

The Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions –  
an Analysis of the Portuguese Case

**Verónica Salgado de Oliveira Gomes**

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Supervised by

**Pedro Nuno de Freitas Lopes Teixeira**

## Resumo

A internacionalização tornou-se um dos principais temas no sector do ensino superior, cuja importância tem vindo a aumentar significativamente nas últimas década. Esta evolução é resultado de grandes mudanças socioeconómicas e institucionais, bem como do impacto da globalização e do desenvolvimento da massificação do ensino superior. Assim, nos últimos anos, o desenvolvimento de estratégias para promover a internacionalização das instituições de ensino superior tornou-se uma prioridade para as mesmas.

Esta dissertação visa o estudo da internacionalização no ensino superior português, nomeadamente através da análise das estratégias de internacionalização das instituições de ensino superior portuguesas. O estudo procura compreender as motivações subjacentes à internacionalização das IES portuguesas, a formulação das suas estratégias, e os principais desafios enfrentados por essas instituições. Utilizamos estudos de casos exploratórios referentes a três Universidades portuguesas para abordar estas questões e para encontrar padrões e diferenças no seu processo de internacionalização.

De acordo com as conclusões do estudo, as motivações por detrás da internacionalização das IES portuguesas parecem ser essencialmente académicas e socioculturais. No processo de definição da estratégia de internacionalização, as IES enfrentar o desafio de lidar com a sua pluralidade e descentralização institucional. Nesse sentido, as Universidades têm de delinear uma estratégia institucional que englobe as necessidades da instituição no seu todo e combine os interesses de diferentes grupos dentro da comunidade académica. No caso de Portugal, as Universidades têm centrado os seus esforços em atrair estudantes europeus e dos Países de Língua Portuguesa. Os principais instrumentos para desenvolver a internacionalização utilizados pelas Universidades Portuguesas são a participação em redes universitárias internacionais, em projetos internacionais e programas de mobilidade e a atração de estudantes estrangeiros. Os resultados desta dissertação também colocam em evidência algumas especificidades no que diz respeito à definição e elaboração de estratégias de internacionalização no sector do ensino superior.

**Palavras-chave:** instituições de ensino superior, internacionalização, motivações, estratégias

## **Abstract**

Internationalisation has become one of the major issues in the higher education sector, whose importance has significantly increased over the last decades. This was a result of major socio-economic and institutional changes, as well as of the impact of globalisation and the development of mass of higher education. Hence, in recent years it has become a priority for higher education institutions to develop strategies to promote their internationalization.

This study aims at studying internationalization in Portuguese higher education, namely by looking at the strategies of internationalization of Portuguese higher education institutions. The study will endeavour to understand the motivations underlying the internationalisation of Portuguese HEIs, the formulation of their strategies, and the main challenges faced by those institutions. We use explorative case studies referring to three Portuguese Universities in order to address those issues and to find patterns and differences in their internationalization process.

According to our findings, the motivations behind the internationalisation of Portuguese HEIs seem to be essentially academic and socio-cultural. In defining the internationalization strategy, HEIs face an important challenge in how to deal with its institutional plurality and decentralization. In this regard, Universities need to outline an institutional strategy that encompasses the needs of the overall institution and combines the interests of different groups within the academic community. In the case of Portuguese HEIs, efforts have been focused in attracting students from other European countries and from Portuguese-speaking Countries. The main instruments to implement internationalization by those Universities are the participation in international university networks, in international projects and mobility programmes, and the attraction of foreign students. The results of the dissertation also highlight some specificities regarding the internationalization strategies in the higher education sector.

**Keywords:** higher education institutions, internationalization, motivations, strategies

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## 1. Introduction

Universities have developed internationalization activities since the Middle Ages, but the phenomenon bloomed and adopted novel and important features over the past four decades (Wit, 2018). Qiang (2003) justified the growing importance of the internationalisation in the Higher Education sector by two reasons. First, the changes driven by the globalization of the economy have imposed more demanding requirements on the labour market that should be provided by HEIs. Secondly, internationalisation is crucial to meet the needs of specialised research, as it requires strong international engagement and cooperation. The globalisation process has created an international knowledge network, in which Universities are integrated (Altbach, et al, 2009). In addition to academic relations between states, commitment in the international field offers valuable learning and research opportunities, creating mutual benefits for participants.

Many countries have been promoting the international dimension of higher education at national and institutional levels. In fact, the 5th IAU Global Survey<sup>1</sup> published in 2019 identified that that many HEIs report internationalization forms as an explicit part of their whole institutional strategy, especially in Europe, Asia and Pacific region. Exporting educational services and attracting foreign students have become important sources of revenue for HEIs in many countries (Sin et al, 2019a), (Choudaha, 2017), (Zhang et al, 2016). From an international management perspective, it is also important to understand why universities should exploit international activities to raise interest in the eyes of local, national or even international stakeholders.

The Portuguese higher education system has also participated in this trend towards greater internationalization. The fundamental changes have happened in the last three decades with the EU membership and the so-called Bologna Declaration (Coelho and Arau Ribeiro, 2018), (Horta, 2010), (Amaral et al, 2006). Thus, this study investigates the motivations for the internationalization of Portuguese HEIs, how the internationalization strategy has been defined, which instruments are used for the strategy implementation and which are the constraints and challenges of the process. Our analysis will also look at the specificities of internationalization strategies in this sector.

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<sup>1</sup> 5th IAU (International Association of Universities) Global Survey report presents an analysis of data collected from HEIs around the world via an online questionnaire, open between 1 March and 31 October 2018, and which collected data for the academic year beginning in 2016.

The structure of this dissertation is as follows. We will firstly review the relevant literature to provide a context to the internationalization of HEIs, describe the main concepts related to the theme, and explain its rationales. Then, we discuss central dimensions of the Portuguese HE system internationalization process, by analysing its evolution and contextualization, describing what are the reasons that motivate internationalization in Portuguese HEIs and what strategies are mostly used. We will then proceed with a case study based on 3 Portuguese HEIs. The methodology is mainly qualitative, though we will also analyse data in order to outline the main patterns of internationalization in the Portuguese HE system versus the European context. In the final chapter, we will present and discuss the main conclusions of this study.

## **2. The rising importance of internationalization in Higher Education**

In this chapter, we will portray the distinctive features of higher education, the consequences of the phenomenon of globalisation on the sector, followed by a conceptual framework of the internationalisation of HEIs. In this latter section, we will present and describe the main rationales that motivate the internationalization of HEIs and its multidimensionality.

### **2.1. Specific Features Higher Education and the Impact of Globalization in the Sector**

In this chapter we analyse the implications of the globalisation process for higher education and the respective specificities of this sector, namely in the context of the services sector. According to Erramilli (1990), education should be categorized as a hard service. Unlike soft services, hard services do not require the presence of the service provider on site and production is relatively independent from consumption. These differences are supposed to influence how companies/institutions go abroad. Soft services will often require that the production and the consumption of services are located at the same place, while the internationalisation of hard services will be similar to that of manufacturing industries (Ekeledo and Sivakumar, 1998).

Internationalization of HE (higher education) is often presented as a reaction of Universities to the process of globalization (Van der Wende, 1997), (Qiang, 2003). In fact, globalization induced important changes in the economy and in the labour markets (integrated world economy). In addition, new information and communication technologies emerged and there was a rapid spread of the English language. This created the need for universities to constantly review their strategies, their positioning and their processes at the same pace. As a consequence, HEIs began to see internationalisation as a fundamental strategy for good performance and to stand out in the increasingly globalised higher education sector. Nevertheless, Qiang (2003) argues that even though that internationalization of HE is a response to globalisation, respect for the individuality and heterogeneity of each nation is crucial.

According to Verger (2009), trade flows in higher education services have become increasingly relevant within world trade, which has created particular interest in its liberalisation. The GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) has been one of the



main mechanisms of removing barriers to trade in higher education services. GATS distinguishes four types (modes) of trade in services, including “consumption abroad” (Konan and Maskus, 2006). Just like tourism, the service of higher education integrates this category, i.e., the service is performed within a country’s territory for consumers from any other country. In fact, with the conclusion of the "Uruguay Round" (1986 to 1994) and the signing of GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) in 1995, the service market saw a progressive liberalization translated in a substantial reduction of customs duties and other trade barriers as well as in shaping international trade relations without so many obstacles (Rammal, 2014). However, Verger (2009) concludes that the liberalization assurances made by GATS member countries are not reflecting liberalization pressures and enforcements.

Besides adapting to these changes, universities had to manage the exponential rising demand for tertiary education. Globally, the percentage of the age cohort enrolled in tertiary education has grown from 19% in 2000 to 26% in 2007, with more significant gains in upper and upper middle-income countries (Altbach et al, 2009). The number of foreign students stood at around 0.8 million worldwide in 1975 and had risen to more than 4 million by 2010, meaning that there has been more than a fivefold increase in foreign students since the mid-1970s (OECD, 2016). According to an OECD report from 2016, the number of international students will grow to about eight million by 2025.

In 1997, Kävelmark and Van der Wende concluded that most countries were seeking international cooperation beyond the sphere of European Union countries, extending to Asian and Latin American regions. In terms of policies implemented, the focus was directed to traditional instruments such as increasing the number of international students and teachers. In addition, institutional strategies were already becoming more prevalent, particularly in the CEE countries. More recently, a study on internationalization of higher education<sup>2</sup> requested by the European Parliament’s Committee on Culture and Education (Wit et al, 2015) identified key trend developments for Europe and the rest of the globe: 1) rising significance of internationalisation at all levels; 2) intensification in institutional strategies for internationalisation; 3) widespread funding constraints and challenges; 4) increased privatisation in internationalization; 5) competitive pressures of globalisation; 6) visible switch from cooperation to competition; 7) emerging regionalisation (Europe is often

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<sup>2</sup> Study based in 17 country reports – ten from Europe and seven from other continents (developed, emerging and developing countries)

seen as an example); 8) numerical figures growing all over the place, bringing up the challenge of quantity vs. quality; 9) lack of sufficient data for comparative analysis and decision-making; 10) curriculum internationalisation, transnational education and digital learning stand out as emerging areas of focus.

The same study concluded that the vast majority of national strategies revolve around mobility, economic motivations (whether short and/or long term), as well as the recruitment of brilliant scholars. International reputation and visibility also assume an important role. Based on UNESCO Report "Trends in Global Higher Education" of 2009, the first decade of the new millennium saw an increase in the number of programmes and institutions that were operating internationally and promoting internationalization strategies as an integral part of their national education programmes. It is also important to mention that there has been a growing concern to recruit capable international academics, especially in the STEM<sup>3</sup> fields.

