

40 Years of Internationalization in European Higher Education: Achievements and challenges

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Introduction: Europe and higher education

When did higher education become ‘European’? The precise starting date of the process of Europeanization of higher education can be debated. Was it the establishment of the first universities in Italy, England, Spain, and France? These were the first universities in the world and became a model for most of the thousands of universities that emerged in the centuries thereafter. Or should we see the first treaties of the European ‘project’ as the start of a European dimension in higher education? The 1957 EURATOM Treaty and the 1958 Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) already contained passages on cooperation in science and technology. The first treaties, however, did not transfer any authority in the field of higher education to the European level. Despite this, the European Commission and other European Union (EU) institutions did find opportunities to actively get involved in higher education in the early 1970s, especially by linking education to the free movement of people within the European Community.

Forty years later we can claim that ‘Europe’ has unquestionably left its mark on higher education in Europe. Through the involvement of EU institutions, higher education in the EU member states has gained a stronger European but also a stronger international dimension. Mobility of students within Europe and between Europe and the rest of the world has increased and institutions and their academic staff increasingly collaborate with each other to improve their education and research.

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The process of Europeanization of higher education reversed a centuries long process of nationalization of universities. In the past few centuries universities became more firmly embedded in the nation state. Their students, their funding, their regulative framework, *etc.*, all were impacted by the strong role of the nation state. The past forty years this process has been slightly reversed and the international dimension in higher education is gaining importance. The organizational field (in the meaning of DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) definition as "sets of organizations that constitute a recognized area of institutional life") of the contemporary university has become more international and transnational in nature. Staff and students, regulatory agencies, funders, and competitors increasingly operate across borders and are less bound by national contexts than half a century ago. In this paper we will analyze the processes of Europeanization and internationalization of higher education in Europe and the challenges they bring.

The Europeanization of higher education

The Europeanization of higher education can be conceptualized by three interrelated processes:

1. The Europeanization of higher education policies through the emergence of a supranational polity;
2. The Europeanization of academic activities through increased academic interaction and exchange within Europe; and
3. The Europeanization of higher education systems through harmonization.

The first process is a political process: the establishment of education as a domain of European policy. This began at the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1958 and the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 can be seen as a major milestone in this process. In Maastricht, the European policy makers managed to pull education into the competence of the EU. Although education was not within the formal authority of the European Community – the term was not mentioned in the first European treaties – education became a division within the Directorate General for Research Science and Education in the 1970s. It took, however, until the 1992 Maastricht Treaty to include education in the Treaty. Articles 126 and 127 stated that:

The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education

by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

The latter part of this paragraph clearly shows the sensitivity of European policy in the field of education. Teaching content and the organization of education was a national matter, not a European one. In addition, education was subjected to the subsidiarity principle, meaning that Community action can only be taken if national actions are not sufficient.

The second development was the increased interaction and mobility in European higher education and research. This started with the first European education program in 1976. From this point on, the internationalization of education became part of European academic life. Only in 1987, however, the first large scale European education program was established. This was what became the European flagship program named ERASMUS. This program for the first time brought about substantial flows of students between European countries. Student mobility was – and still is – the cornerstone of the European programs and through it, young Europeans gained an understanding of other European cultures and developed some form of European identity. In this sense, the program was very much an instrument to support the European integration project. The program also made international mobility an option for many, not so much through its funding but through the institutionalization of international mobility within universities. Universities set up infrastructures to deal with new demands of students and staff, leading also to an increase of mobility outside of the Erasmus Programs.

What's more, Erasmus developed into more than a mobility program. After 1995, staff exchange and curriculum development also became part of the activities. Erasmus was also a prime networking instrument, bringing academics and administrators from around Europe together to collaborate and communicate. The same was true for the European research policies, and in particular the Framework Programs. Cooperation in partnerships and consortia and combining strengths of different universities were a major objective of these European policies. Several decades of research cooperation has made 'Europe' a more natural playing field for academics in European research universities.

