

**Policy Statement
on Internationalisation**



GÖTEBORG
UNIVERSITY

Policy Statement on Internationalisation

**International Office
External Relations
Göteborg University**

Box 100, SE 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden.

Fax: +46-31-773 4473

E-mail: internationaloffice@gu.se

May, 2005

Layout: Anders Eurén

Translation: English department

ISBN 91 7360 340-6

Contents

Preface	5
The Driving Forces of Internationalisation	6
The Challenges of Globalisation	8
Fundamental Values	10
The Role of the University in a Multi-Cultural Society	11
The Regional European Perspective	12
Towards Improved Internationalisation	13

Preface

International exchange is essential in order to give students and teachers access to international academic environments and to remain competitive in an increasingly globalised education market.

The current document is an amended version of the policy statement on internationalisation approved by the University Board in December 2001. The policy, which has been agreed by the reference group for international policy and strategy, provides an ideological platform for all work on issues of internationalisation at Göteborg University.

It is my hope that the basis for the internationalisation of research and teaching established in this document will promote further discussions and new initiatives in departments and faculties.

Gunnar Svedberg

VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Driving Forces of Internationalisation

The internationalisation of higher education is a political aim as well as a process of change in society. The concept of ‘internationalisation’ is usually associated with something positive: an international perspective in education and research, links with universities in other parts of the world, increasing mobility for students, teachers, researchers and administrators, improved language skills, increased preparedness for managing meetings across different cultures, and international standards of quality assurance. As a result of the globalisation of national and local communities another dimension has been added to internationalisation. This development contains both possibilities and dangers. So-called ‘fair-weather internationalisation’, that is, an emphasis on the positive aspects of this process, is increasingly being replaced by a view of internationalisation as a course of action necessitated by globalisation, a prerequisite for universities to be able to carry out their essential duties: teaching and research, and their role as an enquiring and challenging force in society. A university should also be a guardian of democracy and intellectual freedom beyond the boundaries of the nation state.

The guiding principles for the internationalisation of higher education in Sweden date back to a government commission, which in 1974 published an official report entitled ‘The Internationalisation of Education’ (Utbildningens internationalisering). Its basic premise was ‘the process of internationalisation’, which referred to the development towards increased mutual dependence and cooperation between countries and peoples. This process was seen as both desirable and problematic. The conclusion anticipated what later came to be called ‘globalisation’, and which to some extent has created a new climate for all work on issues dealing with internationalisation. Today many new and different demands have to be met in the internationalisation process, both in universities and in society at large.

Since 1974 many reports and government bills have emphasised the importance of internationalisation in higher education, most recently 'Shared Responsibility: Sweden's Policy on Global Development' (Gemensamt ansvar. Sveriges politik för global utveckling, 2002/03:122), which underlines the role of sustainable development and education in achieving this goal. In many other contexts stress is laid on the need for higher education and research to be internationally competitive. In a Department of Education memorandum, 'Thinking about the world' (Tänka om världen, Ds 2004:46), the need for global, interdisciplinary research and for closer cooperation between researchers, on the one hand, and political decision makers and administrators, on the other, is emphasised.

An international university is also better equipped to promote debate and development in the local community. This was established in an action plan, 'Göteborg University 2010', which also emphasises the role of the University in working for a sustainable society, internally as well as externally.

In the past, international cooperation tended mainly to involve other industrialised countries, primarily Europe and North America, which still make up more than 90% of all student exchange. Today, all regions of the world are involved, including Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. In recent years, this expansion has become an essential objective for all national endeavours in the internationalisation process and for various projects and schemes in the European Union. There are several reasons for this:

- > Internationalisation, in all its different aspects, is, for reasons of quality, part of all knowledge generation
- > It reflects the importance of international solidarity and responsibility
- > Sweden stands to gain from an involvement in the new dynamic regions of the world towards which the global economy is moving

These motives have been manifest in, for instance, the government's strategy on Asia, as well as in 'A New Swedish Policy on Africa' (En ny svensk Afrikapolitik) and in a publication from the Department of Foreign Affairs, 'Tradition and Renewal: a Study of North Africa and the Middle East' (Tradition och förnyelse: en studie av Nordafrika och Mellanöstern), which all stress education and research as important features of Sweden's relations with non-European regions. Most recently, India has been highlighted as a future regional powerhouse and economic market.