Since 1990s, many authors, including Van der Wende (2001), speak of a paradigm shift from cooperation to competition, materialized by the growing relevance of international HEIs' rankings. Furthermore, in contrast to the globalization trend, ideas of anti-globalism, protectionism, anti-immigration and other nationalist streams have been emerging in some regions around the world (Altbach and Wit, 2018). Thus, the current panorama requires that there be agreements for international cooperation and for international engagement.

## **2.2. Breaking down the Concept of Internationalization and its Rationales**

The internationalisation concept of higher education appeals to several areas of action. Knight (2003) described the internationalisation of higher education institutions as the "process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education." Wit (2018) stated later that internationalization is intended to improve the quality of education and research for students and staff, as well as it should add a contribution to the society. Qiang (2003) also noticed that one should not describe internationalization in all countries homogeneously, as the process is influenced by history, culture, resources and different concepts across regions. Scott (2006) reinforces that

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<sup>3</sup> Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

the mission of internationalization of an university does not mean breaking with its philosophy, but directing its focus to the international level. Moreover, to reflect the current reality, internationalisation needs to be understood at the national, sectoral and institutional levels.

Some authors, including Middlehurst (2008) and Beelen and Jones (2015), mention two very important dimensions of HEIs' internationalization: internationalization abroad and internationalization at home. According to Middlehurst (2008), distinguishing between internationalization abroad and internationalization at home is also very important because the structures and governance arrangements at the institutional level may differ from one internationalization strategy to another. Being the most traditional approach to the internationalization of HEIs, internationalization abroad happens when the service of higher education is provided abroad, covering all cross-border forms of education (Knight and UNESCO, 2006).

On the other hand, internationalization at home happens inside the institution itself (inside borders). This is usually made by developing a focus on activities that provide an understanding of international and intercultural skills (Beelen and Jones, 2015). The "at home" component has been gaining attention and has focused more on the internationalisation of the curriculum and the teaching and learning process (Wit, 2018). Even for students who are restricted to the home learning environment, internationalization abroad succeeds in integrating international and intercultural dimensions into the students' formal and informal curriculum.

Helms et. al (2015) presented a more detailed categorization for HE internationalisation policies: 1) Student mobility; 2) Scholar mobility and research collaboration; 3) Cross-border education; 4) Internationalization at home; 5) Comprehensive internationalization strategies. The researchers state that student mobility, whether credit or degree mobility, aims to attract foreign students and is linked to economic motivations. On the other hand, mobility of the teaching staff and research collaborations are more linked to academic motivations. Cross-border education can be seen in the form of branch campuses and franchise operations, commonly designated as "offshore education". According to Wit et al (2015), the mobility of the teaching body is a trend taking on more prominence, even though it has developed less strategically in recent years.

### **2.3. Rationales for Internationalization of HEIs**

This section presents and explains some rationales for internationalization in HEIs. Different motivations have been identified for internationalisation in the higher education sector. Rationales can be categorised into political, economic, academic, and sociocultural. National governments have come to realize that the internationalization of higher education is related to issues such as national security, diplomacy and economic development. More recently, new research also highlighted the role of institutional context, emphasizing the University as an established institution with an entrepreneurial approach (Renc-Roe and Roxa, 2014). Reinforcing this idea, Knight (2004) argued that the national level context influences the international dimension of higher education. This is made throughout policy, programs, funding and regulatory frameworks. Nevertheless, the real process of internationalization usually takes place at the institutional level (Knight, 2004).

#### **2.3.1. Economic rationale**

The economic rationales concern mainly the macroeconomic long-term effects, e.g. economic growth and domestic revenues. The internationalization of higher education can boost economic growth and investment in the economy and bring direct economic benefits. Given that people from all countries compete in an international environment (Knight and Wit, 1995), internationalization of higher education can contribute to shape skilled human resources required for the country's international competitiveness.

Secondly, participation in international research and development projects enhances a nation's ability to compete internationally when it comes to the technological field. Within the globalization process of knowledge, it is of the interest of universities to provide an international dimension to research and teaching, so they can compete with the other players globally. Universities make internationalisation efforts inside the university community (internationalisation at home), so that students, teachers and staff are ready to face an international and multicultural context (Knight and Wit, 1995). Furthermore, some R&D projects require intense international cooperation, either because a high financial investment is required, or due to the need to have highly qualified staff.

The third dimension of the economic rationale has to do with the financial attractiveness of internationalisation activities. The export of educational services became one important

source of revenue for higher education institutions (HEIs) and national economies in many countries. Another good example is the recruiting of foreign students, who usually pay a higher tuition fee, generating more income for the institution (Knight and Wit, 1995).

### **2.3.2. Competitive rationale**

Competitive and management rationales focus more on a microeconomic perspective, i.e. how the institution manages its own resources and develops a successful market strategy. Competition among institutions became a growing trend and internationalization strategies are being targeted with ranking considerations (Sursock, 2018). The first attempts of global rankings of higher education appeared around 2003, signaling a new era for higher education worldwide (Hazelkorn, 2008). This trend led to HEIs racing for reputation and the strongest universities end up being seen as centres because of their research expertise and reputation for excellence. African universities, on the other hand, have struggled to find a prominent place in global higher education, as they contribute with a small percentage of the investigation produced worldwide. The rankings select an elite of HEIs viewed as essential resources for governments and industry partners concerned with knowledge creation and innovation (Sursock, 2018).

While cross-border higher education is experiencing a prosperous phase, many HEIs also choose to internationalise at the local level, particularly by attracting top international scholars and students. Some nations further seek to develop international centres of education, with the aim of building the capacity of HEIs, increasing the economic competitiveness of a nation, and improving research and development aptitude (Knight 2014).

### **2.3.3. Political rationale**

The political rationales are related to the country's position in the global panorama, including issues such as security, stability, peace, political influence and dominance, etc. The international dimension in academic education is seen as a beneficial tool for foreign policy. Knight and Wit (1995) argued that education can be taken as a form of diplomatic investment in future political relations, providing those who can be the future leaders with the knowledge

of the respective host country. Inherently, sympathy for the political system, culture and values would also be developed. Aigner (1992) and Scott (1992) also pointed out the interest in international security and in maintaining international economic competitiveness as motivations to integrate an international dimension in higher education.

#### **2.3.4. Academic rationale**

The academic rationales focus on the international dimension of higher education as a way to improve the quality of education and research and development (R&D), as well as a tool for the institution to raise its international standards. In countries where the demand for higher education is higher than the supply, it is necessary to increase the capacity of higher education. On the other hand, internationalisation policies and programmes aimed at academic mobility and research collaboration can be motivated by the broader goal of creating and promoting knowledge (Helms et al., 2015). Furthermore, enhancing the international dimension of teaching, R&D and service is often assumed as a way to create value added to the quality of a higher education system (Qiang, 2003).

#### **2.3.5. Socio-cultural rationale**

The cultural and social rationales focus on the importance of understanding foreign culture and foreign languages. It is also related with national cultural identity, citizenship development and social and community development. Knight and Wit (1997) stated that “the preservation and promotion of national culture is a strong motivation for those countries which consider internationalization as a way to respect cultural diversity and counterbalance the perceived homogenizing effect of globalization” (p.11). Therefore, the internationalization of a nation's education system is motivated by the recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity within and between countries. Moreover, it becomes fundamental to prepare graduates with understanding and skills based on intercultural relations and communications for an increasingly global society and labour market.

### **2.3.6. Multidimensionality of the rationales for internationalization in Higher Education**

It is important to recognise that the rationales for internationalisation are very different when comparing countries and regions of the world (Middlehurst, 2008). In countries like the UK and Australia, economic rationales play a big role. Knight (2004) also pointed out that in regions where internationalization is not so noticeable, institutional-level rationales tend to be more institution-specific and take on greater significance.

Internationalisation motivations also differ between different groups of people (Middlehurst, 2008). For instance, students and researchers' expectations of internationalisation may be different. Also, institutional leaders and managers have usually different goals or identify other benefits from internationalization that the deans of faculty or heads of department.

In short, organizations are located in multiple and diverse environments, and there are many players that act to promote their own interests (Kraatz et al, 2008).

Furthermore, rationales can also differ according to function, i.e. education, research or enterprise (Middlehurst, 2008). In the same institution, some areas of knowledge may develop more international collaborations when it comes to R&D projects, whereas others may be more interested in regional or national partners. In this respect, managers and institutional leaders face the challenge of deciding whether there can be a single internationalization strategy across faculties or disciplines. Complexity is therefore present at various levels in HEIs. Thus, defining an institutional strategy that can be tailored to all stakeholders of the institution seems to be particularly challenging.

### **3. Internationalization in Portuguese Higher Education**

#### **3.1. Presentation of Portuguese HE System**

Portuguese HE system is organised in a binary system that integrates university and polytechnic education and consists of public and private institutions (DGES, 2019).

The democratisation of the Portuguese HE system began with the 1974 Revolution, which placed an end to a dictatorial regime. Over the past decades, Portuguese higher education went through institutional, economic and social transformations that mainly reflect an upgrade in living conditions and progressive changes towards EU development patterns. The number of students matriculated in higher education grew from 81.582 in 1978 to 385.247 in 2019 (Pordata, 2019). From the total number of students enrolled in Portuguese HE in 2019, 316.189 students enrolled in public HEIs and 69.058 in private HEIs.

However, the consequences of the previous regime are still reflected in an educational attainment gap compared to other OECD and EU countries (Amaral and Fonseca, 2012). According to an OECD report (2019), in Portugal, about 35% of students between 25 and 34 years old attained tertiary education in 2018. Although this ratio has been increasing over the past decades, it is still below the OECD average (44%).

#### **3.2. The rising Importance of Internationalization in Portuguese Higher Education**

Before Portugal's integration into the EU, the Portuguese state supported postgraduate students in some European countries with training grants and, in addition, the government arranged vacancies at universities for students descended from Portuguese emigrants and/or from countries belonging to the CPLP<sup>4</sup> (Amaral et al, 2006).

Portugal joined the EU in 1986 and since then education (and higher education in particular) undergone many structural changes. The integration with Europe in higher education was accelerated by the Bologna Process<sup>5</sup>, which introduced the first steps towards the creation of a coherent, compatible, competitive and attractive European Higher Education Area for

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4 Community of Portuguese Language Countries

5 It officially began with the Bologna Declaration in June 1999, which sets out a series of steps to be taken by European higher education systems towards a globally harmonised European higher education area.



students from within and outside Europe. The Bologna Reform induced many changes in Portuguese higher education. In addition to allowing the restructuring and reorganisation of the higher education system, it has favoured student mobility and encouraged the establishment of cross-border partnerships (Andrade and Costa, 2014).