A final development started at the end of the twentieth century and can also be seen as a development triggered by the increase in European policies and European interaction. This created an awareness of the diversity of systems in

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Europe and an acknowledgement of the fact that this patchwork of national higher education systems can create obstacles for further cooperation and exchange and creates inefficiencies from a pan-European perspective. Making a single European Higher Education Area from this patchwork was the main objective of the initiators of the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations.

The Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations of 1998 and 1999 were intergovernmental actions, initiated by Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom in the Sorbonne in 1998 but extended to 29 countries in Bologna in 1999 and growing to 47 countries in 2010. In the 1999 Bologna Declaration, national governments agreed to harmonize their education systems. Objectives were to:

- adopt a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;
- adopt a system with two main cycles (undergraduate/graduate);
- establish a system of credits (ECTS);
- promote mobility by overcoming legal recognition and administrative obstacles;
- promote European co-operation in quality assurance; and
- promote a European dimension in higher education.

These were supplemented by new action lines in the course of the process, for instance, to promote the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area and the promotion of the social dimension in the Bologna Process. Although the European Commission was initially not a participant in this process, they – together with the Council of Europe – became facilitators of the Bologna Process.

European cooperation was not just seen as an instrument for European integration and mobility and for quality enhancement of European higher education, but also became an instrument for improving Europe's economic competitiveness in an increasingly globalized world. Through a more flexible and more innovative higher education system, European universities were increasingly considered as engines of economic growth and as crucial determinants of a country's competitiveness. This narrative was very much part of the European 'Lisbon Agenda'. This agenda developed in parallel with the Bologna Process. Together with an ongoing discourse about the crisis of European universities (partially caused by the emergence of international rankings), this paved the way for a closer alignment of the collaboration based Bologna Process with the competition based Lisbon Agenda. Ultimately this

has *de facto* led to the convergence of the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Agenda into one policy framework (Huisman & van der Wende, 2004, pp. 34-35).

Harmonizing education systems thus became an instrument not only for stimulating cooperation and exchange but even more for strengthening the attractiveness and quality of Europe higher education as a whole, with the ultimate aim of strengthening Europe's competitiveness in the global economy.

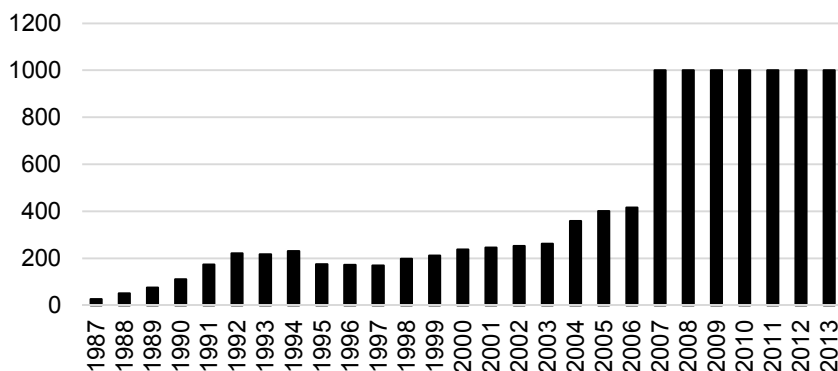
Achievements

The developments of the past 40 years that we identified above have shaped the European field of higher education. In March 2010 in the city of Budapest, the governments of the 47 countries involved in the Bologna Process launched the European Higher Education Area. Whether the Bologna objectives had actually been achieved is debatable. What can be concluded is that the European dimension has gained an important position in the life of European higher education institutions. Universities in Europe can no longer be seen as purely national institutions, operating in national systems, subjected to national policies. In this section, evidence is provided of the impact of these three processes and what has been achieved is analyzed.

