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The impact of international projects and fundraising on university strategic plans for internationalization

How to make Erasmus plus Capacity building action a useful tool to match universities needs and priorities

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Why strategic plans for internationalisation matter?

“Strategic planning is the process an institution follows to realize its vision of its ideal future state. It’s a roadmap for getting there. Your vision becomes a reality through the process that defines specific goals, needs and actions. It helps you to structure and contextualize information leading to important decisions”

Cascade team 2022, 5 Steps to Highly Effective Strategic Planning In Higher Education, available online



Why strategic plans for internationalisation matter?

- Despite universities are extremely different in the various regions of the world, it is very likely that most of them include internationalisation as a pillar of their own institutional mission and value.
- Internationalisation is associated to a vast array of opportunities, requests, contacts and activities whose governance and management may be confusing.
- Every day an International relation office may receive internal and external requests for:
 - signing agreements
 - obtaining funding for mobilities
 - opportunities for calls or tenders
 - hosting delegations
 - meeting any sort of potential stakeholders



Why strategic plans for internationalisation matter?

To set up a roadmap and a plan is extremely useful in order to take decisions, to make choices, to classify the request according to a predefined priority order and also to explain internally why some actions are possible and others no



Why strategic plans for internationalisation matter?

Other reasons:

- To recognize the need of an internal shift from marginal activities at the periphery to integrated and embedded approaches led from the centre;
- to clarify the institution's objectives for internationalisation and articulate how internationalisation is expected to enhance the institution's main mission;
- to select the most appropriate modes and forms of internationalisation for the institution;
- to involve key stakeholders in developing the internationalisation approach to gain valuable insights about the best approach;

A plan matters for moving from a state where “we carry out activities associated to internationalisation” to a situation where these activities are part of a common goal, are inter-connected and spread all over the institution



Risks for strategic plans for internationalisation

- Standardization. Same plans are not suitable for all the environments;
- International rankings: insist only on few indicators of internationalisation.
Better Sustainable Development Goals;
- Lack of experience in strategic thinking and planning;
- Definition of objectives and actions that go beyond the current capacity of the institution;
- Underestimation of the need of resources (not only financial);
- Lack of involvement of the university community;
- Lack of autonomy in carrying out actions described in the plans;
- Institutional vulnerability and turnover.



Main steps for strategic plan for internationalisation

1. Where are we now?

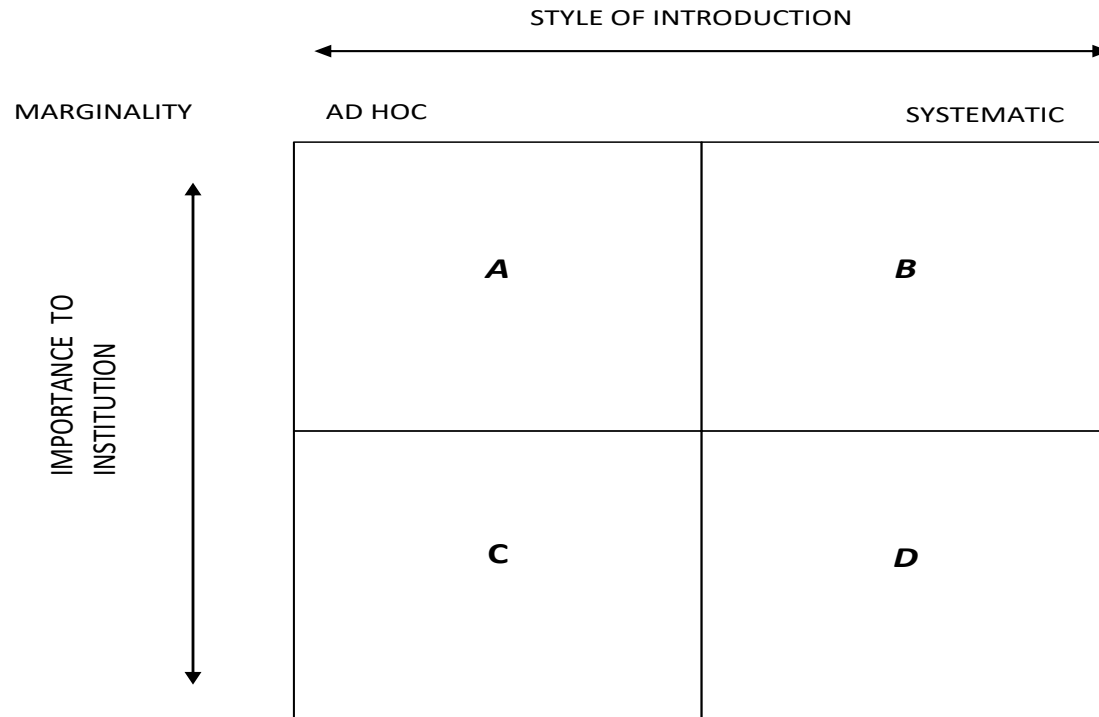
2. Where do we want to go or we could go?