A report from the National Agency for Higher Education (Högskoleverket), 'Education and research for strategic internationalisation' (Utbildning och forskning för strategisk internationalisering), emphasised the need for further cooperation with countries outside the OECD. It led to the setting up of Linnaeus-Palme, a programme financed by SIDA (The Swedish International Development Agency), which aims at strengthening the cooperation with universities in developing countries in order to increase global links in higher education.

The EU programme Erasmus Mundus has a similar objective, even though the overall ambition, as in all EU projects, is to strengthen European competitiveness. This also applies to research funding, which is handled by the EU framework for funding.

The Challenges of Globalisation

Today the internationalisation of higher education and research must also be regarded as a response to the challenges of globalisation. Globalisation means that the distance in time and space between different parts of the world is diminishing as a result of, for instance, the development of information technology; our experience is that 'the world is growing smaller'. The world economy is becoming increasingly integrated, whereas the autonomy of national economies is diminishing. Many multinational companies have a turnover greater than that of many national economies. For humanity, shared ecological conditions

create existential problems across the planet. More and more diseases take on a pandemic character. Cultural phenomena which previously used to be locally conditioned are now to be found everywhere in the world.

There is nothing predetermined in the continuing process of globalisation; on the contrary, there are opposing tendencies in the shape of ethnic mobilisation, local subcultures, neo-nationalism, religious fundamentalism, conflicts between civilisations, regional protectionism and a growing anti-globalisation movement. This national, subnational or supranational opposition is an integral part of the globalisation process, but constitutes at the same time a threat to the ideals of openness and solidarity present in internationalism.

Against the background of the tsunami catastrophe in Asia, there is also reason to stress the idea of global interdependence and the need for interdisciplinary knowledge and international research in order to achieve sustainable development.

It is important for the University to develop an informed and integrated approach to globalisation. Regionalisation is one such approach. On the one hand, regionalisation involves the kind of change in the world order that leads to increased room to manoeuvre on the supranational regional level, and, on the other, the growth of a regional identity and sense of community. The macro region is an example of a communal level developing between the national and global level. The best example of a macro region is the European Union, which as a result of its continuing enlargement is becoming increasingly synonymous with Europe.

The micro region is a subnational region, seeking to find its place in the new political landscape that is developing as a consequence of the process of regionalisation. The ambition of the West of Sweden (Västra Götaland) to promote its own distinctive characteristics and interests within the EU can be seen in this perspective, and the University and other regional institutions of higher education have a role to play in this strategy. A university, however, is a universal institution. A regional perspective is, therefore, insufficient. Regionalisation/Europeanisation is an

ambivalent phenomenon, which can represent a step towards internationalisation and, at the same time, a move towards regional isolation, a ‘fortress Europe’ mentality. Internationalism, the ideology that stresses the importance of long-term supranational interests as opposed to short-term national and regional ones, should, therefore, be the predominant philosophy. This ideology, however, contains complex political, ethical and moral dimensions.

Fundamental Values

Since globalisation is a controversial process it is all the more important that there is consensus in the University’s policy on internationalisation, not least where the defence of intellectual freedom is concerned. The University’s policy should be characterised by a willingness to maintain a network of international links in a spirit of solidarity with intellectuals, researchers and academics in a variety of societies and cultures. These principles are expressed in the Magna Carta of European universities:

“To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power. A university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge; to fulfil its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other”.

In the past, universities have protected the national culture, but today every trend towards chauvinism, xenophobia and other forms of anti-intellectualism must be rejected as incompatible with the university as a concept and with the principle of internationalism.

International cooperation often gives rise to questions about democracy, human rights and academic freedom, which must in each case be managed in a uniform manner. In these issues it is therefore important that the University acts vis-à-vis the outside world as one integrated institution.

The Role of the University in a Multi-Cultural Society

Globalisation also means that national and local societies are becoming more multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. A widening of the concept of ‘internationalisation’ is therefore justified to include attitudes to the globalisation of one’s own society, for example, its increasingly multi-cultural character.

In this context the University, in cooperation with other public institutions, has a very important role to play, as has been highlighted in an official report ‘Diversity in Higher Education’ (Mångfald i högskolan – SOU 2000:47) and in a government bill ‘Open Higher Education’ (Den öppna högskolan – 2001/2:15). It is important to take advantage of the cultural variety and valuable experiences that multiculturalism has to offer in order to counteract anti-democratic movements, which are often associated with hostility toward multiculturalism. Here it is also important to stress the role of the University as a multi-cultural workplace, where the recruiting of teachers, researchers and administrative staff from abroad is seen as an asset for the organisation. This is a valuable part of what is called ‘internationalisation at home’.

