



*Conference Conversation Starter*

---

# ENCOMPASSING ALL VOICES

# **Encompassing all voices**

*Edited by Laura E. Rumbley*

All EAIE publications are exclusive property of the EAIE. Commercial use, modification or electronic redistribution of EAIE publications are strictly prohibited. Please contact [publications@eaie.org](mailto:publications@eaie.org) for permission for use.

**EAIE Conference Conversation Starter**  
Encompassing all voices

**Edited by**

Laura E. Rumbley  
Copyright © 2019 EAIE

ISSN 2214-7152  
ISBN 978-90-74721-51-6

**Published by**

European Association for International Education  
PO Box 11189, 1001 GD Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
*tel* / +31-20-344 51 00  
[info@eaie.org](mailto:info@eaie.org)  
[www.eaie.org](http://www.eaie.org)

**Printed by**

Drukkerij Raddraaier, Amsterdam.  
Printed on PEFC certified paper.

The European Association for International Education (EAIE) is the European centre for expertise, networking and resources in the internationalisation of higher education. We are a non-profit, member-led organisation serving individuals actively involved in the internationalisation of their institutions.

# Table of Contents

- v**     **Foreword**  
*Leonard Engel, Executive Director, EAIE*
- 01**    **Introduction**  
*Laura E. Rumbley, Associate Director, Knowledge Development and Research, EAIE*
- European perspectives on diversity and inclusion**
- 05**    **Diversity and inclusion: a strategic issue for European universities**  
*Anna-Lena Claeys-Kulik, European University Association, Belgium*
- 11**    **Diversity and European higher education students: national perspectives in a global age**  
*Rachel Brooks, University College London, United Kingdom*
- 15**    **Encompassing all voices: Finland's new challenges and opportunities**  
*Anita Lehtikoinen, Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland*
- The student voice in internationalisation**
- 19**    **Students as co-creators of internationalisation strategies**  
*João Pinto & Rasmus Benke-Åberg, Erasmus Student Network, Belgium*
- 25**    **A holistic approach to understanding international student experiences**  
*Krishna Bista, Morgan State University, United States*
- Leveraging diversity in our midst**
- 29**    **Equal rights and equal opportunities: inclusive internationalisation of higher education and the future of the Rainbow community**  
*EAIE Rainbow Task Force*
- 33**    **Our greatest challenge**  
*Aminata Cairo, The Hague University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands*
- 38**    **About the authors**

## Foreword

The theme of the 31st Annual Conference of the European Association for International Education (EAIE), ‘encompassing all voices’, fits this year’s host country, Finland, very well. Not only has Finland made a name for itself as the happiest country in the world, but its education system, from the primary to the tertiary level, attracts educators and policy makers from around the world who come to see for themselves what makes Finnish education so successful. One of the key words that the Finns often use to describe the essential nature of their system is ‘inclusive’ – they do not think of students with diverse backgrounds as problematic or challenging, but instead firmly believe that diversity enhances the educational experience for all involved.

‘Encompassing all voices’ is a message of optimism rooted in the Finnish tradition. At the same time, it serves as a call to action for all of us to realise that there is still a lot of work to be done. This year’s edition of the *Conference Conversation Starter* addresses the topic of diversity and inclusion from different angles. As a former Director of Student Affairs, I found the Erasmus Student Network’s article calling for the inclusion of students in developing and evaluating internationalisation strategies to be particularly timely and urgent. Yet still, this represents just one of the many steps we must take to make every voice heard.

‘Encompassing all voices’ is a theme that builds on work that the EAIE is undertaking beyond the scope of the current conference. One year ago, the EAIE formally launched its core values. We are **collaborative** in fostering a culture of openness, working together to achieve shared goals and maintaining a community based on mutual respect. We aim to be **inspiring** by facilitating the sharing of expertise and sparking innovation to make a positive difference wherever and whenever we can. We aspire to create an **inclusive** environment by celebrating diversity, hearing and respecting all views and working to remove barriers in our field. And we strive for **excellence** by empowering people to better themselves, setting ambitious goals and offering excellent resources that combine the best of our creative expertise and sector knowledge.

Living these values will help guide the EAIE into the future and make sure that, within our community and the field of international higher education at large, all voices will be heard. This is the only path towards fulfilling our purpose of inclusive education for all.



