities of PC HEIS for internationalisation through staff training and by translating general awareness of the IaH concept into streamlined institutional strategies and Action Plans.
- To build students' intercultural knowledge and sensitivity to cultural diversity by transforming the International Relations Offices (IROS) of PC HEIS into vibrant multicultural focal points.

In fact, South Mediterranean students are in urgent need of acquiring international experience to be as competitive in the excessively multicultural job market as North Mediterranean and western students. However, economic, social, and political realities in their countries dictate other strategies for internationalisation other than physical mobility that do not require huge funding and complex regulations and policies.

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