



*Conference Conversation Starter*

# FACING OUTWARD

# **Facing outward**

*Edited by Leasa Weimer*

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**EAIE Conference Conversation Starter**  
**Facing outward**

**Edited by**

Leasa Weimer  
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## Foreword

The 2018 Annual EAIE Conference brings us together in Geneva under auspicious circumstances. First and foremost, we are celebrating the EAIE's 30th annual gathering, an impressive and uplifting milestone. Furthermore, we find ourselves in a city renowned for its role in international politics and diplomacy, whose setting provides us with ample opportunities to consider how our work in international education connects with other important global trends. Yet, we must note that our celebrations and explorations of the exciting field of international higher education are framed by a tumultuous world of violence, inequality, uncertainty and deprivation.

To help us make some sense out of all of this, the EAIE Conference has chosen to focus our attention on the notion of 'facing outward'. This is a decidedly apt expression of what most EAIE members do every day: guide others to engage, in countless different ways, with the world beyond our borders (however we might define those lines in the sand). As we witness across Europe and around the world intense efforts to draw our attention to the challenges we face within each of our respective countries, keeping the world around us equally in focus remains a crucially important task.

But, the message of 'facing outward' should not be understood as a one-way, one-dimensional dynamic. As the essays in this volume make clear, facing outward yields its best results when we are equally prepared to look critically inward; when we honestly consider the full complexity of the situations around us; and when we are able to embrace a brave and ambitious agenda of responsible action.

The *2018 EAIE Conference Conversation Starter* aims to foster discussion and reflection that will encourage all of us to face ourselves and the world around us with deeper insight and conviction, in Geneva and beyond.



**Laura E. Rumbley**  
*EAIE Publications Committee Chair*

# Introduction

— *Leasa Weimer*

Working in the field of international higher education naturally provides opportunities to engage with people from different cultures and viewpoints. With the rise of insular politics and sentiments, some of the core values and practices of higher education internationalisation are vulnerable. During this political moment, it's imperative our community continues to create inclusive practices at home and foster collaborative partnerships across borders. The conference theme 'Facing outward' challenges us to face outward into the world and think deeply about the work we do to advance intercultural understanding, both in our institutions and beyond.

This is a special year as we celebrate 30 years of the Annual EAIE Conference and Exhibition. As we breathe in the fresh Swiss Alpine-lake air and take in the majestic peaks of Mont Blanc, Geneva serves as a 'capital of peace' and allows us to reflect and refocus on how we have evolved and what stands before us.

In seven essays, this slim volume highlights several select topics featured in the conference programme. Our contributing authors represent a breadth of expertise and geographical diversity. From practitioners to researchers and professors to therapists, they offer intriguing perspectives on timely issues critical to the field of international higher education.

This year's *Conference Conversation Starter* is organised into three subthemes:

1. Understanding the past
2. Tackling the present
3. Building a more inclusive future

As we celebrate 30 years of the EAIE, we have an especially nice opportunity to reflect on where we are and where we are going. As such, the publication begins with thoughts from the current EAIE President and EAIE Executive Director on the evolution of European higher education internationalisation over the past five years and the EAIE's current and future role in the field.

**Markus Laitinen** and **Leonard Engel** contemplate 30 years of Annual EAIE Conferences by considering how the Association adapts, aligns and leads international higher education as the world continues to change around us. They highlight specific ways the EAIE has responded to world events such as the influx of refugees, Brexit and the questionable future of the Central European University in Hungary. They note how the Association has worked to support the Sustainable Development Goals and continues to participate in global dialogues to drive responsible internationalisation. At the same time, the future looks bright as the EAIE strategy and values guide a more proactive approach through engagement, advocacy, diversification and research.

The second subtheme – ‘Looking inward to face outward’ – focuses on recommendations for international higher education practices that are both inclusive and supportive of international students. The first essay in this section explores the cultural dimension of mental health and proposes a counselling approach that takes culture as a starting point. Continuing with the inclusive internationalisation theme, the second essay considers the experiences of international students with disabilities and highlights several ways institutions can be more welcoming for this community. The last essay in this subtheme highlights the relationship between the international student experience and employability.

**Jessica Price** advocates for a culturally sensitive approach to counselling services for international students with mental health issues. Mental health issues of international students are often perceived as a failure to adapt to a new culture and higher education experience. However, some international students arrive at their host institution with pre-existing mental health issues or after experiencing traumatic situations related to international conflicts and forced migration. Are higher education institutional counselling services prepared to deliver the culturally competent care and intensive services that some international students need? While the manifestations of mental health are culturally grounded, so are treatment approaches. Through “culturally competent care” and a “comprehensive counseling center model”, Jessica offers solutions for counsellors and institutions to adapt their services to the needs of international students.<sup>1</sup>

In her essay, **Agnes Sarolta Fazekas** explores and lets us imagine a more inclusive internationalisation that welcomes students with disabilities. Through time, people with disabilities have been viewed through different perspectives, thus impacting their treatment in society. Taking a human rights approach acknowledges that people with disabilities have rights and therefore practices and policies should not limit their participation.