**Leonard Engel**  
*Executive Director, EAIE*

# Introduction

— *Laura E. Rumbley*

Included in the vision statement of the EAIE are the words, “We believe international education and exchange deepens appreciation of human society and is essential to the prosperity of societies and individuals alike.” These words are elegant, inspiring – and also deceptively simple. Individuals and societies have always been exceedingly complicated entities, and continue to be so. Our evolving understanding of the fluid and multifaceted nature of *identity* is opening the door on an increasingly broad range of fascinating and challenging answers to the questions: Who am I? Who are you? Who are we? And how can each of us be fully seen, clearly heard and sufficiently empowered to play our most meaningful and authentically fulfilling roles in the world around us?

The EAIE is committed to expanding expertise, inspiring understanding and fostering deep collaborative learning and engagement through international education. To be both responsible and successful in these endeavours, it is vital for us to reflect on whether our efforts are *genuinely and fully inclusive*, and to encourage the international education professionals we serve to carefully consider the same. ‘Encompassing all voices’, the theme of the EAIE’s 31st Annual Conference, offers an invitation to all of us to engage in precisely this type of thoughtful reflection. Indeed, how often do we honestly ask ourselves: How carefully and legitimately is ‘inclusion’ embedded in the work we undertake each day? Who is invited into the conversations that matter at our institutions and who is not? Whose norms and priorities are reflected in the agendas and strategies that guide us toward the future – whether we operate at the level of programmes, institutions, national governments or elsewhere – and whose norms and priorities are missing? Who is served, underserved, injured, or forgotten in the teaching we offer or the services we provide? Whose voices ring out around us, and whose remain faint or unheard?

To whet our appetite for discussion on these and other vital matters as we gather in Helsinki, this year's *Conference Conversation Starter* features seven original essays organised into three distinct sub-themes:

1. European perspectives on diversity and inclusion
2. The student voice in internationalisation
3. Leveraging diversity in our midst

As suggested by the titles, each sub-theme provides a space for considering the notion of 'encompassing all voices' from distinct perspectives and levels of analysis, and each essay includes a short list of discussion questions that we hope will encourage readers to reflect on many of the key issues and ideas raised by the contributors. Taken together, our authors offer everything from empirical data to policy discourse, passionate pleas for social action and compassionate guidance for taking personal responsibility for diversity and inclusion. Clearly, not 'all' voices could be included in this publication; even still, there is considerable breadth of insight in evidence across this unique collection of essays designed to move our thinking and awareness forward.

For example, our colleague from the European University Association, **Anna-Lena Claey-Kulik**, helps us understand the particular nature of diversity and inclusion as a "strategic issue for European universities" today. Technological, political and demographic trends, among other forces, are changing the face of higher education in Europe, and altering the social and educational landscape in which higher education institutions must operate. Students, academics and professional staff are all agents and objects of these developments, to which a diverse range of responses – at institutional, national and European levels – are being actively designed and tested. Sensitivities are being raised, but there is a clear need for ongoing awareness building, marshalling of relevant resources, and connecting the dots between disparate efforts.

Finding synergies across distinct understandings of difference is a particularly compelling component of the ideas presented in the essay penned by **Rachel Brooks**, Professor of Higher Education and an executive editor of the *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Noting that understandings of diversity have been researched more frequently at the level of institutions, rather than at the level of the state (*ie* among policy makers), she provides insight into some of the ways that "policy influencers" understand diversity in six different European countries. Her work points to the challenges that may exist when different stakeholder groups understand and value diversity in higher education differently. Meanwhile, extending conversations and insights about the power and potential of diversity across the domains of domestic and international student populations may be mutually illuminating.

Furthering the discussion about encompassing all voices at the national level, we are treated to an insider's perspective on these matters in relation to Finland, the host of this year's EAIE Conference and Exhibition. **Anita Lehikoinen**, Permanent Secretary of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, notes that the vision for the future of higher education in this country is ambitious, inclusive and distinctly engaged with both global developments and local priorities. For example, even as Finnish society

becomes more diverse and culturally heterogeneous, a commitment is being made to honouring a long tradition of student involvement in decision-making as the country attends to its national and international education goals and objectives. Meanwhile, innovation – in the form of new networks, new forums and new technology – must be leveraged to advance opportunity equitably for all Finnish citizens, a core value in this society.

