

**36th Conference of Rectors and Presidents of European Universities  
of Technology**

**Internationalisation of Universities  
September 15-16, 2017, Graz**

Session 15.09.2017 / 16:30 – 17:45

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Austrian Strategies for Internationalisation of Higher Education,  
Research and Innovation**

Dear Rector Kainz,  
Distinguished conference participants,

Let me first of all thank the organisers for giving me the opportunity to speak to you on a topic that is not only part of my Directorate General in the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, but has been close to my heart ever since I started my professional career as the founding staff member of the Office of International Relations of the University of Graz not far away from here 30 years ago.

Of course universities, especially universities of technology are international by nature. But they also face the challenge that internationalisation has become a very complex endeavour as a cross cutting issue connected to all missions of a university.

This includes among others

- the mobility of students, teaching, research and administrative staff,
- the pursuit for international talent and experts in recruitment processes,
- special training offers for students and staff in languages and intercultural competences
- the creation of an attractive environment for international students, researchers and other staff by providing teaching and learning content in foreign languages (mainly English), offering special welcome services and packages including dual career opportunities for partners, housing, insurance, childcare, international schools, and many other services some of which can only be provided in cooperation with various partners outside the university, especially with the local authorities
- strategic decisions about academic and non-academic partner institutions for cooperation in teaching, research and in the so-called third mission across borders and internationally
- decisions of where and how to pursue co-operation with industry beyond national borders
- the assessment of the benefits and the costs of being involved in European and international cooperation and in specific programmes such as ERASMUS +, Horizon 2020 or projects co-financed by the structural funds

- and of course decisions on how to finance these activities within the university's budget and by third party funding

To support and to stimulate the internationalisation of Austrian higher education and research - embedded in the European higher education and research areas - the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy's portfolio includes a wide range of activities including funding for science, technology and innovation as well as mobility and international cooperation and promotion agencies.

Let's start with higher education. Austria has been a strong promotor of the European Higher Education Area since its start in Bologna in 1999 and has also had a vital role in efforts to make the European Higher Education Area internationally visible and attractive. As you know the Bologna Process focused at the beginning mainly on intra-European reforms. The growing interest of other parts of the world was only taken note of for the first time in the Berlin Ministerial Communiqué in 2003. At the launch of the European Higher Education Area in 2010 in Budapest and Vienna a policy dialogue among different regions of the world was initiated with representatives of 69 countries – both at policy maker and at stakeholder levels. At that time participants agreed among others to further promote dialogue and cooperation among higher education staff and students across the world. This has been mainly

implemented by all of you – by direct cooperation between HEI and networks.

For the Austrian higher education area the “National Development Plan for Universities” is a strategic tool of the ministry to prioritize overall long-term goals covering 6 years, which relates to two three year periods of performance agreements between the Ministry of Science, Research and Economy and the Austrian public universities. One of the 8 overall systemic goals is to “sustainably increase internationalization and mobility”.

This does not only encompass the formulation and implementation of internationalisation and mobility strategies by each university, but also more concrete fields of action such as transnational mobility, internationalisation at home, international research infrastructure as well as the strategic use of relevant, national and international cooperation, mobility and research funding programs and the participation in international networks. As far as mobility is concerned a more detailed strategy document, the so-called “Higher Education Mobility Strategy” was developed by the ministry promoting transnational physical mobility of students, teachers and staff at Austrian Universities, Universities of Applied Sciences & Private Universities.

As far as the participation in EU programmes is concerned Austria has been very successful both in higher education and in research.

National top-up funding for ERASMUS student mobility, for example, has allowed a continuous increase in study and internship-related stays abroad by Austrian students over the years.

Austria has always been among the top performing ERASMUS countries. There has been a steady increase in the number of students and staff participating in the programme. The number of outgoing mobilities from Austrian HEI has reached 7.400 in 2016/17 and, thus, increased by 27% since the start of ERASMUS+ some 3 years ago. Outgoing Erasmus *traineeships* have doubled within the same period. And more than 1.000 *global mobilities* for Austrian students and staff per year were supported.

