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Challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic to higher education institutions' governance of international student mobility

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Research Context

Pandemic Immobility: The Impact of the Covid-19 Lockdown on International Students in Portugal

Spring, 2020

Higher education institutions' governance of international student mobility

Autumn, 2020

The impact of the pandemic on staff members and universities' routines in Portugal

Measures taken by university staff to safeguard their institutions and maintain the integrity of educational courses



Portugal on the international student mobility map

Emergent destination

- Only in 2014 were structured policies developed towards international students
- Fast growth of in numbers of international students in the country
- Main nationalities: former African colonies and Brazil
- Increasing popularity among Erasmus students



Student mobility to Portugal during the Pandemic

The number of international students enrolled for full degree programmes continued to grow

Erasmus mobilities remained in place

Universities adopted hybrid classes format

Methodology

Interviews with nine universities' representatives responsible for International student mobility from across the country, including one of the islands

Concerns in relation to governance of student mobility during the pandemic, including the need to balance financial imperatives, international students' well-being and public health





Universities' governance overview

Coorporate model of governance

International students as a revenue stream

Multi-actor governance

State, EU, Director board

Multi-agenda

Financial and pedagogical

Main findings (I)

Lack of a uniform response

Difference in recognition of vulnerability among international students

Shared concerns

Students' emotional well-being and financial situations

Work overload

Adapt or change in universities' routines regarding international students to ensure students' basic needs were met

Dichotomy about new recruitment of new students

Cooperate and ethical principles



Main Findings (II)

Ambiguity regarding virtual mobility

As a learning process

A form of intercultural exchange

Expansion of the socio-demographic scope of the student body

Environmental sustainability

Conclusions

Complexity of delivering pastoral care - housing, finance, psychological support, dealing with bureaucracy, etc. - and academic support

Difficult of providing a comprehensive response without extensive national or European level guidelines on how to act

Signs that the pandemic has been used as an opportunity to push the virtual learning agenda

Failure to recognize the ethical limitations of market-driven universities during a public health emergency

Delivering international education requires both ethical and pedagogical coherence

Dziękuję bardzo!

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