According to Zgaga (2003), even though that the Bologna process started as an intergovernmental plan, evidences show similarities with EU processes aimed at reinforcing European co-operation in higher education. Portuguese students' mobility and the internationalisation of Portuguese HEIs started being promoted mainly through European programmes (Amaral et al, 2006). In addition to the Bologna Process, from 2005 onwards, new statutes were defined for all universities, as well as new regulations for academic careers and a new accreditation agency was created (Hoareau et al, 2012). These actions were carried out to bridge the gap between European and national higher education policies and to address structural problems in the Portuguese educational system such as the low level of internationalisation. For instance, Decree-Law no. 42/2005 of 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2005 introduced important changes which resulted from the adaptation to the Bologna Declaration, namely: the structuring of higher education with a first three or four years studies' cycle, and a second cycle of one or two years (Master); the implementation of ECTS<sup>6</sup> credit units for reading at a national and international level; the creation of instruments to foster mobility, during the undergraduate and post-graduate stages, in the European space. The legal diploma also establishes the creation of the diploma supplement<sup>7</sup> and the European scale of comparability of classifications<sup>8</sup>.

In 2014, the Secretary of State for Higher Education disclosed the document "Uma Estratégia para a Internacionalização do Ensino Superior Português" (DGES, 2019). The guidelines were aimed at implementing the strategic outline for empowerment and affirmation of Portuguese HE at international level. The report presented a picture of the internationalisation of HE phenomenon in a national and international panorama and pointed out some weaknesses in the system as well as examples of internationalisation

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6 ECTS - European Credit Transfer System - measurement unit of student work

7 The diploma supplement is a bilingual document which is complementary and integral to a diploma and aims to contribute to improving international transparency and the academic and professional recognition of qualifications

8 The European scale of comparability of classifications is the relative percentile-based scale which allows comparability of the classifications obtained in the various European higher education systems using different scales.

strategies that could be regarded as good practices in the matter. This document described a broad set of recommendations organised into four main areas: strategic institutional cooperation, mobility, promotion and governance. Among the many recommendations, the most pertinent were to extend the promotion of cooperation strategies beyond the community of Portuguese-speaking countries; restructuring bureaucratic procedures; make available good and complete information to possible enrollers; increase the provision of education in English (DGES, 2019). In addition, the 2014 report stated that Portuguese HE system aims to double the number of international students by the end of the year.

Also in 2014, the Government defined the International Student Status (ISS), through the Decree Law 36/2014. This publication covers all students who do not have Portuguese nationality, with some exceptions. It also regulates the status of international student by defining the rules of the special contest for access and entry of these students and allows public institutions to charge higher fees for international students.

### **3.3. Recent Trends of Internationalization in the Portuguese HE System**

This section will be divided into two parts: first we will present trends of internationalization in the Portuguese HE system versus the European context. Then, we will present additional general trends in Portuguese HEIs, such as the origin of foreign students and the nationality of foreign students by mobility type.

In order to characterise the internationalisation of Portuguese HEIs compared to other European countries, we collected data from the ETER (European Tertiary Education Register) platform for the 2011-2017 period. The data compares indicators from Portuguese HEIs and HEIs from a group of European countries (designated by EU+). This group includes the EU countries and also the United Kingdom, Norway and Switzerland. These three were added to the list of countries since they are important references in the internationalisation of higher education in the European continent.

For the analysis period, ISCED 7 education level (master or equivalent) presents more students/graduates (either foreign or under mobility regime) when compared to the ISCED 6 education level (bachelor degree or equivalent), both for Portugal and for the EU+ group. For all these indicators, the group of EU+ countries present a better performance than Portugal (more foreign or mobility students/graduates in relation to the total number of

students), both in the undergraduate and master's categories. Portugal's performance against the EU+ group is related to the fact that Portugal is a latecomer in the internationalisation market compared to many European countries, as mentioned previously.

At both ISCED 6 and ISCED 7 levels, the ratio of foreign students to total students is generally higher than the ratio of mobility students, both for Portugal and for EU+.

In Portugal, the percentage of mobility undergraduate students in relation to the total number of students enrolled at this level remained almost always at 3% between 2011 and 2016. For the same period of time, the countries of the EU+ group recorded values between 1 and 2 p.p. above those observed in Portugal. As regards foreign students attending a bachelor degree (or equivalent) in relation to the total number of students enrolled in this level of education, this indicator registered a minimum of 7% in 2011 and a maximum of 13% in 2017 for the group of EU+ countries. In Portugal, this same indicator remained between 4% and 5%.

Moving to ISCED level 7 (Master or equivalent), for Portugal, the percentage of mobility students in relation to the total number of students enrolled at this level has been increasing since 2011 (7%), reaching 11% in 2015 and 2016. For the same period of time, this indicator remained more stable for the EU+ group countries, having registered values in the order of 13%. As regards foreign students attending a Master's degree (or equivalent) in relation to the total number of students enrolled in this category, Portugal saw a significant increase in this indicator between 2014 and 2015 (from 11% to 14%). It should be noted that in 2014 both the document "A Strategy for the Internationalisation of Portuguese Higher Education" was released and Statute of the International Student was implemented. In the EU+ countries, this percentage rose to 17% during almost all the years under review.

Analysing Portugal and the EU+ group in parallel, the evolution of the ratio of foreign graduates and of the ratio of mobility graduates is quite similar to the evolution of the ratio of foreign students and to the ratio of mobility students, respectively, for both undergraduate and master levels. As regards the indicators of Erasmus students (whether incoming or outgoing), Portugal remains more or less at the level of the EU+ countries group. At the undergraduate level, the percentage of Erasmus incoming students in relation to the total of Erasmus incoming students has been decreasing between 2011 and 2016, both for Portugal and for EU+. At Masters or equivalent level, the ratios between Erasmus incoming students

and the total master students' number are much lower, with European countries differing from Portugal by 1 to 3 percentage points during the analysis period. It should be pointed out that whereas until 2014 this indicator was lower for Portugal compared to the EU+ group (29%), from 2014 the situation was reversed and Portugal increased its ratio compared to the EU+ group, with a peak of 34% in 2016. As far as the Erasmus outgoing students' indicator is concerned, the figures are relatively similar to those of incoming students for both Portugal and the EU+. Once again, there are more students doing Erasmus outside the country at undergraduate level than at master level. In Portugal and for the EU+ group, the Erasmus staff mobility (both incoming and outgoing), appeared only in 2014, with increases of 1 pp in both regions from 2014 to 2016. Finally, the ratio between student fees funding and total current revenues was higher for the EU+ countries group than in Portugal, except for the year of 2012. On average, this indicator was around 23% in the group of EU+ countries and 19% in Portugal.

Table I - Internationalization indicators for PT HEIs and EU+ HEIs

		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>PT</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 6 - foreigner	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%	5%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 6 - foreigner	7%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	13%
<b>PT</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 6 - mobility	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 6 - mobility	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	6%	8%
<b>PT</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 7 - foreigner	9%	9%	11%	11%	14%	15%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 7 - foreigner	16%	17%	18%	17%	17%	17%	17%
<b>PT</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 7 - mobility	7%	7%	8%	9%	11%	11%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 7 - mobility	13%	13%	13%	13%	12%	13%	13%
<b>PT</b>	Graduates at ISCED 6 - foreigner	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Graduates at ISCED 6 - foreigner	7%	7%	7%	8%	7%	8%	N/A
<b>PT</b>	Graduates at ISCED 6 - mobility	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Graduates at ISCED 6 - mobility	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%	N/A
<b>PT</b>	Graduates at ISCED 7 - foreigner	9%	9%	10%	12%	14%	16%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Graduates at ISCED 7 - foreigner	18%	19%	18%	19%	19%	19%	N/A
<b>PT</b>	Graduates at ISCED 7 - mobility	7%	6%	7%	10%	12%	12%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Graduates at ISCED 7 - mobility	16%	16%	15%	15%	15%	17%	N/A

<b>PT</b>	Erasmus incoming students - ISCED 6	73%	71%	72%	63%	62%	61%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Erasmus incoming students - ISCED 6	70%	70%	70%	64%	63%	63%	N/A
<b>PT</b>	Erasmus incoming students - ISCED 7	26%	28%	27%	33%	33%	34%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Erasmus incoming students - ISCED 7	29%	29%	29%	31%	31%	31%	N/A
<b>PT</b>	Erasmus outgoing students - ISCED 6	68%	71%	72%	63%	61%	59%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Erasmus outgoing students - ISCED 6	69%	68%	68%	62%	62%	62%	N/A
<b>PT</b>	Erasmus outgoing students - ISCED 7	31%	29%	28%	34%	35%	35%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Erasmus outgoing students - ISCED 7	29%	30%	30%	33%	33%	33%	N/A
<b>PT</b>	Erasmus incoming staff	0%	0%	0%	3%	4%	4%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Erasmus incoming staff	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%	N/A
<b>PT</b>	Erasmus outgoing staff	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Erasmus outgoing staff	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%	N/A
<b>PT</b>	Student fees funding / Total current revenues	19%	21%	19%	18%	18%	19%	N/A
<b>EU+</b>	Student fees funding / Total current revenues	22%	21%	22%	22%	24%	27%	N/A

Source: ETER data on Portuguese and European HEIs

In order to characterise the origin of foreign students and their nationality by mobility type in Portuguese HEIs we collected data from DGEEC (Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics in Portugal) between academic years 2011/2012 and 2018/2019. Also based on DGEEC figures, between the academic year 2015/16 and 2019/20, students enrolled in credit mobility increased approximately 25%. The number of those enrolled in degree mobility increased about 130% between 2015/16 and 2018/19. This growing trend is seen in both the public and private sectors. For the same period of time, the most significant increase in relative terms of credit mobility enrolments was in the 2nd cycle of studies; in degree mobility, the largest relative increase was in the 1st cycle of studies.

Between academic years 2011/2012 and 2018/2019, both at the undergraduate and master's level, the origin of the enrolled students was mostly Brazilian. It should be noted that there is an increasing trend in the percentage of students from this country at both ISCED 6 and ISCED 7 levels. Students coming from Brazil, Angola, Cape Verde and Italy appear at the top 5 nationalities in both levels of education. In this regard, the figures clearly show a pattern

of international students coming from CPLP countries in Portuguese HEIs at both levels of education.