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1 Brunner, J., Wallace, D., Keyes, L., & Polychronis, P. (2017). The Comprehensive Counseling Center Model. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 31*(4), 297-305.

Through a pragmatic discussion, Agnes offers suggestions for practitioners to consider when working with students with disabilities in international higher education. Issues of disclosure and attitudes, language and action can impact the student experience. The way forward includes higher education institutions (HEIs) employing a 'yes!' approach when recruiting and welcoming students with disabilities as well as intentional 'universal design' of environments that are both aesthetic and useable.

How does international higher education enhance students' employability? **Paul Blackmore** offers thoughts on the topic by highlighting evidence and exploring challenges, solutions and opportunities. In recent years, robust research has emerged supporting the assertion that a student's employability is impacted by their international higher education engagement. Yet, there are still challenges to overcome when international students seek work experience in host countries or attempt to translate their international experience into something of value for an employer. After Paul addresses the challenges, he then turns his attention to focus on practical solutions. Creative practices in the field exist, including career fairs, virtual internships and partnerships among HEIs, industry and the government. It's up to the institution to create rich opportunities and provide tools for students to reflect on and transform their international experience into desirable employability traits.

While internal practices are important, especially for the international student experience, it's also important to consider the wider geopolitical environment that shapes international engagement. The first essay in the 'Dancing with politics' subsection encourages us to think about how we can empower students to tackle current and future global and political challenges by adopting a more critical approach to internationalisation at home. Switzerland serves as a fascinating case study when considering how political relationships between the European Union (EU) and European countries shape international higher education offerings. The final essay in this volume focuses in on the current debate surrounding English as the *lingua franca* and the implications this has on national languages and identity.

In their essay, **Eve Court** and **Eva Janssen** propose a novel approach to internationalisation at home through decolonised and critical global citizenship. Challenges abound in our global community: inequality continues to grow, nationalism threatens international cooperation and climate change comes with future implications. To confront inequality and promote social justice and sustainability, they argue that internationalisation efforts should include an institutional culture of critically engaged global citizenship. Embodying such an ethos would prepare students and staff to face difficult realities, resist inequality and other threats to social justice as well as seek solutions to current and future global challenges. Foucault's power-knowledge nexus offers a frame to examine the internationalisation mandate, as the authors reimagine a more critical internationalisation at home approach.

**Robert Buttery** explores the tumultuous history of the Swiss–EU relationship over the past 30 years and how it has impacted Swiss international higher education. As a non-EU country, Switzerland’s participation in European mobility and research programmes, such as Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020, have been shaped by the interplay between national and supranational politics. Since 1987, Swiss HEIs have lived in periods of uncertainty concerning their involvement in European programmes and networks. During these periods of precariousness, the Swiss higher education community lobbied the government and continued to draw strength from their international networks. Throughout the essay, Robert draws parallels between the Swiss case and the Brexit referendum and negotiations.

**Amanda Clare Murphy** addresses the growing debate in Europe surrounding English as a *lingua franca* threatening national languages in academia. The English language plays a key role in the internationalisation of higher education. With the rise of English-taught programmes in Europe, controversies arise. Specific examples in Italy, Germany and the Netherlands showcase the nuances of the national debates. Amanda proposes that internationalisation be infused with a more multilingual approach through multicultural-learning spaces. Finland’s multilingual aspiration is an example of where this discussion could move in the future.

The *EAIIE Conference Conversation Starter* aims to stimulate intellectual reflection and incite dialogue on myriad dimensions of the conference theme and hot topics featured in the conference programme. Just as Geneva has a long history of hosting organisations focused on international diplomacy and collaboration, we, as a collective community, have a 30-year history of ‘facing outward’ and creating global ties to foster intercultural understanding. As we come together in Geneva, we have the opportunity to further advance the practice of international higher education through critical dialogue by sharing best practices, building on existing relationships and forging new partnerships. We hope this publication serves as a springboard for deep conversations at the conference.



## FACING OUTWARD

As we come together in Geneva to celebrate 30 years of the Annual EAIE Conference and Exhibition, we reflect on how our field has grown and where we are going. To further advance international engagement in the current political moment of rising insular sentiments, it's imperative to continue 'facing outward'. This year's theme encourages us to consider internal practices that foster international cooperation as well as the external environment that enables and challenges our work in the internationalisation of higher education. The *Conference Conversation Starter* features seven essays on hot topics presented by authors from various backgrounds and different parts of the world. This sampling of thought leadership encourages us to cultivate practices that are inclusive, critical and outward-looking.

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