The University should therefore take an active interest in the integration of immigrants in Swedish society, and in the adaptation of Swedish society to a multicultural reality. In addition, the University has a special responsibility towards those university-educated individuals who have come to Sweden to escape political persecution or other restrictions of intellectual freedom in the same way that, in accordance with the fundamental democratic principles referred to above, there is an obligation to act when universities in other countries suffer repression or ethnocratic monopoly of power.

The Regional European Perspective

The European dimension is central to all work on internationalisation. In 1998 Göteborg University was awarded status as 'Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence'. It also has two Jean Monnet professorships, one in Political Science and one in Law, as well as a Centre for European Research (CERGU), whose objective is to encourage interdisciplinary research and education.

As part of the introduction of a three-tier system of academic qualifications in accordance with the Bologna agreement (bachelor, master and doctor) the University will be spending considerable time and effort on the strengthening and development of cooperation with a number of universities in different parts of Europe. Special attention will be paid to language issues. The national languages of Europe play an important role in the European education system, and teaching in European languages other than English or courses in French, German, Russian, Spanish, among other languages, may be given to students and teachers who study or work in Europe. Language checking and translation support, including to and from English, are also important requirements for the safeguarding of quality assurance as part of the expansion of international exchange.

In order to meet the challenges of globalisation, more comprehensive cooperation between regional universities is also necessary. Here one can distinguish between a national and a regional strategy for the development of universities. In the national strategy the government allocates tasks and resources to the universities and creates competition between them. The regional strategy is instead based on a regional grouping of universities and institutions of higher education, who cooperate in the best interest of the region. The cooperation between universities in the West of Sweden (VUS) is one example of this kind.

Higher education in a certain region may be seen as 'an intellectual system', a decentralised system of knowledge generation. A similar

strategy can be extended to the secondary, transnational region, since universities in the different Nordic countries do not compete with each other for national funding and are able to take advantage of an extended sense of regional identity.

A strategy for regional internationalisation involves approaching the rest of the world from a common platform, where investments and productive partnerships are shared within the region. This includes cooperation with public authorities, trade and industry, in which the specific role of the university must be clarified, since its task is primarily analytical and reflective.

Towards Improved Internationalisation

According to the principle of subsidiarity, work on issues of internationalisation is to be carried out on a level within the University where effectiveness and involvement can be maximised. Any geographical and/or other priorities must be related to the overall policy of internationalisation so that the work on different levels of the University organisation will be characterised by long-term planning and stability.

It is essential that Göteborg University is seen internationally as an institution with a distinct profile. While it is important to emphasise the breadth that the whole University represents, and which is its particular strength, the different parts, that is, the comparative advantages of each faculty, must also be highlighted.

According to the University's action plan 2004-06, international exchange provides essential access to international education and research for teachers and students, and improves the competitiveness required in an increasingly globalised education market. The objective is to make the city of Göteborg and Göteborg University attractive to students from all over the world.

This objective demands constant planning at all levels. It calls for expertise, interest and commitment; it requires resources and a clear definition of areas of responsibility. It also requires that links with

different international frameworks are maintained and that national initiatives in the field are monitored in order to ensure external income allocated for the internationalisation of higher education.

It is important, in all work on issues of internationalisation, to consider two different aspects: 'to do research on' and 'to do research with'. On the one hand this involves doing research on different global environments from the perspectives of the natural and human sciences, and, on the other, international cooperation as a necessary component in scientific development.

International competence is spread across the University and can be used most effectively in interdisciplinary cooperation across faculty boundaries. The School of Global Studies at Göteborg University is one such initiative. Its aim is to develop and promote exchange in global studies. The centre will be part of European and global networks and will function as a resource for the whole University. In terms of its activities, its relations with public bodies and the relevance of its policies, transparency and openness will be important considerations.

Internationalisation is in many ways an important component in the University's work on quality assurance; research and teaching are exposed to international competition and given opportunities for cooperation, and better knowledge about the world is a necessary factor in all knowledge generation. The universalism of science depends finally on the input of different cultural experiences into higher education and research.