Table II - Top 5 ratio of students enrolled in Portuguese HEIs between academic years 2011/2012 and 2018/2019 by nationality and by education level, against the total of students enrolled in Portuguese HEIs (excluding Portuguese nationality)

Portugal – ISCED 6									Average %
	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	
Brazil	20%	24%	21%	19%	20%	21%	25%	27%	22%
Spain	11%	11%	11%	12%	12%	12%	10%	10%	11%
Angola	13%	12%	11%	12%	11%	10%	9%	8%	10%
Cape Verde	14%	11%	10%	10%	9%	9%	8%	9%	10%
Italy	3%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%

Portugal - ISCED 7									Average %
	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	
Brazil	29%	34%	32%	28%	31%	36%	41%	45%	36%
Angola	16%	12%	14%	13%	9%	7%	7%	6%	9%
Italy	5%	5%	5%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	6%
Germany	3%	3%	4%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	5%
Cape Verde	8%	7%	5%	4%	4%	4%	3%	3%	4%

Source: DGEEC data

Let us now analyse the nationality of students by type of mobility and by level of education in the general panorama of Portuguese HEIs between the academic years 2011/2012 and 2018/2019. Students in the 1st cycle of degree mobility were mostly from Brazil, Angola, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe and Guinea-Bissau. At master's level, the distribution in descending order of the 5 main countries of origin was Brazil, Angola, Cape Verde, Germany and Italy. As for the nationality of the students in credit mobility at undergraduate level (or equivalent) in Portuguese HEIs, between 2011/2012 and 2018/2019, the main nationalities were, in decreasing order of importance, the following ones: Brazilian, Spanish, Italian, Polish, and German. In the 2nd cycle of studies, the top 5 countries-origin of students for the same period of time under the credit mobility scheme were Italy, Poland, Brazil, Germany, and Spain.

### 3.4. Main Internationalization Activities in the Portuguese HE System

Some years ago, Amaral et al (2006), in their analysis of the main internationalization activities in Portuguese HEIs, concluded that these were the recruitment of international students by

participating in European networks and the attraction of students from Portuguese-speaking countries; the investment in mobility programmes; and the focus on research partnerships. When it came to institutional strategies, Universities enrolled in international events and took advantage of online platforms for promotion and partnerships purposes (Sin et al, 2019b). More recently, authors argue that Portugal has reinforced its investment in the attraction of international students during the last decade (Sin et al., 2019b), (França et al, 2018).

With the economic and financial crisis of 2008 and the declining demographics (prospects of a decrease in demand resulting from the reduction in the birth rates) Portuguese HEIs were facing a tough financial context and the enrolment of fewer students (Fonseca et al., 2015). This, combined with a reform exhaustion, reduced the implementation of innovative measures and enforced financial constraints on HEIs which reduced their autonomy. Public expenditure on higher education decreased between 2005 and 2012, and from 2008 to 2012 decreased by more than 10% (Hoareau et al, 2012). Furthermore, during this time, R&D funding was reduced as a consequence of the crisis (Hoareau et al, 2013). Given this situation, Portuguese HEIs have started to develop interest and mechanisms for the recruitment of foreign students, especially students from CPLP countries (Fonseca et al., 2015).

Portuguese public HEIs have only recently invested in strategies to attract international students, due to the adoption of new legislation and a national strategy of internationalisation (Sin et al, 2019a). Nevertheless, Portugal is still regarded as a semi-peripheral European country concerning international student recruitment. This activity is highly concentrated in a few countries, being the top five destination countries the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Australia (OECD, 2016). While semi-peripheral countries may show the ability to attract international students, they generally have to define other types of approaches to do so. This is due to their condition of latecomers in the international market and is also related with the lack of tradition in international education (Sin et al. 2019a).

There is a visible pattern of international students coming from CPLP countries, which has to do with historical and cultural reasons, as well as with the shared language. However, one of the strategies highlighted in the 2014 report is to attract foreign students from other regions beyond the CPLP. According to França et al (2018), this point reflects the European Commission orientations to promote international student mobility within the European

Higher Education Area. Portuguese HEIs are therefore encouraged to enlarge their geographical internationalization focus.

As said by Amaral et al (2006), among a wide range of European programmes, the Erasmus programme is the one that stands out most in Portugal as a catalyst in promoting the mobility of students and academic staff. Structures and physical means have been created in most Portuguese HEIs to foster cooperation with other European institutions, i.e. international relations offices. Overall, the strategy for internationalization of Portuguese HEIs seems to be based on three main goals: raising the number of international students, invest in mobility programmes and focus on research partnerships.

### **3.5. Rationales for the internationalisation of Portuguese HEIs**

Political, cultural and economic reasons can be identified as the most determinant rationales for Portuguese HEIs. Thinking on the countries that are involved in the relational sphere of the academic institution, rationales' weight is relatively even between the so called CPLP countries and countries from other regions, especially from Europe (Amaral et al, 2006).

As far as *political rationales* are concerned, and despite the 2014 strategy lists motivations to increase the heterogeneity among the home countries of international students, Portugal continues to show intentions to privilege relations with the Portuguese speaking countries. Quoting Sin et. al (2019a, pp. 11), Portugal "aims to maintain its outstanding position as a student destination among Portuguese-speaking countries and to act as a bridge between these countries and the European Union".

Also in this regard, and allied to the low development of the higher education system in these countries, Portuguese government (in particular, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) has been offering scholarships to students from former Portuguese colonies, which demonstrates the intention to preserve cultural and political relations with CPLP countries (Sin et al, 2019b).

*Economic rationales* play a significant role in Portuguese HEIs. This is mainly due to the reduction in public funding and the decrease in the number of applicants to higher education in Portugal that followed the 2008 economic crisis, which created a big motivation to increase the recruitment of international students (Fonseca et al., 2015). International students tend to be seen as "cash cows" and as a new source of cash flow for producing financial income



(Choudaha, 2017). According to Amaral et al (2006), the profitability argument is particularly relevant for private educational institutions, which are free to define the fees to be charged to students from former Portuguese colonies (unlike public universities, due to Portuguese law).

*Academic rationales* (meeting international teaching and research standards) have a much smaller weight. The international recruitment of students is perceived as a strategy to accomplish other politically more relevant goals, including maintaining the relationship and prominence with the CPLP countries. Besides that, academic rationales are a means to achieve and/or increase the financial revenues aimed by HEIs (Sin et al. 2019a). In fact, between 2008 and 2011, Portugal stood below the European average concerning the vast majority of research indicators (Hoareau et al, 2012).

The least important when it comes to internationalisation rationales in Portugal are the *cultural rationales*, which are not regarded as a strategic priority. Instead, they are only used as a supplementary argument.

Having addressed the main characteristics of the Portuguese higher education system, as well as some trends in the internationalisation of Portuguese HEIs, we will proceed empirical analysis to answer our research questions. We will address the motivations for the internationalisation of Portuguese HEIs and try to understand how the internationalisation strategy is defined, what the main operational instruments are and what are the priorities and constraints to the internationalisation process.

## 4. Methodology and Data

Research is the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting data in order to understand a phenomenon (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). A research methodology can be defined as a series of logical steps from formulating a research problem to arriving at a conclusion, providing the link between theory and evidence (Tan, 2017). In order to maintain rigor, methodology should use agreed standards.

The three common approaches to conducting research are quantitative, qualitative and mixed. The researcher should anticipate the type of data required to answer the research question and, based on this assessment, should select one of these three approaches. As a general rule, researchers usually select the quantitative approach to answer research questions requiring numerical data, the qualitative approach to research questions requiring textual data, and the mixed methods approach to research questions requiring numerical and textual data (Williams, 2007).

As previously mentioned, this research aims to describe the main patterns of internationalization in the Portuguese case and the main motivations, strategies and challenges identified by the main stakeholders in the process of internationalization of HEIs. To answer these questions, the methodology used will be mainly qualitative. This approach will be based on 3 case studies and will be divided into two steps: first, through the documentary analysis of internationalisation documentation; then, through structured interviews to deepen the documentary analysis. The choice of this methodology allows to explore each of the case studies to a level that would not be possible only through numerical data. In addition, we reinforce the representativeness of the analysis with the 3 case studies so it is possible to highlight trends, patterns and differences.

In order to contextualize the 3 case studies in the Portuguese Higher Education system, we will also analyse data retrieved from ETER platform (European Tertiary Education Register) as well as data from the Portuguese portal DGEEC (*Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência* - General Directorate of Education and Science Statistics). ETER is an initiative of the European Commission whose aim is to collect information on HEIs in Europe. DGEEC guarantees the production and statistical analysis of education and science, being a central service of Portuguese State direct administration.

The criteria used for the selection of the 3 case studies (University A, University B and University C) is based on substantial reasons such as the different dimension of these institutions, the diversity of areas of knowledge and the different internationalization degree of their activities, as well as the existence of signs of strategic thinking and organization dedicated to internationalization. The three universities have internationalization as a fundamental vector of their development and mission.

Moving on to the practical criteria, the selection had to do with the following reasons: 1) geographical proximity, giving us the chance to better coordinate interviews; 2) availability of contacts, through the website; 3) given that the three institutions can be categorized as public universities, we should be able to gather more and more reliable information (not only statistical data, as well as content from interviews).

The first step of the qualitative methodology was the collection of analysis of key documents of each University (Strategic Plans, Annual Plans, and Annual Reports) in order to grasp their views and activities on internationalisation. These were collected from the three institutions' official websites. Afterwards, the interview phase followed. We decided to interview the institutional, strategic planning and International Relations Services representatives of each institution. This had to be adapted in some of the Universities due to practical limitations such as time and availability of the interviewees.

Throughout the review of institutional documents, we concluded that was very relevant to collect not only the views of those in charge of the internationalization are in the University, but to complement it by the views of those who are more involved in operational functions. This will bring complementary perspectives that could enrich our results. Therefore, the interviews were directed to internationalization institutional as well as technical and strategic planning representatives in the field of internationalization.

The interviews were mostly conducted remotely, due to the current context of the covid-19 pandemic, after obtaining an informed consent of the interviewees. The interview scripts were very similar for all interviewees, though more specific and operational questions were addressed to the staff in charge of the International Relations Services of each University. If the interviewee allowed the recording of the interview, we proceeded with the transcription of the interview and subsequent validation by the respondent. In other cases, in addition to the inputs from the interview, the respondents have provided the draft answers by which

they guided their participation. After the end of the interview process, a systematic analysis of the interviews was carried out, i.e. organizing the information by themes and drawing contributions from each of the sources.

## 5. Internationalization in Portuguese Higher Education - Empirical Analysis

This section will focus on the internationalization aspects of Portuguese HEIs, based on the 3 case studies. Firstly, we will characterize the three Universities regarding internationalization. Then, we will present the strategies of Internationalization in the three institutions. In this latter part, we will cover the motivations for internationalisation, the influence of the national and international context, the strategy, the institutional plurality in the process, the main sector strategies and the effects, priorities, constraints and future challenges in the internationalisation process.