A special financial support scheme called „Austria Mundus“ supports Austrian HEIs in the preparation of applications for ERASMUS+ projects such as Erasmus Mundus joint degrees, knowledge alliances and capacity building in higher education. And we are proud that our HEIs are very successful in these international actions. In the Capacity Building action, targeted at supporting internationalisation and modernisation of teaching and training in partner countries worldwide, roughly half of all Austrian proposals have been accepted and Austrian institutions will be involved in 23 out of only 149 selected projects of 2017 - this means in every 6<sup>th</sup> project!

On a more operational level internationalisation of universities is an integral element of the three year **performance agreements between the universities and our ministry**. While the phase 2013-2015 focused on motivating the universities to develop specific internationalisation strategies, the current period 2016-2018 is characterized by an increased visibility of these internationalisation efforts and the implementation of numerous concrete measures and co-operation activities. In the upcoming next period we expect an even more enhanced approach regarding internationalisation and mobility with concrete goals and measures related to all missions of the university.

As far as research is concerned the creation of a European Research Area (ERA) was first proposed by the European Commission already in 2000, but implementation could only gain momentum with the Treaty of Lisbon, where the ERA is defined as follows:

“The Union shall have the objective of strengthening its scientific and technological bases by achieving a European research area in which researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely, and encouraging it to become more competitive, including in its industry, while promoting all the research activities deemed necessary by virtue of other Chapters of the Treaties.”

ERA has been implemented in a strong partnership among Member States, Associated Countries, the Commission and research

stakeholder organisations ever since. All participating States have drawn up national action plans or road maps focusing on the six priority areas of the European Research Area. These include effective national research systems as the basis for a prospering ERA, jointly addressing the grand challenges we are facing by improving the alignment of national and European activities and programmes and by Joint Programming initiatives and making optimal use of public investments in research infrastructure. Of course the open labour market for researchers is at the heart of the ERA. This can only be realized with open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices across Europe. Still, not only researchers, but also knowledge should freely circulate across borders - open access and open innovation are policy areas addressed here. And translating national equality legislation into effective action to address gender imbalances in research institutions and decision making bodies and integrating the gender dimension better into R&D policies, programmes and projects is another priority in the ERA. And of course internationalisation is one of the ERA priorities as well.

To support the alignment of national activities with European efforts and to monitor progress towards the European Research Area a national coordination group, the ERA Policy Forum encompassing all relevant sectoral ministries and policies, was set up in Austria as well as a high level expert committee, the ERA Council Forum Austria led by Professor Helga Nowotny, which advises the Minister of Science,

Research and Economy at the interface of European research policy and the national science, research and innovation system.

At the national level, the Austrian Federal government has adopted and launched a **Strategy for Research, Technology and Innovation** entitled “Realising potentials, increasing dynamics, creating the future: Becoming an innovation leader” already in 2011. The strategy includes a commitment to increase spending in research and innovation to 3.76% of the GDP and to become an innovation leader by 2020. At the time, we rank second behind Sweden regarding the research quote with 3.14 % and we are a strong innovator in the European Innovation Scoreboard with rank 7. The strategy encompasses reform measures in the education and higher education systems, tackling grand challenges as well as strengthening basic research and research institutions including research infrastructure, increasing the innovation capacity of industry, enhancing framework conditions for start-ups, spin offs and venture capital, increasing cooperation between science and business as well as strengthening the knowledge transfer to society and industry and improving the efficiency of policy measures - and of course internationalisation! coordinate and support its implementation a high level Task Force with representatives of the Federal Chancellery, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, the Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology and the Ministry of Education, with several working-groups has been set-



up, among which a working group on the European knowledge area and one on internationalisation “Beyond Europe”. The “**Beyond Europe Strategy**” developed within this context has identified a set of priority countries for increased future collaboration as well as specific cooperation instruments and actions reaching from joint calls and joint labs to improvement of Austrian-wide coordination, joint promotional activities and collaboration within Horizon 2020 or the establishment of Offices of Sciences and Technology at Austrian Embassies. So far two of them were implemented one in Washington, D.C. and one in Beijing. Due to our geopolitical location and our shared history special importance in the internationalisation context is given to our neighbouring regions in east and south-east Europe where Austria has played a strong role in building bridges to scientific communities.