3. How do we get there?



Main tools adopted

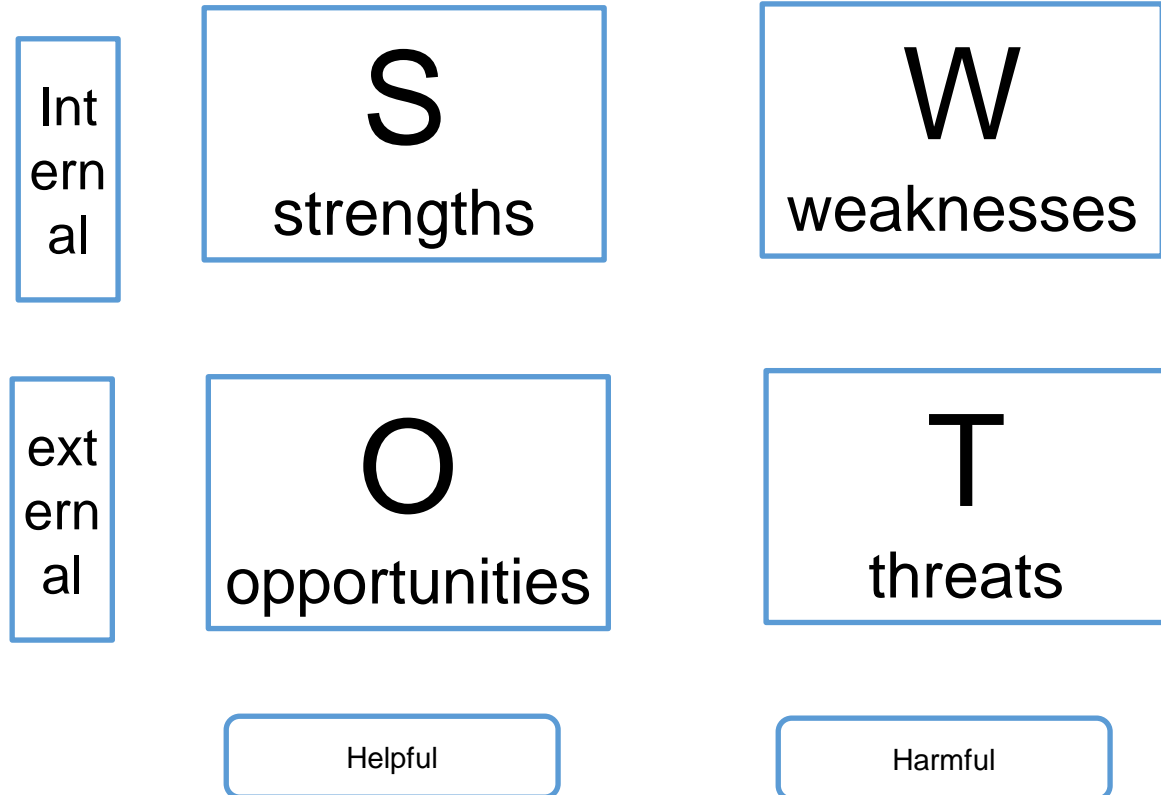
Level of Institutionalization and approaches to internationalization of universities





Main tools adopted

SWOT analysis





Main tools adopted

Planning process for internationalisation





To conclude

The essence of a strategy is differentiation

- Universities all over the world do not face similar environments and internationalisation requires each institution to find its own place in the global educational arena.
- This is not necessarily to compete but to play a significant role and offer services and unique opportunities of collaboration that are the “core” of each internationalisation strategy.
- Strategic plans for internationalisation need to embed differences and peculiarities and valorize them.
- International collaboration does not necessarily imply to work with institutions with similar standards and objectives but also to look for complementarity and for original approaches.





To conclude

Internationalisation of universities is part of internationalisation of the local territory

- A plan should incorporate the needs and the opportunities offered also by the regional business community, the local public authorities and the local community expressed by NGOs, agencies and associations.
- They may become a competitive advantage in terms of attractiveness and support the university in consolidate international strategy and partnerships



Final outcomes

- A one-week training programme was delivered in Bologna by mid May 2022
- 9 preliminary plans delivered by July 15th, 2022 adopting a common framework discussed during the training week in Bologna
- Review by colleagues of University of Bologna
- 5 final plans delivered by November 30th, 2022
- Handbook to support the preparation of strategic plan for internationalisation