### 5.1 Characterization of the three Universities regarding internationalization

In this section we will characterise the 3 Universities chosen for the case study in terms of their size and seniority, as well as present the main trends of each of the institutions vis-à-vis the others and versus the Portuguese context.

University B interacts with more than 80 countries and 400 universities and University A has various bilateral cooperation agreements signed with universities around the world. University C has a smaller dimension and a lower degree of internationalization, however, internationalization is considered an important vector of its strategy. The three institutions have an International Relations Service/Office that ensures the coordination and development of international cooperation actions, such as mobility programmes.

When it comes to R&D, these universities stimulate a dynamic participation in partnerships with foreign research centres, promote the access to international research network and try to ensure that the scientific results and research can be shared in prestigious international scientific journal and/or in international conferences. Although University of A is more decentralized and Universities B and C more centralized, they share the characteristic of being public institutions. This will give us an advantage of comparability in this respect.

Table III – Characteristics of the 3 institutions under study

Characteristic	University A	University B	University C
Age	Old	New	New
Number of Faculties/Schools	Large	Large	Small

Size	Large	Medium-Large	Small
Share of international students <sup>9</sup>	15%	12%	6%

Source: University A webpage, University B webpage and University C webpage

In order to describe the main trends of each of the 3 institutions, we will analyse data from ETER platform, together with data from DGEEC). Between the academic years 2011/12 and 2018/19, there's a predominance of students from Portuguese speaking-countries in each University under study. During this period, the ratio of Brazilian students to the total of foreign students exceeded 45%.

Table IV - Top 5 ratio of students enrolled at University A, University B and University C between academic years 2011/2012 and 2018/2019 by nationality, excluding Portuguese nationality

U.A		U.B		U.C	
Country	%	Country	%	Country	%
Brazil	45,78%	Brazil	45,58%	Brazil	45,47%
Spain	6,41%	Angola	5,65%	Spain	14,59%
Italy	6,19%	Spain	5,65%	Poland	6,03%
Germany	3,07%	Cape Verde	4,92%	Cape Verde	3,40%
Poland	2,82%	Italy	3,52%	Turkey	3,31%

Source: DGEEC data

According to data retrieved from ETER platform, ISCED 7 education level (master or equivalent) presents higher ratios of foreign students or under mobility students compared to ISCED 6 education level (degree or equivalent) , during the analysis period. At both ISCED 6 and ISCED 7 levels, the ratio of foreign students to total students is generally higher than the ratio of mobility students. At the undergraduate (or equivalent) level, it can be seen that, Universities A and B score between 2% and 3% in the ratio of foreign students (under degree mobility). University C presents slightly lower figures. The ratio of foreign graduates is about 1 p.p. below the ratio of foreign students for each HEI.

Regarding the share of mobility students in relation to the total number of students enrolled in a bachelor degree level (or equivalent), there seems to be a growing trend in the three institutions, except in 2016. Universities A and B have recorded similar ratios (the average was 2% during the six years). University C reached the maximum number of students under

<sup>9</sup> According to the latest reports available at each HEI website

mobility regime in 2014 and 2015 (2%). The ratio of mobility graduates is about 1 to 2 p.p. below the ratio of mobility students for each cycle of studies.

Table V – Internationalization indicators for ISCED 6 education level for University A, University B and University C

		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>U.A</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 6 - foreigner	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	N/A
<b>U.B</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 6 - foreigner	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	N/A
<b>U.C</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 6 - foreigner	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	N/A
<b>U.A</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 6 - mobility	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%	N/A
<b>U.B</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 6 - mobility	1%	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	N/A
<b>U.C</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 6 - mobility	0%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	N/A
<b>U.A</b>	Graduates at ISCED 6 - foreigner	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	N/A
<b>U.B</b>	Graduates at ISCED 6 - foreigner	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	N/A
<b>U.C</b>	Graduates at ISCED 6 - foreigner	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	N/A
<b>U.A</b>	Graduates at ISCED 6 - mobility	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	N/A
<b>U.B</b>	Graduates at ISCED 6 - mobility	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	N/A
<b>U.C</b>	Graduates at ISCED 6 - mobility	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	N/A

Source: ETER data on Portuguese HEIs

In general, at Master's level, both the ratio of mobility students (and graduates) and the ratio of foreign students (and graduates) increased between 2011 and 2016. During the period under review, the largest increases were reflected in the percentage of foreign graduates and in the percentage of foreign students. In Universities A and B, the ratio of foreign students increased from about 9% to 13% between 2011 and 2016. This figure was substantially lower in University C, except in 2013. As for the share of mobility students in relation to the total number of students enrolled in a Master's level (or equivalent), University A registered an increase of 5 pp in relation to 2011. At University B, this indicator also evolved quite favourably. The ratios were substantially lower in University C, except in 2013.

Table VI – Internationalization indicators for ISCED 7 education level for University A, University B and University C

		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>U.A</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 7 - foreigner	9%	8%	9%	11%	12%	12%	N/A
<b>U.B</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 7 - foreigner	9%	10%	10%	12%	12%	13%	N/A
<b>U.C</b>	Students enrolled at ISCED 7 - foreigner	2%	2%	10%	4%	4%	6%	N/A

U.A	Students enrolled at ISCED 7 - mobility	8%	6%	9%	11%	12%	13%	N/A
U.B	Students enrolled at ISCED 7 - mobility	5%	9%	10%	11%	12%	14%	N/A
U.C	Students enrolled at ISCED 7 - mobility	1%	1%	10%	4%	3%	6%	N/A
U.A	Graduates at ISCED 7 - foreigner	7%	9%	10%	10%	12%	10%	N/A
U.B	Graduates at ISCED 7 - foreigner	15%	9%	12%	12%	13%	15%	N/A
U.C	Graduates at ISCED 7 - foreigner	N/A	4%	8%	7%	14%	3%	N/A
U.A	Graduates at ISCED 7 - mobility	6%	10%	10%	10%	12%	11%	N/A
U.B	Graduates at ISCED 7 - mobility	15%	8%	11%	13%	13%	15%	N/A
U.C	Graduates at ISCED 7 - mobility	N/A	4%	8%	7%	15%	3%	N/A

Source: ETER data on Portuguese HEIs

As far as the indicators of Erasmus students (whether incoming or outgoing) are concerned, the percentage of students undertaking periods of mobility was usually higher at bachelor's level than at master's level, with the exception of Universities A and B in the category of Erasmus outgoing students. For the years 2011-2016, in University A, the total of Erasmus outgoing students was distributed between 64% and 77% at ISCED 7 level, versus an average of 26% at the undergraduate level. University B presents a similar register: in the total of Erasmus outgoing students, for the same period, the percentages varied between 51% and 70% at Master's level and between 30% and 42% at bachelor level. For University C, the picture was reversed by 2016. The percentage of Erasmus outgoing students at the undergraduate level in relation to the total number of Erasmus outgoing students showed a downward trend (83% in 2011 compared to 42% in 2016); at the Master's level, the trend was upward (16% in 2011 and 49% in 2016). Regarding Erasmus incoming students per education level, the ratio is substantially higher in ISCED 6 compared to ISCED 7. The biggest difference in this distribution can be seen at Universities B and C.

Table VII – Erasmus incoming and outgoing students in education levels ISCED 6 and ISCED 7 for University A, University B and University C

		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
U.A	Erasmus incoming students - ISCED 6	64%	67%	65%	51%	52%	49%	N/A
U.B	Erasmus incoming students - ISCED 6	81%	75%	78%	63%	55%	57%	N/A
U.C	Erasmus incoming students - ISCED 6	74%	78%	73%	68%	63%	61%	N/A
U.A	Erasmus incoming students - ISCED 7	35%	32%	34%	44%	42%	43%	N/A
U.B	Erasmus incoming students - ISCED 7	19%	23%	19%	29%	35%	33%	N/A
U.C	Erasmus incoming students - ISCED 7	24%	22%	25%	27%	32%	27%	N/A



U.A	Erasmus outgoing students - ISCED 6	34%	32%	23%	26%	22%	21%	N/A
U.B	Erasmus outgoing students - ISCED 6	30%	38%	41%	48%	30%	42%	N/A
U.C	Erasmus outgoing students - ISCED 6	83%	80%	83%	71%	59%	42%	N/A
U.A	Erasmus outgoing students - ISCED 7	66%	68%	77%	67%	64%	66%	N/A
U.B	Erasmus outgoing students - ISCED 7	70%	61%	58%	51%	64%	51%	N/A
U.C	Erasmus outgoing students - ISCED 7	16%	20%	17%	21%	37%	49%	N/A

Source: ETER data on Portuguese HEIs

At last, we will look at the relevance of student fees funding over the total current revenues. For this indicator, there is no disaggregated data between national and international students, so the ratios presented below correspond to the tuition fees of all students over total current revenues. This indicator allows us to understand the relevance of students' tuition fees for the financial sustainability of the institution and thus help to understand the relevance of economic rationales for internationalization. In this regard, the situation is similar across the 3 Universities: student fees have accounted between 15% and 18% for the total current revenues between 2011 and 2016.

Table VIII – ratio of student fees funding over total current revenues for University A, University B and University C

		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
U.A	Student fees funding / Total current revenues	N/A	17%	16%	16%	15%	15%	N/A
U.B	Student fees funding / Total current revenues	16%	18%	17%	16%	15%	17%	N/A
U.C	Student fees funding / Total current revenues	15%	18%	15%	15%	16%	16%	N/A

Source: ETER data on Portuguese HEIs

## 5.2 Strategies of Internationalization in the Three Universities

In this section we will discuss the internationalisation strategies of the 3 Universities based on the information gathered through the analysis of strategic documents available from each University and also from the interviews with the representatives linked to the internationalisation of each institution. The interviews were structured through a script covering the following topics: motivations for internationalisation; relevance/influence of the national and international context on the internationalisation strategy; definition of the internationalisation strategy; institutional plurality at the internationalisation level; sectoral

internationalisation strategies; effects of internationalisation; future challenges of internationalisation. The choice of these subjects seeks to encompass the various dimensions of internationalisation portrayed in the literature review. Furthermore, we seek to answer the research questions “why do Portuguese HEIs internationalize?”, “what are the main internationalization strategies used?”, “what are the key challenges and effects of internationalization?”

The questions inside each topic were addressed to institutional, technical and/or strategic planning representatives, within the availability of each institution. Having this plurality of actors is useful to understand the different perspectives at the various levels of internationalisation, i.e. at institutional, technical and strategic planning level.

