

FORUM

MEMBER
MAGAZINE

Discussing international education

INTERNATIONAL POLICIES AND POLITICS

10 STEPPING FORWARD TOGETHER

18 WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

28 IN CONVERSATION WITH MICHAEL IGNATIEFF

36 A TURNING POINT FOR TAIWAN

CONTENTS

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04 EDITORIAL

05 CONTRIBUTORS

06 NAVIGATING NATIONAL INTERNATIONALISATION POLICIES

Moving internationalisation from the periphery to centre stage

10 STEPPING FORWARD TOGETHER

Overcoming national policies and politics with
the help of partnerships

14 A NATIONAL ALUMNI STRATEGY TO STAY COMPETITIVE

A look at the Netherlands' drive to retain international talent

18 WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

How Norway is overcoming conflicting immigration and
mobility priorities

22 NEW INSTITUTION, BIG PLANS

The case of Kazakhstan's Nazarbayev University

25 INDIA'S SELECTIVE APPROACH

Increasing quality by focusing on 'Institutions of Eminence'

28 IN CONVERSATION WITH MICHAEL IGNATIEFF

Rector and President of Central European University on
academic freedom

32 CHINA'S WORLD CLASS 2.0 INITIATIVE

Improving China's global capacity and emphasis on quality

36 A TURNING POINT FOR TAIWAN

Taiwan's 'New Southbound Policy'

40 A STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS: INTERNATIONALISATION IN ARGENTINA

When government resources aid in significant progress

43 EAIE BLOG SPOT

44 SWISS INSTITUTIONS FACE OUTWARD

The innovative university system of Switzerland

47 EVENTS CALENDAR



10

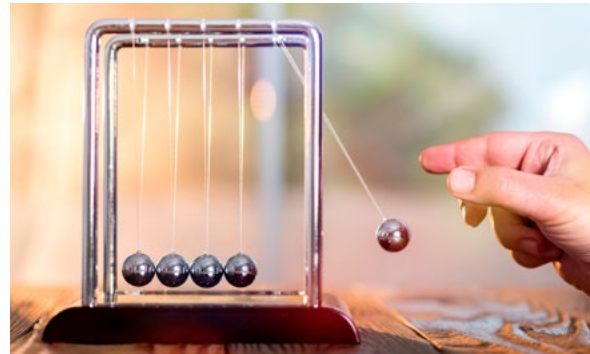
“Each time a new national leader takes office, their country’s priorities change”

STEPPING FORWARD TOGETHER

18

“Norway’s immigration policy might have utterly derailed the success of an innovative new Erasmus+ project”

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE



28

“Academic freedom is an absolutely critical pillar of democracy itself”

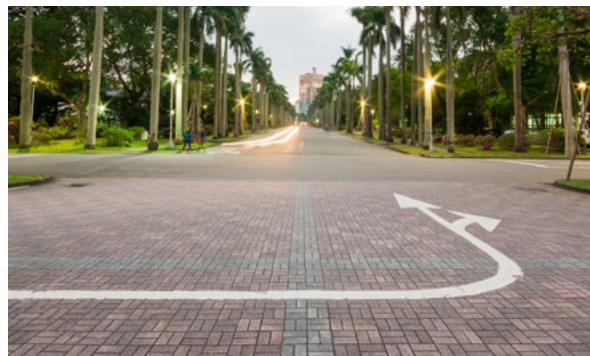
IN CONVERSATION WITH MICHAEL IGNATIEFF



36

“There are many factors driving global student mobility, with politics being one of the most significant”

A TURNING POINT FOR TAIWAN



EDITORIAL

Hating to state the obvious, I'll do it anyway: the work of international higher education takes us regularly into spheres beyond our own local and national contexts. We all know this.

At the same time, however, it's hugely important for us to keep in mind that so much of our reality in higher education is shaped by *national* frameworks and realities. By virtue of the fact that our higher education institutions are situated in particular countries, they are undeniably affected by specific 'rules of the game' that are in place in that national context. Yes, the European Higher Education Area, the Bologna Process preceding that, and other initiatives, have introduced a palpable sense of shared concerns and objectives in higher education across Europe. However, we can't escape the fact that many aspects of our internationally focused work are shaped – for better or worse – by national actors and developments. National policies and politics, therefore, have a clearly important role to play in relation to international higher education.

Given the worldwide increase in interest in, and activity around, internationalisation of higher education in the past several decades, one could say – in a gross over-generalisation, of course – that national policies and politics have enabled (passively or assertively) significant developments in many quarters of the world.