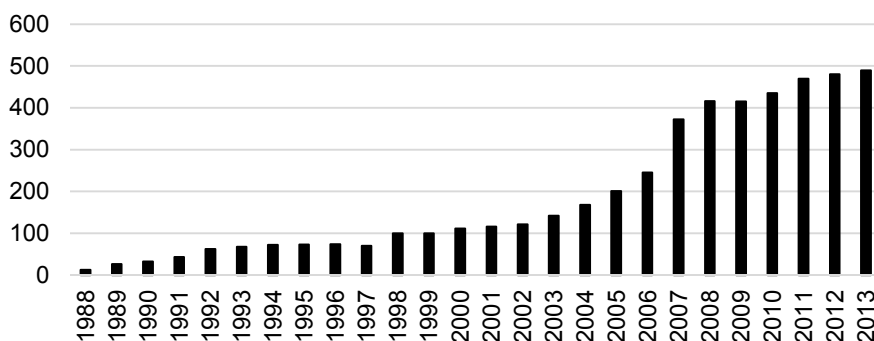
Europe as a new polity in higher education

The inclusion of 'education' in the Maastricht Treaty was a major milestone in the Europeanization of higher education policies and politics. If one looks at the distributive role of European institutions, for instance, a clear rise in the budget of the Commission's education and research programs in the past 30 or 40 years can be seen (Figure 1).

The budget on education increased gradually since the start of the Erasmus Program in 1987. In the Socrates programs (1994-2000 and 2000-2006) this increase slowed down. It was especially with the start of the Lifelong Learning Program (LLP, covering the whole sector of education) that investments in education really became substantial. The LLP had a budget of almost 7 billion Euros over 7 years. If one only looks at the budget spent on student and staff exchanges in higher education, one sees a similar pattern: a gradual increase from 1987 until 2006, with spending increasing strongly in the LLP, reaching almost half a billion in 2013 (Figure 2).

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**Figure 1. Annual EU budget for education 1987-2013 (in M€)
(European Commission, 2006)**



**Figure 2. Annual Erasmus budget for student and staff mobility (M€)
(European Commission, 2013)**

The budget for the new ERASMUS+ program, which will start in 2014 will be 14.7 billion Euros. The European Commission initially asked for a budget of 19 billion Euros for a seven year period, a significant increase compared to the 7 billion of the LLP. The EU budget negotiations (between the Commission and the member states) have resulted in the budget of 14.7 billion. Substantially less than the budget the Commission asked for, but still a doubling compared to the LLP budget.

Of the budget, two thirds will go to mobility programs in all levels of education. The majority of this will be earmarked for higher education. About a quarter of the budget will be earmarked for collaborative projects

between higher education institutions and between higher education institutions and industry. The remaining part will go to support for policy reform.

A similar trend can be observed if one looks at the EU's involvement in research. The first Framework Program for Research was launched in 1984 and had a budget of almost 3.3 billion Euros for a four year period. This has increased tenfold in the last thirty years with the budget for 2013 totaling more than 10 billion Euros (Figure 3). In 2014, the successor of the Seventh Framework Program will commence. The European Commission initially proposed a budget of 80 billion Euros for the seven year period until 2020. The end result is likely to be closer to 70 billion. Still a substantial increase from the almost 56 billion Euro budget of the Seventh Framework Program.

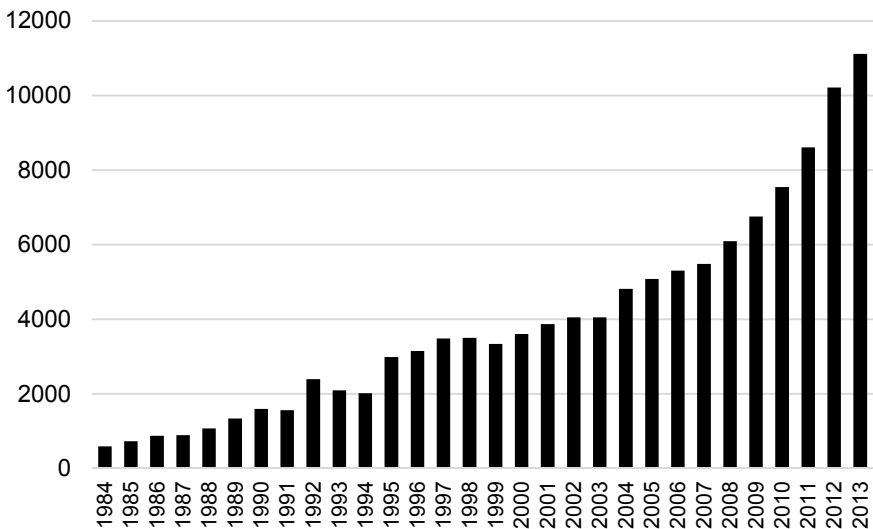


Figure 3: Annual EU budget for research 1984-2013 (M€) (European Commission, 2012a)