For University A, we conducted three interviews: one directed to the current institutional representative of internationalisation, other to a former institutional representative and another to a strategic planning responsible in the area of internationalisation. As for Universities B and C, we interviewed the respective institutional representative in the area of internationalisation of each institution.

### **5.2.1 Motivations for the internationalisation of Portuguese HEIs**

On this topic, the questions focused on the main motivations of the institutions concerned, in particular the relevance of economic and management indicators. Several motivations seem to underlie the process of internationalization of Universities A, B and C. According to the interviewees, the main motivation are the academic and socio-cultural motivations, followed by economic and political motivations. On the other hand, motivations will depend on the focus of internationalization (whether it is mobility or the attraction of international students, etc.).

Analysing the most recent Strategic Plans available for each of the Universities, we find mainly academic, competitive and cultural motivations. The most recent Strategic Plan available from University A stated that internationalisation should contribute to strengthen relations with other countries and other regions, to make the University more competitive and international, to pedagogical innovation and integral development of students and, finally, to place the work of the academic community at the service of scientific, cultural and socio-economic development. In the case of University B, the main motivations seem to be

the institutional development and the development of the academic community (students, teachers and non-teaching staff). Internationalisation is a tool for the University to grow and learn through contact with other institutions (in some cases it will itself serve as a model for others). In the 2017-2021 Action Plan, it was stated that by 2020 University B should be "a centre of education, creation and enhancement of knowledge with great international attractiveness" and should promote economic, social and cultural development. The Strategic Plan 2017-2021 of University C also identifies academic, competitive and cultural motivations, among others.

All interviewees recognised the relevance of economic indicators such as national economic growth, the country's economic competitiveness through human capital and/or technological advantage and the financial attractiveness associated with internationalisation activities. At University B, although important, economic motivations do not appear at the top of the reasons for internationalization. At Universities A and C, the positive economic impact of attracting international students was particularly highlighted. This has to do with the financing international students provide to Universities, among other advantages. In addition, the recruitment of international degree students has made up for the decrease in national enrolments, which is associated with the demographic decline. An institutional leader at University C stressed that the economic impact of international mobility students goes beyond HEIs:

"Erasmus students bring economic dynamism to the cities that host them."

In all 3 institutions, one gets the impression that the economic indicators will be reflected differently in each of the University Missions. Through Education, cities will benefit from further development. On the other hand, R&D programmes will bring funding and reputation to the institutions.

In Universities A, B and C, management indicators such as positioning in the global rankings of HEIs and the development of a marketing strategy and reputation of the institution are seen as secondary reasons for internationalisation. The strategy of both Universities A and B does not aim to have a good position in the rankings, however, this may be a consequence of the work developed by the institutions. In fact, the 2018 University A Activity Report and the 2017-2021 University B Action Plan mention each institution's relevant position in the rankings. University C seems to place less weight on its position in the rankings, possibly due

to its smaller dimension. However, University C 2018 Activity Report mentioned the presence in the international rankings as a relevant issue.

In the 3 institutions there is the concern to develop a marketing and reputation strategy for the University, which will strengthen the institution's presence in the market and increase its attractiveness. On this topic, a representative of University B mentioned that the most intentional marketing strategy is reflected at international fairs. Nevertheless, it was also mentioned that the best marketing comes from the Alumni network, i.e., when former students transmit good references to others.

### **5.2.2 Influence of the national and international context on the internationalisation of Portuguese HEIs**

In this part, we searched to understand the influence of the national and international context (namely the European context) on the process of internationalisation. Respondents were also asked about the possible paradigm shift from cooperation to competition between institutions in the context of internalisation.

The 3 Universities identified that the main constraints in the process of internationalisation occur at national level. The main limitations are legal rigidity, lack of funding (both in Education and R&D), competitive funding irregularities and low teachers' salaries. At the legal level, interviewees at Universities A and C mentioned the limitations for defining joint degrees between institutions. Portuguese legislation does not recognize the figure of double degrees, unlike other countries. However, in the case of University B, it was argued that national legislation has been following the trends.

In University A, the complexity associated with security issues, visas and residence permits is an obstacle as well, affecting students from countries outside the EU the most. Another setback mentioned is that there is no national strategy to promote the attraction of students of excellence. This happens mainly at PhD level, as there is not much support if foreign students need to bring their family with them.

As for the favourable characteristics of the Portuguese context, University A mentioned initiatives within the scope of the "Study & Research in Portugal" programme. A respondent from University C mentioned advantages such as the dispersion of the higher education

system throughout the territory and the recognition of the Portuguese quality system were. Moreover, the country's mild climate, the Portuguese language and the national hospitality "fame" are factors that drive the internationalisation process.

As regards the international context, the Universities highlighted the following elements favourable to the internationalisation process: mobility programmes within and outside the European context (mainly the Erasmus+ project), Horizon 2020 projects and initiatives for participation in university networks (more recently the inter-university alliances in Europe).

Erasmus programme was very much highlighted by a respondent at University B since it shaped the way EU countries (including Portugal) view mobility. Furthermore, Erasmus is a good way to start the process of mutual knowledge between two partner institutions. An institutional responsible of University C also added that the international context promotes the "search for study experiences at an international level", which benefits Portuguese HEIs.

As for the possible paradigm shift from cooperation to competition between institutions, the 3 Universities stressed the great importance of cooperation between institutions. In all 3 cases, it appears that competition only arises as a consequence of promoting the institution itself and due to inherent dynamism of Education and R&D activities. In addition, it was unanimously agreed that internationalization should benefit all participants as well as bring a relevant impact on the development of institutions and societies.

In University A cooperation has been an effective means of affirming and recognizing the institution. The institution enrolled in a recent initiative by the European Commission aimed at building inter-university alliances in Europe. Institutional staff at University A described the relevance of such project:

“The recent initiative to build inter-university alliances in Europe (...) is an example of the importance of collaboration between institutions to deepen the process of internationalisation and build sustained (and sustainable) models of European universities of the future.”

University C also presented examples of cooperation with other institutions, such as a project with two Universities in the North of Portugal and three in Galicia to promote Master's and Doctorate degrees under an association regime. An institutional leader of the University B mentioned that Portugal will always benefit more through cooperation given its small dimension. The participants also added that the institutions by them represented also

cooperate with less developed institutions in order to support their development and institutional capacity building.

### **5.2.3 Strategy of the internationalisation process**

In this section, the discussion focused on how the internationalisation strategy emerged and evolved, on the existence of horizontal and/or vertical integration in the internationalisation strategy and in which countries the institutions were more focused within the internationalisation strategy.

The development of an internationalization strategy was generally regarded as a time-consuming process and as being an increasingly privileged topic in the strategic plan of the Universities over time. In addition, one gets the impression that this has not only been a centralised process in the Rector's teams and International Relations Services, but there was also individual initiatives by HEIs professionals. The strategic objectives in the 3 Universities are, essentially, active participation in international knowledge networks; increasing international students and mobility flows; promoting partnerships and projects with partner Universities.

In the case of University A, internationalization started to be formally integrated in the strategic goals in 2006 and, from then on, it took a central role in several dimensions of the institution. Since then, University A has revealed a strong dynamism in the Erasmus+ programme and the participation in the Horizon 2020 projects has provided achievements in the area of R&D (raising research projects and other support). Moreover, the mobility of students, researchers, teachers and technicians has grown steadily as well as the recruitment of foreign students. Even though this process was centralised in the International Relations Services, it had several origins beyond that, namely individual contacts made by teachers. University A strategy has been outlined by the various Rectors and Vice-Rectors of the area, taking into account the interest of the teachers and the areas of excellence of the institution. An interview respondent mentioned the funding cuts from the State budget felt at the time of the 2008 crisis, which had a negative impact on mobility and international cooperation actions. On the other hand, this constraint forced institution's employees to be creative and to resort to other types of financial support, namely through applications to European funding management programmes. At University A, these were the highlighted goals in the

axis of internationalization, within the current Strategic Plan (concerning 2016-2020): strengthening the internationalization of Education and Training; promoting Research for Excellence; promoting partnerships and access to international knowledge networks; strengthening fundraising and efficiency of R&D activities.

In the 2009-2013 Action Program of University B, internationalization was not part of the strategic vectors, but was still allocated to strategic challenges. In the 2013-2017 Program of Action, internationalization became a programmatic vector within the context of the objectives and strategy of the University. Based on the 2017-2021 Action Plan, the strategic priorities associated with each Mission axe (Education, R&D and Interaction with Society) are articulated transversally with internationalization. Within the programmatic objectives of internationalization of the Plan of Action currently in force, it is worth mentioning the strengthening of B University's participation in international organizations of relevant universities, the promotion of strategic partnerships to train partners from developing countries, increase mobility flows, increase the number of degree students and strengthen internationalization at home. An institutional leader at University B added that internationalization has changed a lot in recent years:

“If before 90% of internationalisation was through mobility, today there are many other internationalisation initiatives, such as joint degrees.”

Moving on to University C, the definition of a strategy for the internationalization process and its relevance in the current Strategic Plan (2017-2021) came essentially from the Rector and his Team. However, there have been several other individual contributions and initiatives through the involvement of teachers in networks and the exchange of contacts with other foreign institutions. In Education, the majority of internationalisation initiatives come from those responsible for internationalisation itself. In R&D, most of the internationalisation initiatives come from the research units. In the Strategic Plan 2011-2014 internationalization was a topic of strategic definition, however, there was no clearly defined strategic axis and/or solid strategy. The Strategic Plan 2013-2017 already categorizes internationalization as a strategic goal and in the Plan currently in force (2017-2021) internationalization is defined as one of the strategic axes. According to the latter plan, the main focuses of internationalization are "building the capacity of structures and human resources, strengthening involvement in international networks and consortia, increasing joint programs and projects, attracting foreign students, teachers and researchers, and increasing exchanges and mobility". The

Strategic Plan 2017-2021 of University C defines that the 2nd and 3rd cycle programs in collaboration with Universities from other countries should double in 2021 compared to the reference value (10%) and the percentage of foreign students enrolled to obtain a degree should triple by the same year (from 2% to 6%).

Including a horizontal and/or vertical integration in the internationalization strategy allows a harmonious functioning between the different services of the institution and makes it possible to take advantage of the contribution of the different sectors of the University. The 3 institutions confirmed the relevance of horizontal and/or vertical integration in the internationalization strategy and the interviewees presented examples that prove its practical implementation.

In the case of University A, faculties and scientific areas have embraced the process of internationalization at different paces and with different priorities. The institution has sought to combine both horizontal and vertical integration in the strategy of internationalization without having hierarchical enforcement. This takes into account faculties and research centres' administrative, scientific and pedagogical autonomy, which usually oppose to more structured integration processes. An institutional leader at University A further stated:

“The choice has been shared institutional policy, which has been slower, but has provides  
to be sufficiently effective.”