There is no doubt that this is still the case today. However, at this particular moment in time, there is also unquestionably a palpable shift in dynamics toward overt *nationalism* in a multitude of national contexts, in Europe and elsewhere. Nationalism tends to be distinctly hostile toward many aspects of internationalisation. What our governments think, and do, in relation to matters of 'national concern' – such as immigration, foreign policy, language policies, *etc* – can have direct impacts on the work we do. Those impacts can be seen in very tangible ways (for example in relation to funding and other concrete supports) to the more intangible, yet equally powerful, realm of the way our country, and its higher education institutions and programmes, may be

perceived in the world, both positively and negatively.

This issue of *Forum* does not dwell on the obvious matters of Brexit in the UK and the 'Trump effect' in the United States. Instead, it takes us down a number of surprisingly different paths to consider how national politics and policies intersect with international higher education – as far away as Taiwan and as near as in the Netherlands. Ultimately, it reminds us that faith in our purpose, and the development of creative and pragmatic responses, are important tools at our disposal, no matter what political climate we may find ourselves in.

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IN CONVERSATION WITH

MICHAEL IGNATIEFF

ELISE KURSTRA
EAIE

Born in Canada, educated at the University of Toronto and Harvard, Michael Ignatieff is a university professor, writer and former leader of the Liberal Party of Canada. In his current role as Rector and President of Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, Prof Ignatieff has mounted a vigorous campaign to counter the Hungarian government's attempts to force the closure of CEU. He talks with the EAIE about the impact of politics on academic freedom and why CEU is choosing to engage instead of disengage in the face of political uncertainty.

Central European University considers itself to be 'international by design' yet is also unquestionably a product of its regional and local context. How does an institution like CEU effectively manage those multiple identities and agendas - local, regional, and international - particularly in complex political times?

MI: We were set-up in 1991 with a regional vocation to provide social science and humanities graduate training to assist in the transition from communism to democracy. Initially our primary focus was Central and Eastern Europe. We've become, almost by stealth, a global university with recruitment from over 120 countries, including Pakistan, Ghana, Yemen, Sudan, yet we still maintain our regional vocation. At our commencement graduation ceremony, the largest single national origin in our student body crossing the stage to get their Masters or PhD was actually from Hungary but you looked across the room of 2000 people and it was the world. We have managed to remain true to our regional vocation, which is to train people in the social sciences and humanities, with a strong commitment to open society; the core values of freedom of thought, free politics, free institutions and research, academic freedom. And we are now spreading that word to 120 countries.

Universities have long been considered 'ivory towers,' catering excessively to the needs of the elite and reproducing privilege. As populist political and social movements gain ground in a variety of national contexts, in Europe and elsewhere, what can

higher education institutions do to address these concerns, in concrete and sustainable ways?

MI: Access, access, access is number one! Our university offers financial packages that open high quality masters and doctoral higher education to students who would otherwise not get any path into global higher education. That is crucial and we need to double down on that. Secondly, we need to remember that universities provide the knowledge that keeps societies free and capable of innovating and growing. You can't run a modern society for three minutes and can't make political and investment decisions without the knowledge that universities give to students

We teach our students that acquiring knowledge is hard but that once you acquire it you have the only granite under your feet you will ever need

but also provide to the wider community. In an age of fake news, organised paranoia and cultivation of hatred, I have never believed more passionately in the university's vocation, which is knowledge. People forget that there is a huge difference between knowledge and rumors, knowledge and opinion,

knowledge and a tweet or Facebook post. Knowledge is created by disciplines and, as the word implies, discipline take years to master. We teach our students that acquiring knowledge is hard but that once you acquire it you have the only granite under your feet you will ever need. The whole international education community needs to be saying that over and over again: access on the one hand – open the doors and come on in – and secondly we are going to teach you what knowledge is, which requires discipline. As educators, we can't just be managers; we need to be passionate defenders of the highest ideals of public education. We can't batten down the hatches and wait for the conservative, populist, authoritarian tide to sweep over us. We have to stand up and say: "whatever your politics, great societies need great universities. Invest in universities and ask them to do difficult things for you and they will respond!"

The European Union faces significant political challenges today. National political dynamics in a variety of countries are calling into question the value and the relevance of the 'European project' in some very fundamental ways. In your mind, what role does international cooperation in higher education have in fostering the future cohesion of Europe?

MI: Everyone knows the single most popular and successful programme that Europe as a whole has ever done is Erasmus. Higher education exchange among young Europeans has been an absolute rip-roaring success. I'm delighted that Europe has increased the funding

for Erasmus because, along with other great things, like knocking down mobile roaming charges and borderless travel, in my view, Erasmus has been the signature achievement of Europe as a post-war institution, and universities have been at the centre. We have trained a whole generation who think it is completely normal to spend a semester in London, a semester in Barcelona and then Budapest. Long may it continue! The EU has that right.

