

THE 10th ECSPM SYMPOSIUM 19-20 March 2026

Hosted by the Saarland Language Council & HTW SAAR University of Applied Sciences
(Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft des Saarlandes)

INTERNATIONALISATION OF HE, MULTILINGUALISM AND TRANSLATION

Concept note

In the last 25 years, the international dimension of higher education (HE) has become progressively more essential on the agenda of national governments, universities, and accreditation agencies in the EU and beyond. However, it has also attracted significant criticism from scholars, educators, and policymakers who focus on the ethical, cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic implications of how internationalisation is practiced. These reactions are not a consequence of the aforementioned criticism.

Skepticism about the internationalisation is the result of new nationalist politics, based on nativist, populist and authoritarian ideologies which favour isolationism and protectionism in general and universities in particular. Nationalist trends in HE would result in calling to a halt access to globally-oriented education for students and faculty, termination of cross-border partnerships, curriculum localisation, the exclusive use of the official/national languages, lack of diversity of perspectives, and the restriction of equity-diversity-inclusion (EDI) schemes. Such policies involve limitation or constraint of university autonomy which can hinder academic freedom, innovation, and the ability to respond to societal needs. By restraining university autonomy academic freedom, innovation, and the ability to adapt to societal needs are hindered. When HE autonomy is reduced, universities may struggle to attract talent, pursue research effectively, and maintain high-quality teaching.

In view of the above, the **first topic** to be discussed during this symposium has to do with internationalisation in HE being understood not as a threat but as a gateway to new possibilities for universities which are facing serious challenges. One basic question we are raising is “How can universities be globally engaged fighting isolationism, polarisation and short-sighted thinking of populist regimes, while also respecting linguistic and cultural differences, diverse ways of thinking and viewing the world, as well as encouraging varied practices?”

The **second topic** to be considered has to do with translation of academic knowledge, given that the internationalisation of universities is deeply intertwined with it. The translation of academic texts is essential for inclusive learning in HE, implementing institutional internationalisation policies. Hence, the first question we would like to raise has to do with the challenges of adapting knowledge, ideas, and perspectives across cultures and contexts, of transferring and sharing knowledge and research findings across borders, necessitating the translation of scientific constructs and research methodologies. The second question is related to automated systems of translation and especially those leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. What are the risks of excessive reliance on such tools without proper refinement and review of translations?