

## Higher Education Institutions in the middle of economic, social and political pressures

**Dr. Martina Gaisch**

Professor, Head of Diversity Management,  
University of Applied Sciences, Upper Austria, Austria

Email: [martina.gaisch@fh-hagenberg.at](mailto:martina.gaisch@fh-hagenberg.at)

Around the world Higher Education Institutions (HEI) have increasingly come under pressure due to conflicting ideology-driven agendas of governance. For one, the economy model puts focus on entrepreneurial innovation skills where autonomy from government has turned into a management tool with the aim to change universities increasingly in line with the needs of private enterprises. Second, the open society model which is driven by today's grand challenges and the conviction that societal needs can only be addressed in an interdisciplinary and democratic way and the assumption that society values objective knowledge grounded in communicative rationality as opposed to dogma and speculation. The third variation in governance ideologies is spurred by national agendas where HEIs are considered as a series of communities held together by a common name, governing board and similar objectives. Political purposes are foregrounded and funding is based on the expected outcome in terms of effectiveness and efficiency as to the achievement of these political directives. To effectively navigate these different rationales, university leaders will need to constantly identify potential institutional challenges and possess the willingness to adapt their agendas and earmark and invest resources in innovative and timely structures. In the middle of multiple and complex internal and external relations it becomes a vital asset to be aware of these conflicting rationales to best organize, plan and implement academic and managerial processes.