Where I think there is actually a problem is that EU legislation does not commit member states to specific obligations in respect to academic freedom and institutional autonomy. I don't feel people are sufficiently aware of this fact. The European treaty language only guarantees academic freedom to the degree that it is freedom in the provision of educational services – it is defined as an economic issue. I do think that if Europe wants to anchor its values it should be anchoring commitments to academic freedom and

very weak on academic freedom. Universities across Europe should get together and provide the language that would strengthen their institutional freedom not for themselves but for the sake of the societies that they serve.

Language and identity are deeply intertwined, as can be seen in the history of Canada. Language policies have been hotly debated by national governments, most recently in the Netherlands, with impassioned arguments put forward on both sides of the debate about English as the *lingua franca* in the global knowledge society. From where you sit at CEU, how do you see the alignment between the need for international communication and the need to foster local (non-English speaking) intellectual traditions?

MI: I was at Maastricht University about six weeks ago and the rector, a terrific academic leader, alerted me to the fact that there were currents in the Dutch

Academic freedom is not the privilege of spoiled professors but it's an absolutely critical pillar of democracy itself

institutional autonomy in its treaty language because academic freedom is not the privilege of spoiled professors but it's an absolutely critical pillar of democracy itself and the core European institutional values upon which the future of Europe depends. The language in European treaty and legal machinery is actually

political opinion that were opposing the expansion of English-language instruction in the Netherlands. To be blunt, the Netherlands is the shining demonstration that you can speak a *lingua franca* and be passionately patriotically Dutch. It is a complete non-issue! There is no conceivable threat to the Dutch language

and tradition in teaching your best and brightest to use a lingua franca. Dutch dialects from one town to the next are alive and well. Canadians can speak with authority about this. We have a franco-phone population that has safeguarded their language and has had constitutional protection from the Canadian government for 150 years. They live in a world where the lingua franca is English. Is Québécois in danger? Give me a break! It would be a mistake for universities to bend over backwards to think that this is a problem and we must stop teaching in English. They should not go down that road because it plays into a game that ends by depriving great Dutch students of some of the tools they need to make the Netherlands a stronger and better place.

If you would need to make a pitch to national governments about why they should care about the internationalisation of their higher education institutions and systems, what would you say?

MI: Firstly, since the Second World War, internationalisation of higher education has probably been the single most important aspect of globalisation that has promoted understanding, cooperation, the creation of transnational networks of friendship, entrepreneurship, partnerships, science and research. It really has furthered the cause of peace. For a while, the globalisation of higher education appeared to be linked to the globalisation of democracy. We are now in a different trend where we have globalised higher education but an increased proliferation of authoritarian regimes. The challenge

that emerges is the extent and degree to which free institutions that were created in the high tide of democratisation, can maintain their academic freedom and institutional autonomy in the face of regimes that are centralising power and

cannot do our jobs, which is to teach students what knowledge is, unless we have full, uninhibited academic freedom. Our position at CEU, is to go about our business. We are a free institution and we will keep operating here because we

The challenges we face are the challenges that are being faced by many other universities around the world

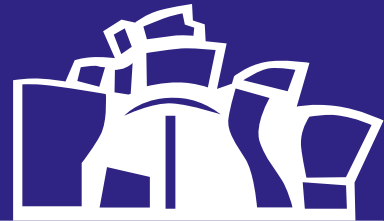
authority evermore, restricting freedom of the press, reducing constitutional safeguards, rewriting constitutions, eliminating the independence of the judiciary and inevitably curtailing the institutional autonomy of these institutions. This is a really big issue. In China, for example, where there has been a huge global expansion of Western educational institutions, the government is tightening the vice on its own universities. It seems to me inevitable that it will demand more and more compromises of the Western institutions to stay in China. Ditto Turkey. Ditto Russia. Ditto the Middle East. This is now a global challenge. How do you defend academic freedom in the middle of the authoritarian turn in global politics? In Budapest we have made a clear commitment to stay and open recruitment for 2019–2020 in the face of continued difficulties with the Hungarian government.

Global higher education is not the political opposition to these regimes. We are not in the business even of democracy promotion. However we

have been here a long time, we love the place and are passionately committed to being part of Hungarian academic life. There is another side issue that needs to be said – international English-language institutions are sometimes caricatured as being alien implants. That is not true. All of these institutions contribute massively to the higher education systems of the countries in which they are present. But if these authoritarian regimes are clamping down on those higher education systems in a country, the international institutions are inevitably going to be affected and they will have to make difficult decisions whether to engage or disengage. CEU's commitment is to engage, to recommitment, to rededicate, to stay, to remain, to serve. The challenges we face are the challenges that are being faced by many other universities around the world.

Michael Ignatieff is the 2018 winner of the EAIE's Constance Meldrum Award for Vision and Leadership.

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