

FORUM

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WORK IN PROGRESS

THE SWISS RESEARCH AGENDA

In Switzerland, research on internationalisation is used to shape policy at the national level. Facilitated by national agency Movetia, the Swiss research agenda is an ongoing process that draws on local strengths to stake out a position on the international stage. ►



Research has always been important in our domain in that it enables us to better measure the impact of exchange and mobility on curricula and thus on our education system. In this spirit, research about higher education plays an important role in the development of quality in the sector. It is also the basis for the development and testing of funding instruments for internationalisation activities such as exchange and mobility at universities. As Switzerland's national agency for exchange and mobility, Movetia implements education policy measures for the internationalisation of the Swiss education landscape. We develop and test new measures and are in constant contact with higher education

of teacher education, all of which are internationalised to varying degrees. In addition, there are the colleges of higher education, which are actively striving for an international positioning.

EVIDENCE-BASED SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONALISATION

Movetia supports exchange and mobility financially, through various programmes and grants: 30.9m Swiss francs for mobility projects in five different educational sectors in Switzerland, Europe and worldwide, of which more than 20m for higher education. One of the highlights is the Swiss-European Mobility Programme (SEMP), which has run for almost five years now and

and educational materials for the tertiary sector. The agency advises interested stakeholders and supports them in the organisation and implementation of projects and strengthens exchange and mobility with new and innovative formats, through networking between stakeholders and through improved integration in education, business and society.

EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL COOPERATION

Whether near or far away, there are differences between individual mobility and cooperation in internationalisation activities. As an agency, we implement our performance agreement with the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation for the improvement of quality and relevance in teaching and learning, for the promotion of cross-border cooperation in order to strengthen the knowledge triangle between education, research and innovation and to create effective governance and funding mechanisms for higher education.

In addition to SEMP, we nationally fund strategic partnerships developed with European institutions (Erasmus+ programme countries). In 2018 we started another funding programme for collaborations with institutions outside of Europe (International Pilot Programme 2018-2020). The objective is to examine what the constellation of successful international cooperation could look like, and how we can provide the right funding measures. It is interesting to note that to this day we received fewer applications for partnership projects in Europe than for cooperation with institutions outside of Europe, presumably because of the

We promote cross-border cooperation in order to strengthen the knowledge triangle between education, research and innovation

institutions in order to be able to offer applicants the simplest possible funding and financing instruments. The focus here is on promoting mobility and cooperation and exchange – both nationally and internationally – and ultimately improving our education system.

The Swiss university landscape is a particularly fertile ground for the scientific investigation of questions relating to the internationalisation of education. Although geographically rather small, Switzerland is home to ten universities, two federal institutes of technology, eight universities of applied sciences and arts, and twelve universities

has generated statistical data, the evaluation of which provides new insights into personal mobility¹ in the higher education sector.

Our work is rooted in research and sources such as the Swiss annual education report, which summarises data from statistical research and administration on the entire education system.² Movetia identifies and promotes innovation and develops scientific and pedagogical positions in the field of exchange and mobility, in close cooperation with actors in the field of education.³ As a competence centre, it provides information, organisational aids

special conditions for institutions from Switzerland to qualify as Erasmus+ partner country and not as a programme country. Perhaps there are other factors behind this divergence; after completion of the pilot phase in 2020, sufficient data will be available to gain further insights into this development.

INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME AS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

The Swiss higher education system is also shaped by special factors, such as the four national languages and, based on them, the four cultural regions with their great cultural diversity which play a major role. Multilingualism and its impact on internationalisation is a topic that has not been studied yet. Would a stronger emphasis on the internationalisation of curricula in Switzerland be a possible way of integrating multiculturalism and thus creating a concise global dimension in university teaching and research? How could the cultures of students and lecturers from

cultures in the emergence of cooperation? How can multilingualism be promoted and the institutional management of linguistic diversity optimised?

These are the questions we will address in the coming years. In a national support programme launched in 2019 for the exchange of teachers in training within Switzerland, we want to examine in more detail what experiences will be gained and how we could support mutual cultural fertilisation even more. Perhaps this will not completely eliminate the cultural shock, but this area of research is still worthwhile.

FURTHER TRAINING RESEARCH

When it comes to the topic of strengthening internationalisation expertise and specialised knowledge, the first thing often mentioned in research articles is the lack of financial resources. The second highest ranked internal barrier is the limited experience and expertise of faculty and staff.⁴ If it is true that this needed further

research topics only represent a small fraction of the possible research themes. For now, research on internationalisation in Switzerland remains a work in progress.

— MARIA STERGIOU

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We want to examine how we can support mutual cultural fertilisation even more

outside Europe who have been living in Switzerland for some time be integrated? Furthermore, it is astonishing that sometimes the experience of an exchange within Switzerland or of a collaboration between two language regions leads to greater culture shock than with another institution somewhere far away in the world. What is the dynamic of contact between languages and the role of different

knowledge is mostly attained by English language courses and visits to internationalisation conferences⁵ then there is a great necessity of an improved variety of courses in intercultural and international competences to be developed.

The importance of internationalisation is evident and the implementation of policy measures for internationalisation has to be multi-faceted. The abovementioned

WRITE FOR US