Let me give you a few concrete examples of initiatives that have been developed in the last few years:

1) Austria is actively participating in the implementation of the **EU-Strategy for the Danube Region**, that covers 14 EU Member States and associated countries. Within research and innovation one of the goals for cooperation in the region is the better coordination of national funding mechanisms. Therefore we have set-up a **pilot project to opening our bilateral cooperation programs towards multilateral cooperation**. The respective call with Serbia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic was launched in 2016 and has resulted in 40

projects applications of which 19 (14 with Austrian participation) are currently funded.

Moreover the Ministry has created and financed the **Danubius Award for a distinguished researcher active in the region as well as the Danubius Young Scientist Awards**, 14 prizes that are honouring the academic achievements of young researchers in the Danube Region, one awarded to an early stage researcher in each of the participating EU Danube Strategy country .

2) We have also been very much engaged in South Eastern Europe, the so-called **Western Balkans** in EU terminology already since two decades. The Ministry has participated in various strategic projects on EU level (like the WBC-INCO.NET, the SEE-ERA NET), has implemented bilateral activities and calls as well as specific support projects in all of the Western Balkan countries, has financially supported the online information platform WBC-RTI.info and has always taken part in the Western Balkan Steering Platform on Research and Innovation. Currently the Berlin Process and the related scientific conferences have brought new dynamic to the activities in the region and specific measures to support young scientists in the region are currently under negotiation.

3) On bilateral level we have successfully started co-operation with dynamic partners globally such as China, Canada or South Africa.

4) Within all of these internationalisation activities **building networks and collaborative spaces for scientific communities is essential**, as is reaching out to our scientific diaspora. Our ministry tries to support this for example via the Austrian Research and Innovation Talk (ARIT), an annual networking event bringing together Austrian scientists and researchers living and working in North America with the Austrian STI community. In this framework the so-called ASCINA prizes for outstanding achievements financed by our ministry are awarded. In this effort to strengthen the cooperation between Austria and the Austrian research diaspora universities play a vital role with their dedicated alumni efforts and mentoring activities as well as with their concrete cooperation efforts and institutional partnering.

5) The economic sector of our ministry has launched a programme called “**Beyond Europe**” aiming to increase the international RTI activities and collaborations of Austrian companies and research institutions with partners outside Europe through research projects. Two Calls with a total volume of more than 9 million Euros have been launched and 14 projects funded in the first Call and 16 are recommended for funding for the second Call.

6) Finally our Ministry is of course also an active member in European and **international fora like SFIC**, which you will hear more about from the next speaker, to advance the coordination of the EU and its Member states in international STI cooperation activities. Within SFIC Austria is taking part in the country Working Groups for China and

Brazil as well as the Working Group “Toolbox” that compares the different instruments used in international STI cooperation to exchange best practice and foster future cooperation.

In this context let me shortly refer to the **EU Framework Programme Horizon 2020**, the main instrument for STI collaboration in Europe. Austria can proudly look at its participation in 1.175 projects with 1.684 participants, receiving around 718.2 million Euros - which puts us among the top 10 countries. With a success rate of 16.6% so far Austria is clearly above the EU average of 14.5%. Austrian universities account for 29% of all participations, compared to 38% of companies and 21% of research institutions. When looking at the scientific excellence part of the programme the success rate within the **European Research Council** is especially good – with currently 17.2% compared to the EU-average of 12.6%. Overall Austria has already received more than 200 grants from the ERC.

**To summarize:** Covering the many fields of internationalisation is a challenging task, for universities as well as STI policy makers and funding and promotion agencies. However, there are various funding instruments also beyond the EU-programs on national and international level. Some of them are focusing on the institution; some are focusing on the individual researcher. The challenge for the universities is to make the best possible use of those funding instruments as valuable tools for implementing their strategies in the field of internationalisation. Therefore the universities have to offer

tailor made information and support services focusing on the concrete needs of the researchers on the one hand and on the broader picture of funding instruments for the whole internationalisation portfolio on the other hand. And of course these efforts need to be embedded in their university's overall strategy and profile and should be well aligned to national and EU policies. Let me assure you that the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy will continue to fully support the implementation of the European Higher Education and Research Areas and their global competitiveness as well as their international cooperation.