A good example was the recent project to build an inter-university alliances in Europe, which has been involving many Organic Units (both at University A and at EU level).

University B has always had a model of sharing when it comes to horizontal integration. Therefore, it is possible to ally different study plans (complement with other curricular units) or even share degrees. Good examples were European Master programs in technological and legal areas that involved several Schools across the University.

University C developed some projects that put into practice the horizontal and/or vertical integration in the internationalization strategy, such as a seminar of reflection promoted annually on internationalization, which has the contribution of teachers, students and the different services (academic services, social action, etc.); another example is a project linked to the Sustainable Development Objectives of Agenda 2030, which mobilizes teachers in the area of environment, economy and sociology.



When it comes to the regions for which internationalization is more focused on, the 3 institutions acknowledged that the presence of students from the CPLP is noticeable. The reasons behind this phenomenon have to do with the common language and the partial sharing of history and culture. Recently, institutions have sought to broaden the focus of internationalisation to other geographical regions such as Asia and Latin America (apart from Brazil).

In University A, from 2014, the institution considered that the CPLP should be the focus for international student recruitment. This was promoted through a 50% reduction in tuition fees for students coming from these countries. The strategic goal "to strengthen the internationalization of Education and Training" in the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 detailed the implementation of training programs specifically aimed at CPLP students and the strengthening of the support structure for them. Until about two decades ago there was another service besides the International Relations Service (the Cooperation Service with Portuguese-speaking countries and Latin America) focused on these regions. More recently, there has been an attempt to diversify the origin of international students. For instance, the Asian market (especially China and India) is a new focus region.

University B has a long relationship with many institutions from CPLP countries. The relationships have mostly focused on helping and promoting the institutional capacity building of the CPLP institutions. However, when the University seeks strategic partners, it looks for the best ones who can bring advantages to the Schools. In terms of geographical areas, University B wants to keep investing in the European space. In South America, the institution establishes privileged relationships with top universities in Brazil. However, there are also relationships in terms of institutional capacity building with some Brazilian institutions. Recently, there have been attempts to focus on Asia and the Middle East. The focus on CPLP students is also more visible in the 1<sup>st</sup> study cycle and in integrated Master's degree since these are taught in Portuguese. In contrast, the focus for Master and Doctoral Degrees covers all countries since they are taught in English and/or the mentor knows English.

University C portrays a similar scenario to the previous institution: there is also an important weight of CPLP students. In addition, Brazilian students have a greater economic capacity. As there is no broad offer of scholarships, Brazilian students end up having more possibilities to study at C University than students from other CPLP countries. Also similar to other

institutions, there has been a concern to expand the focus countries/regions, especially to countries in Latin America (beyond Brazil) and Asia (especially China). The 2019 Activities Report presented the main nationalities of foreign students during that year: South Africa, Angola, Austria, Cape Verde, China, Spain, France, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Italy and Mozambique.

#### **5.2.4 Institutional plurality in the internationalization process**

Within the institutional plurality in the internationalisation process, the questions addressed the complexity of establishing a common strategy for the whole University and the convergence or divergence of different groups (students, teachers, researchers, etc.). Although complex, it seems possible to design a common institutional strategy that adapts to the needs of the Faculties and the interests of the different stakeholders.

At University A, it has been possible to articulate Schools' specificities and frame them in a global strategy. Indeed, Faculties are interested in defining an institutional strategy, despite the complexity of the process. Given the considerable size of University A, respondents stated that different approaches to internationalisation presented by different groups are perfectly expected and reasonable. While students mirror mobility as one of the fundamental tools for their internationalisation, teachers usually prioritize research. On the other hand, non-teaching staff has increasingly valued mobility experiences under the Erasmus programme.

At University B, internationalization initiatives come from both the Rectorate and the Schools. However, while the Rectorate always thinks of the University as a whole, each School thinks of itself individually. Thus, the specificities of each School should be respected, combining what is the institutional strategy with the strategy of each of the Schools. An institutional representative explained that there are even some initiatives that start from a particular School and then become institutional initiatives. Therefore, there should be a constant dialogue and proximity between the Rector's Office and the Schools. When it comes to the convergence or divergence of different groups, the internationalization strategy is defined for all groups within the university community. However, the way that strategy is put into practice is totally different. In case of students, it has more to do with mobility; teachers and

researchers become more internationalized through their research; non-teaching staff benefits mostly from special international events (e.g. international week at the University).

As opposed to Universities A and B, University C is relatively small, having only 5 Schools. For this reason, the internationalization strategy is essentially based on an overall institutional strategy. Nevertheless, certain aspects must be discussed with the Faculties, such as the promotion of certain courses identified as more attractive in the international market. With regard to reconciling the interests of different groups, there is a logic of cooperation to create synergies between the students, teachers and non-academic staff.

### **5.2.5 Sector strategies in the internationalization process**

On this topic, interviewees were questioned about the initiatives and instruments that have been developed to achieve the strategic objectives. Another questions also sought to understand how "abroad" and "at home" internationalisation are present in the institutions' strategy. The main sectoral strategies implemented by the 3 institutions have been the strengthening of participation in international university networks; involvement in international projects and mobility programmes; and participation in international promotion fairs. Internationalization "at home" is reflected through some other initiatives as well.

In University A, the main and most recent actions have been participating in European Universities' networks (last year), Erasmus+ projects (all types), Horizon 2020 projects and developing agreements with foreign HEIs. In fact, European funding under mobility programmes has been identified as absolutely crucial by a technical officer from International Relations Services. Teaching in English is also important, although it requires an effort from teachers who often end up schooling in two languages (English and Portuguese) due to the poor knowledge of English by students of the CPLP. Within the strategic goals 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, it was mentioned the need to strengthen English language skills of teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as to "strengthen the integrated offer of curricular units in foreign languages, creating, whenever justified, classes in Portuguese and English in the same curricular units to respond simultaneously to the demands of CPLP students and Anglophones". On the other hand, English is more widespread in R&D. Also concerning R&D, the main sector strategies are knowledge exchange, joint publication of scientific papers and stays in other research units.

Regarding the attraction of foreign students, the 2018 Activities and Accounts Report states, among other reasons, that the promotion of University A was guaranteed through its presence in important international student recruitment fairs (particularly in Brazil) and in conferences, both nationally and internationally. Besides that, there were efforts to create a competitive system of scholarships for national and international students in articulation with other institutions (including companies). In fact, the tuition fees at University A for foreign students, even if higher than those applied to national students, are lower than the ones charged by several European institutions. A technical responsible mentioned the importance of welcoming foreign students and having quality institutional services available, whether they are international relations services, academic services, social action services, etc.

There are also efforts to implement internationalization measures "at home", which are contained in a specific document entitled "Internationalization at Home" and in a Peer Mentoring Programme. Mobility also plays an important role, as it gives students who are unable to undertake outgoing mobility the opportunity to share experiences inside and outside the classroom with incoming students.

Moving on to University B, the 2017-2021 Action Plan foresees measures of operationalization, execution times and indicators of achievement for each of the programmatic goals within the scope of internationalization. The reinforcement of the participation of University B in international organizations of relevant universities will be measured through the active participation in initiatives promoted by international networks/organizations of universities to which University B belongs. In terms of capacity building of partner institutions in developing countries, new bilateral strategic partnerships should be celebrated. The increased attractiveness of the University among the international community is linked to the development of the external communication strategy about the institution, to the educational offer and research activity; and to the network of Alumni of different nationalities and outgoing students. The Alumni network can also help in the promotion of international mobility.

As for attracting foreign students, the Action Plan currently in force foresees the participation of B University in international education and training fairs (2 per year); the promotion of "Open Weekend" and "Summer on Campus" initiatives with foreign educational institutions to attract pre-university students of different nationalities; promotion of events with the participation of Alumni of different nationalities, in their countries of

origin (1 per year); development of the University B Ambassadors program from the Alumni network of different nationalities and outgoing students.

Reinforce internationalization "at home" was also highlighted by an institutional representative. At University B, internationalization is not restricted to the internationalization of the curriculum (which is difficult to implement, since it involves the need for accreditations and changes in study plans). Besides that, initiatives of internationalization are developed at home (up to 2 per year), such as the celebrations of the 30th anniversary of the Erasmus program and the internationalization week for non-teaching staff.

As for University C, the institution does not have a significant offer of training in English. However, there are courses in Portuguese on a yearly basis for students who wish to apply for higher education. The institution is also integrated in network projects and university associations, participates in international fairs, is present in digital marketing platforms in order to promote the educational offer and seeks a strong presence in the Erasmus programme. As far as R&D is concerned, research units usually lead internationalisation initiatives. In the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, one of the measures to internationalize Education and R&D is the attraction of invited teachers and researchers using the support mechanisms of FCT, Fulbright, Marie Curie and others.

As examples of internationalization initiatives "at home", there are lecture cycles held on online platforms (especially at Master's and PhD levels) that have guests from various parts of the world: students have the opportunity to attend international lecturers from different universities and, on the other hand, professors from University C can also teach foreign students.

In addition to the typical initiatives such as the participation in international fairs and the educational offer promotion in digital channels, University C relies on other differentiation factors with the aim of attracting foreign students. The institution promotes itself as an eco-university concerned with sustainable development issues and with a very green campus. The promotion of the surrounding area/region of the University and the distinctive offer in some areas, such as agricultural sciences, the link with wine and environment issues are added.

### **5.2.6 Effects of the internationalisation process**

There is a general agreement that the effects of internationalisation are felt in both Education and R&D. In University A, internationalization brought diversity and multiculturalism, characteristics that became more regular and consolidated with the increased presence of degree students (and not only mobility students). There was also an improvement of methodologies and procedures, as a result of contact with students, teaching and non-teaching staff from other cultures and contexts. Thus, academic horizons were broadened and society itself became more cosmopolitan.

At University B, it was mentioned that there are individual effects, namely the personal and educational/professional growth that comes from the experience of internationalization, as well as more tolerance and openness to the world. At the institutional level, a certain parallelism can be established, as the institution evolves through interaction with national and international partners.

In University C, in the scope of teaching internationalization shows its effects on mobility projects and incoming foreign students. At the level of R&D, the main effects are mirrored in the involvement in networks, in European projects, Horizon 2020 projects, etc. In addition, the international spirit felt within the institution has become more noticeable. Currently, about 40 to 50 different nationalities coexist within the campus.