In addition to its distributive role, the EU also plays an important legislative role. If one considers the legislative actions of the European institutions, one can observe a rise in secondary legislation related to education and research¹. Many directives were issued in order to implement article 57(1) EEC on the recognition of qualifications in various sectors in order to enable the free movement of labor. But directives were also issued for matters like the

¹ Directives and Regulations in force under classifications 16.30 (Education and Training) and 16.10 (Science) according to EurLex, see also: Beerkens, 2008)

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education of children of migrant workers, the right of residence for students, and the admission of third country nationals for the purpose of studies or scientific research.

The formal adoption of education as a policy competence of the EU has also been influenced by policy domains that had no direct but an indirect connection with education. For instance, the free movement of workers in the EU also created a push for more transparency and recognition of professional degrees and it created rights for ‘social advantages’ like student financial support for workers and their children. In addition, the non-discrimination principle prohibited different treatment of students on the basis of their nationality. This, for instance, meant that tuition fees charged to other EU nationals could not be higher than those for domestic students. These legal developments enabled the Commission to take a more active role in education policy in the EU. But in this domain, it was especially the European Court of Justice (ECJ) that caused an expansion of the authority of European institutions in education and research. The number of ECJ cases that significantly impacted education and research increased to around 60 in 2005, with peaks in the late 1980s and the early 2000s (Figure 4; for a discussion on these cases: see Beerkens, 2008²).

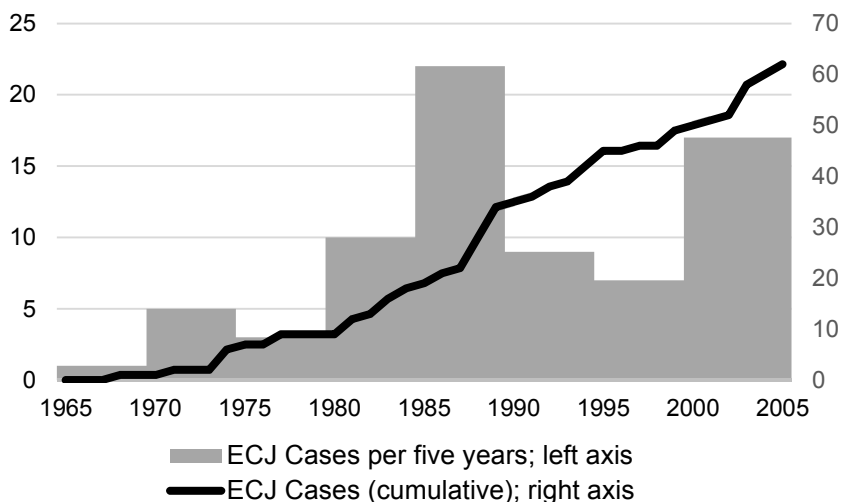


Figure 4. ECJ cases related to education and research (Beerkens, 2008)

² All judgments of the ECJ that are related to (higher) education and research or had a major impact on it. The list was compiled on the basis of various secondary resources (De Witte, 1989; McMahon, 1995; Tudor, 2005) and searches in the EurLex Database.

The observations above demonstrate that the EU is becoming a significant player in higher education and research policies. Both in terms of resources and regulative activity, they have strengthened their position in Europe and thus established Europe as an arena for higher education and research policy.

Yet, this picture might also require some nuance. After all, the subsidiarity principle limits the power of the EU institutions to get involved in education issues. Most of the interference from Europe, therefore, is related to issues arising from the creation of a European single market. They are related to issues like the rights of immigrants; the recognition of qualifications across borders; and the treatment of nationals *vis-à-vis* other EU citizens. The actions of the Commission and other EU institutions are not directed towards issues like curricula, teaching and learning, autonomy of institutions, *etc.* But what one can observe is that some core aspects of education and education policies are indirectly affected by European policies through so-called spill-overs. The central thesis here is that integration within one sector will tend to cause its own impetus and spread to other sectors. The establishment of supranational institutions designed to deal with functionally specific tasks will set in motion economic, social, and political processes which generate pressures towards further integration. This is the logic subsumed under the headings of 'spill-over' or 'the expansive logic of sector integration'. Functional spill-overs occur when the integration in one policy-area spills over into others because these issue areas are inter-connected. For instance, measures in social policy (*e.g.* the right to social support for immigrants) can affect higher education policies through changes in student financial support.