Appropriately, the notion of student involvement in decision-making and in the fullest enactment of internationalisation as a transformative endeavour is addressed by both of the articles that comprise the section on ‘The student voice in internationalisation’. From **Krishna Bista**, an academic based in the United States and editor of the *Journal of International Students*, we are urged to understand that support services for international students should be grounded first and foremost in an understanding and appreciation of the strengths (not the deficits) these individuals – in their immense diversity – bring to our institutions around the world. Furthermore, it is vital that we take holistic approaches to understanding the dynamics between international and domestic student learning experiences.

In a similar vein, the essay contributed by **João Pinto** and **Rasmus Benke-Åberg** – President and Director of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), respectively – positions students as vital collaborators in the development and implementation of internationalisation agendas and action lines. From their perspective, the extensive work done by ESN to foster student connections with host communities through social action and cultural engagement stands out as a clear example of the ways that students are making a difference as key actors with respect to internationalisation. This, despite being regularly excluded from decision-making processes about internationalisation, particularly at the institutional level.

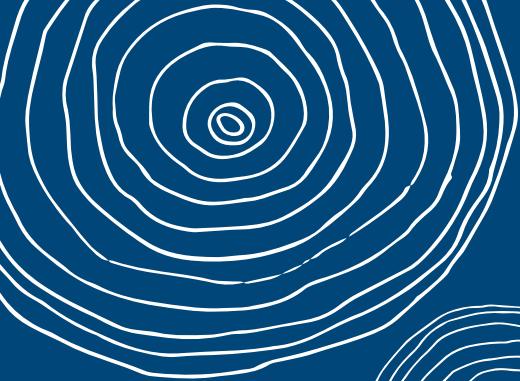
For its part, the section on ‘Leveraging diversity in our midst’ compels us to take an unflinching look around us and into the immediate environments of our lives – classrooms, offices, communities – and even our own hearts. Are the playing fields in which we live and work as level as they can and should be? The EAIE’s Rainbow Task Force members – **Carmela Criseo, Jennifer Valcke, Akos Kiraly, Andrew Disbury, Riitta Kataja** and **Beer Schröder** – chronicle reasons for both optimism and pessimism in their consideration of the realities facing the LGBTQAI+ community across Europe. Equal rights and equal opportunities remain elusive, especially in light of the destructive tendencies of “illiberal populism and conservatism” thriving in some quarters today. They call vociferously on individual higher education institutions and ally organisations like the EAIE to take concrete actions that lead toward the goal of becoming “optimally inclusive”.

Finally, **Aminata Cairo**, Lector of Inclusive Education at The Hague University of Applied Sciences and Keynote speaker at this year’s Closing Plenary, also advocates for concerted action that pushes the needle forward on an expanded, authentic approach to diversity and inclusion in our everyday lives. She reminds us that the practice of excluding marginalised groups is “embedded in a relentless system of inequality” that has insistently privileged the “stories” of “the dominant” over those of “the other”. This privileging of perspectives and narratives has evolved over hundreds of years and relies on



“the use of insidious mechanisms that have normalised the inequality that now stands as the norm”. Facing this truth in ourselves and in the institutions and communities we hold dear can be difficult and painful work. Wisely, Cairo advises that caring, courage and humility can lead us purposefully forward to a place in which sustainable change is possible. Ultimately, “the charge and challenge for us, those who want to embrace diversity and create inclusive environments, is to embrace our humanity and help people deal with the complexities involved in embracing all the stories that are present”.

In his foreword to this publication, EAIE Executive Director, Leonard Engel, reminds us of the four core values that guide the work of the EAIE today: collaborative, inspiring, inclusive and excellence. From my perspective, the 2019 *Conference Conversation Starter* is an **excellent** example of a **collaborative** effort focused on the profoundly important topic of **inclusion** in (international) higher education. *Encompassing all voices* aims to **inspire** each of us to think and act differently, courageously, and well beyond the confines of this conference, in support of a more just and vibrant world. Wishing you a very successful experience at the 2019 EAIE Conference and Exhibition and a most stimulating read of the pages that follow.



## ENCOMPASSING ALL VOICES

An old saying tells us that silence is golden. At the 31st Annual EAIE Conference and Exhibition in Helsinki, however, silence is the last thing we're looking for as we come together to actively consider what 'encompassing all voices' can, should and does mean in our field today. The *Conference Conversation Starter* provides a unique starting point for this discussion. Seven carefully curated essays offer a range of perspectives on how the notions of identity, diversity and inclusion can inform and inspire the work that we do. We hope that you will read, reflect, critique, enjoy and add your distinctive voice to this vital conversation for our time.

[www.eaie.org](http://www.eaie.org)