### **5.2.7 Priorities, constraints and future challenges in the internationalisation process**

At this point, interviewees were asked about the priorities, challenges and constraints of internationalisation. In University A, the main priorities are the attraction of international degree students and the increase of applications to international projects (it should be noted that the new internationalization strategy is currently under discussion within the new Strategic Plan revision). Funding and bureaucratic issues are regarded as relevant constraints. The need to increase classes taught in English is a challenge, as well as the adoption of teaching practices more focused on the acquisition of skills and the adaptation of teaching content to diverse interests. In fact, teachers adapting to the new teaching paradigms and to teaching in English is an internal constraint. The main external constraints are the low

attractiveness of some areas and the absence of some courses (especially in the humanities and social sciences areas).

Regarding University B, the main priority is to increasingly integrate the axes of internationalization; establish/strengthen strategic relationships with partners; attract better students; place the institution on a level of greater international recognition (for the quality of teaching, R&D and the interaction of society). Funding is seen as a frequent constraint. On the other hand, the Portuguese language, instead of being a frequent constraint, is often seen as an enormous asset for foreign students (especially for Chinese students, who may benefit from higher prestige in the labour market).

At University C the main priorities include involvement in international networks and the development of more training offers with other universities, whether double degrees or degrees in association; in the area of R&D, the priority is international research projects. The main internal constraints presented were the low number of employees in the International Relations Office and the need for articulation within the institution regarding the internationalization strategy and respective initiatives (between the Rectorate, the Schools and the services). With regard to external constraints, an institutional representative reinforced the need for a better structured and financed national policy (at governmental level) for the promotion of Higher Education and Research. It would also be important to strengthen the scholarships offer for foreign students (in particular, students from the CPLP).

The recent Covid-19 pandemic created constraints (internal and external) on all these Universities, requiring various adaptation efforts. It is certain that the pandemic will leave a negative mark on the process of internationalization of HEIs, however, it is not known how long this impact will last.

## 6. Conclusions

Internationalisation has become one of the main topics in higher education as well as a priority for HEIs. In Portugal, internationalisation has become increasingly important during the last 30 years. In addition to globalisation, the end of the dictatorial regime and the integration of Portugal into the EU boosted the development of the Portuguese HE system and created favourable conditions for the internationalisation of Universities.

In this dissertation we aimed to understand what motivates the internationalisation of Portuguese Universities and how this process is planned and implemented. We also discussed the effects of internationalization and challenges that institutions face along the way. In order to answer these questions, we adopted a qualitative approach through documentary analysis and structured interviews. The interviews were addressed to decision-makers on the internationalization process of three Portuguese HEIs. In spite of the heterogeneity in the dimension, level of centralisation and experience of internationalisation among the selected institutions, we find similar results regarding the motivations, strategies and challenges of the Universities.

According to the universities we have analysed, it seems that Portuguese HEIs' motivations for internationalisation are essentially academic and socio-cultural. First and foremost, internationalisation is seen as an opportunity for knowledge sharing and continuous improvement, for developing cooperation possibilities and for promoting multicultural integration. Economic and management motivations appear in the background, although they are important for the sustainability of institutions and economic prosperity. The recruitment of international students has helped to balance the consequences of demographic decline and alleviated the economic consequences of the 2008 crisis, thus enhancing financial stability for Universities. In addition, we can see an economic multiplier effect extending the benefits of internationalisation to the geographical areas close to the HEIs. The positioning in the rankings and reputation of the institution are seen as a consequence of the internationalization process, i.e. as the reflection of the work developed by the University. Portuguese HEIs argue that internationalisation should be seen from the perspective of mutual collaboration and that cooperation has been an effective means for institutional affirmation and international recognition. Hence, there doesn't seem to be a growing trend of competition between institutions.



Internationalisation has been gaining prominence in the strategic planning of Portuguese HEIs. In fact, based on the 3 case studies, Universities are committed in defining a solid internationalisation strategy to achieve their strategic goals. This process has been led mainly by the Rector's teams. However, individual initiatives are also very useful, especially for networking. It seems that the smaller the institutional dimension, the more centralised the internationalisation strategy will be in the Rector's teams.

Outlining an institutional internationalization strategy that embraces institutional plurality is challenging. It becomes even more complex the greater the dimension of the institution. Nevertheless, there seems to be a general concern to align the Faculties' specific interests with the institutional strategy. As for the heterogeneity of interests between the different groups of the university community, the three universities under study argued that internationalisation can and should be extended to teachers, students and non-academic staff, adapting the operationalisation of the institutional strategy to each case.

The marketing and reputational strategy of Portuguese HEIs seems to rely very much on the participation in international students' fairs. These are considered to be a great opportunity for attracting foreign students. Besides that, Universities make themselves known through digital platforms and use the Alumni network to promote the institution (as well as to encourage international mobility). One gets the impression that smaller institutions will take advantage of their particularities to stand out on the international market. Differentiation factors may include, for instance, specialised course cycles in certain knowledge areas.

According to our interviewees, it seems that Portuguese universities are also concerned with horizontal and vertical integration in the definition and implementation of the internationalisation strategy. However, in practice, it seems that horizontal integration is easier to achieve through projects that mobilise interdisciplinary collaboration.

The main instruments to implement the internationalisation strategy are part of the "internationalisation abroad" approach and are aligned with what was portrayed in the Portuguese case framework. The initiatives include participation in international university networks; involvement in international projects and mobility programmes; attracting foreign students. If we are to extrapolate from our case-studies, Portuguese HEIs have been directing their efforts to attract students from Europe and from Portuguese-speaking Countries. In regards to the CPLP, Universities have taken advantage of language, historical and cultural

proximity. On the other hand, since Portugal's integration into the EU in 1986, Portuguese HEIs have benefited from mobility incentives in the European area. More recently, Portuguese Universities have been seeking to establish international cooperation beyond the sphere of European Union and beyond the CPLP countries. Portuguese HEIs have also invested in English language teaching as a result of globalisation and the intention to expand internationalisation markets. There is still a long way to go on this topic, as teaching in English requires efforts by teachers who sometimes have to teach in both languages, given the poor knowledge of English by CPLP students.

Within the national context, Portuguese HEIs face legal rigidity and insufficient funding. This is visible through legal restrictions, such as the impossibility of double degrees or degrees in association, and through bureaucratic complexities. As for positive catalysts, changes that took place in 2014 (the National Strategy and the Statute of the International Student), which had a significant positive impact on the attraction of international students, as shown by the data available. The drivers and setbacks of the internationalisation process at national level were also corroborated by the representatives of the Universities. As pointed out by the literature, at the international level, the European context stands out positively through initiatives such as the Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 projects and university alliances. The data also reflect the engagement in the Erasmus mobility programme, both at national level and in each of the universities under study.

The effects of the internationalization have been felt both in Education and R&D, at individual, societal and institutional levels. At the individual level, internationalization had an impact on personal/professional growth and developed greater tolerance in individuals. On the other hand, society has become more cosmopolitan and open. At the institutional level, internationalization has brought diversity and multiculturalism, new teaching and research practices and the consequent development of national and international standards.

The priorities that stand out in the internationalisation strategy of the Portuguese HEIs are the participation in international knowledge networks, partnerships and projects, the reinforcement of mobility flows and, more recently, the attraction of foreign degree students. In fact, in addition to the ratio of students in credit mobility in Portuguese HEIs having increased in the last decade, there was an exponential increase in the number of students enrolled in degree mobility between the academic years 2015/16 and 2019/20.

The majority of results found on the process of internationalisation of Portuguese HEIs are in line with the literature. However, some findings introduce nuances in what is often presented in the literature on the topic. This is the case of the paradigm between cooperation and competition of HEIs, with the institutional discourse in Portuguese HEIs favouring cooperation as an approach to internationalisation. With regard to the reasons for internationalization, it also seems that economic and management motivations are not presented as the main rationales in the internationalization process of Portuguese HEIs, and the institutional discourse tends to emphasise academic and cultural rationales instead.

In this regard, we can point out specificities of HEIs that help us to understand such conclusions. Universities are organisations that, unlike companies, are not oriented to profit creation (which does not invalidate the need to be financially sustainable). On the other hand, although HEIs compete on the international market with Universities from other countries, it takes place in a different record of competitiveness between companies whose aim is to generate economic profits. For these reasons, internationalisation may be mainly motivated by motivations other than economic ones and the context of cooperation can be more attractive to Portuguese HEIs. This may be reinforced by the fact that the three universities studied were all public universities, which may influence their approach to internationalisation.

It's also noteworthy that Universities' decision-making structure is more fragmented and decentralized when compared to, for instance, corporations and even some non-profit organizations. In fact, IES break down into different Schools or Faculties and encompass many institutional services (e.g. academic services, international relations services, etc.). Consequently, Universities are organisations with complex structures and multiple activities, as well as with various actors in the decision-making process whose interests may differ from each other. Hence, planning and operating a clear and consistent strategy is very challenging.

In terms of practical implications, it's visible that the national context still imposes some legal and financing constraints on the internationalisation process of Portuguese HEIs. On the other hand, Portuguese HEIs should keep adopting a proactive attitude towards internationalisation, seeking to reach other countries and fostering the participation in international networks. The promotion of differentiating characteristics, such as the Portuguese language, and the use of alternative instruments, such as the feedback from the Alumni network to other students, are also important for Portuguese HEIs to prosper in the

international market against countries with more experience and tradition in internationalisation.

In carrying out this study, we were confronted with practical and methodological limitations. In regards to practical limitations, we were limited by the impossibility of interviewing all those involved in the decision process of the internationalisation of the Portuguese HEIs for the 3 case studies, either due to time constraints or unavailability of some of the respondents. The current pandemic situation in covid-19 has also created some obstacles and challenges to the interview process. When it comes to methodological limitations, despite the advantages demonstrated in the use of qualitative methodology for this research, the restriction of the sample to 3 study cases ends up being a limiting factor in the extrapolation of conclusions for Portuguese HEIs. In fact, case studies allow us to deepen and detail the results, but they also restrict the possibilities of greater representativeness of the sample. On the other hand, the empirical analysis presents only the vision of institutional leadership. Although institutional representatives are important decision-makers in the process of internationalisation of Portuguese HEIs, the views of other internal stakeholders (e.g., School's Deans, leaders of scientific units, program directors) would be valuable as well. Thus, in the future, it would be interesting to deepen and complete this study, extending the case studies to other Portuguese Universities, and also seeking to collect the testimony of other stakeholders.

Despite those limitations, we think that the results presented in this research provide interesting and relevant elements for the study of internationalisation in the Portuguese higher education sector. Although some aspects may be specific to each institution, we think that having covered 3 out of the 14 public universities provides a good overview of the way Portuguese universities approach internationalisation. Moreover, this study has also underlined some relevant specificities of the definition and implementation of internationalisation in the important and peculiar sector of higher education.

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