Europe as a new arena for academic activities

The main instrument through which European institutions have influenced higher education in Europe was through the promotion of mobility. The growth of international mobility, however, was not just a process guided by European level programs. It is also a phenomenon that is driven by processes of globalization (and a phenomenon that in turn causes further globalization). Yet the Erasmus Programs can be seen as the dominant driver for credit mobility (mobility to obtain credits in another country, as opposed to degree or diploma mobility) and has witnessed a vast expansion in the past decades (Figure 5). From a few thousand a year in the late 1980s, Erasmus mobility has grown to over 200,000 students every year in the current decade. What needs to be realized is that there is also a significant number of students that go abroad for

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studies and internships and do not receive an Erasmus grant. Therefore, they are not included in these statistics.

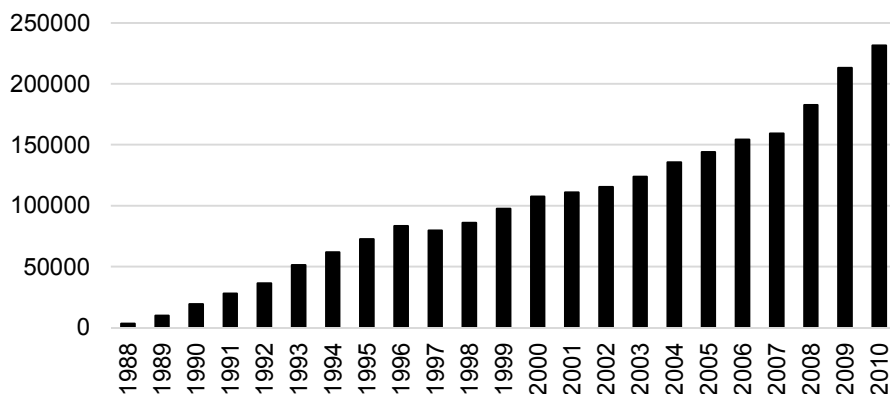


Figure 5. Number of Erasmus students 1987-2010 (European Commission, 2012b)

In the 1990s, Erasmus became part of the two consecutive Socrates programs. This also brought along more instruments for cooperation. This was prolonged in the LLP. The latest step was the adoption of the ERASMUS+ program, planned to start in 2014. Part of the program focuses on widening participation in the mobility program; another part on strategic partnerships; and other forms of cooperation and a last part on policy support.

The emphasis on cooperation and exchange has also led to the creation of numerous partnerships between institutions and the emergence of a wide variety of associations and networks aimed at bringing European students, teachers and scientists together. In the Socrates framework alone, more than 860 cooperative actions were coordinated by higher education institutions in Europe between 1994 and 2004 (ISOC, 2007). These have resulted in joint curricula, joint conferences, research reports, publications and a wide range of other actions that promote joint knowledge creation and dissemination. In the framework of Erasmus Mundus, the Commission requires the establishment of higher education consortia in order to offer a joint Masters program. Since the launch of Erasmus Mundus, more than one hundred of such consortia are active. In the field of research, the prerequisite of cooperation is also apparent. For most of the Framework Program activities, researchers are required to form networks with colleagues from other Member States. All these cooperative activities require communication by phone, email, and internet; face-to-face

meetings of academics and other staff; and the exchange of information and ideas.

But it is not just about organized cooperation in the European programs. Higher education and research have always been characterized by international cooperation but cooperation has become easier because of open borders and new technologies. The result of the intense cooperation and exchange of ideas and information can, for instance, also be observed if one looks at scientific publications. Here, the growth in international joint publications is a phenomenon that can also be observed in Europe. Jonathan (2013) found that, over more than three decades, domestic output (papers that list only authors from the home country) has stabilized in the United States and in Western European countries. The rise in total annual output for each country is due to international collaboration. As a result, the percentage of papers that are entirely ‘home grown’ is falling. What’s more, he found that impact scores for jointly authored papers tend to be higher than for domestic papers.

This collaborative environment has institutionalized in the past few decades in the form of a dense network of academic associations. In Europe it has led to a vast increase in the number of academic organizations. In the past 40 years, at least 700 of such organizations have been established (Figure 6). Most of them are associations organized around disciplines and subdisciplines. Major growth can be observed in the late eighties and early nineties. Considering that establishing such an organization can take multiple years, it is plausible to assume that this rise of associations is related to the emergence of European research and education programs (in 1984 and 1987 respectively).

In these academic communities, the exchange of information and ideas and collaboration to create new knowledge are the primary goals. Within such organizations, conferences and journals function as the vehicles for communication and information exchange. Not surprisingly, the development of disciplinary journals, therefore, shows a similar pattern.

For the everyday life of academics, this means that ‘Europe’ has become increasingly important. Their research networks and also their classrooms do not consist only of domestic researchers and students, but of researchers and students from all over Europe and beyond Europe. They become more dependent on European colleagues for obtaining their research funding and their audience is targeted through European and international journals much more than ever before. The academic arena has become European and even global in scope in the past decades.

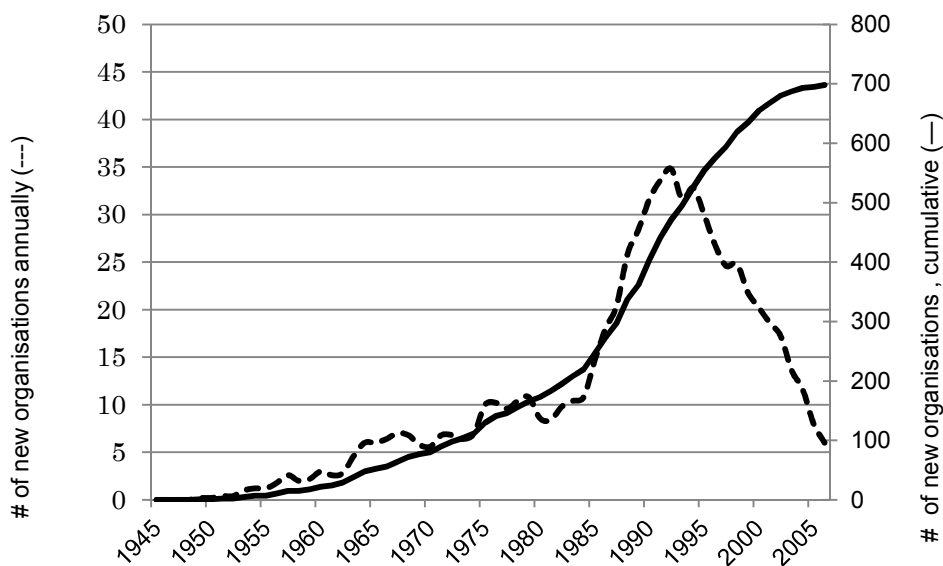


Figure 6. Growth of European organizations and associations in education and research (various sources³)

Europe as a harmonized higher education system

Europe has developed in a mosaic of education systems. With the ongoing mobility of students, academics and other European citizens, this diverse nature of European higher education has become more apparent. At multiple levels of the European polity, the need for more harmonization and more transparency has been voiced. A high level of diversity existed in the types of programs and their comparability, in systems of and ideas about quality assurance, in the university degrees, *etc.* The Bologna Process was intended to harmonize these systems or at least make the differences more transparent.

After more than ten years since the start of the Bologna Process, can one really speak of a harmonized system? Probably not, but evaluations and impact studies of the Bologna Process have shown that major steps were taken (*e.g.* Westerheijden *et al.*, 2010). Higher education across the 47 participating countries looks substantially different from the situation at the start of the

³ The list was compiled from various sources, including the Yearbook of International Organizations (Union of International Associations, 2005), the Directory of European associations in the field of education (European Commission, 1999) and various Internet searches. The list is restricted to organizations with a multinational membership covering a substantial part of Europe.

process. Degree structures and curricula have been reformed, certain instruments have been much more widely applied (for instance, the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), Diploma Supplements, quality assurance, qualifications frameworks, *etc.*) and this in turn has contributed to making European higher education more attractive in the world.

One of the most visible instruments for realizing harmonization was the introduction of a two cycle (three if the Ph.D. is included) degree structure. This has now been implemented in nearly all countries of the European Higher Education Area. Yet, the way it was implemented still shows a diverse picture. Most countries have adopted even differences within the national systems. The Netherlands, for instance, allows both four year and three Bachelor programs (four for the Universities of Applied Sciences and three for the Research Universities) and one and two year Master programs (one for regular Masters and two for research Masters). In this way, we cannot really speak of a harmonized system in Europe. There is still much variety in the length of programs in terms of years or ECTS credits. The ECTS system itself has been implemented in nearly all systems; the few exceptions all use ECTS-compatible systems. However, determining the weight of ECTS credits is based on different considerations in different countries. According to the European Commission, 'ECTS is a student-centered system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of the program of study. These objectives should be specified in terms of learning outcomes and competences to be acquired' (Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2004). However, this is the case only in a minority of the Bologna countries. About half of the countries use only learning outcomes or only the workload concept, and a quarter of the participating countries use neither (Westerheijden *et al.*, 2010).

The extent to which the key objectives of Bologna will be achieved is still an open question. Achieving some of the desired outcomes will require many years of post-implementation experience and even among countries that have shown early progress, compatibility and comparability have not yet been fully achieved. Still, one can safely conclude that a process towards more harmonization has commenced in 1999 and that major steps have already been taken. Whether this will lead to a harmonized European higher education system remains to be seen, but at least it has created an awareness of the differences and it has made these differences much more transparent.

Intermezzo: Europeanization and/or internationalization?

For individual nation states, it is clear that internationalization is about opening up to other countries. In the case of Europe this is less clear. Is internationalization limited to the relation between Europe and the rest of the world? Or does it include internal European dynamics (as analyzed in this paper)? One could best claim it is both. European countries, unlike most other countries in the world, operate in a real multilevel polity. They are part of Europe (or even different Europes) while also being part of the wider global system. In this regard, the European internationalization dynamics are a subset of the wider, global internationalization dynamics.

Operating in the European system can, on the one hand, be compared to operating in the global system; on the other hand it can be compared to operating in federal systems.

Operating in the global system of higher education often means operating in a policy vacuum and at the same time being hindered by national obstacles. The 'global' is not an entity coordinated by supranational organizations. Although international organizations (like the World Bank, UNESCO, OECD) might occupy important positions in global higher education they do not function as a supranational coordinator of international activities. In Europe this is different and in this sense it might resemble a federalist state. The EU institutions monitor whether countries are really complying with the internal market rules that have been laid down in various treaties and they might call for new legislation when new obstacles arise. In this way it does create a supranational hierarchy operating above the separate nation states.

Yet for many students and academics operating in this European system is like operating in a global system. It brings many of the same challenges even though cultural distances might seem relatively small. Although a process of harmonization might be set in motion, students and academics are still confronted with many challenges if they decide to study or work in another European country. This is also the reason why intra-European internationalization has contributed so much to the wider internationalization of European higher education institutions. Universities in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s have set up infrastructures, and developed skills and expertise to deal with international exchange, cooperation and recruitment. Although these activities were initially predominantly European in scope, this infrastructure and expertise now also serves the cooperation and exchange with other countries and regions in the world.

It is this position which makes European internationalization an interesting process, and also a challenging one. European higher education, and its institutions, its students, academics, and leadership, navigate between their national policy domains and the emerging – inter-national – European polity. This brings along questions about the balance between national and European governance; about the extent of solidarity with other member states; and about the role of national sensitivities in the wider European system. These are issues that are typical for nations that are moving from purely independent nation-states to more supranational systems. In this regard, these are also exemplary for what is happening in the wider global system (which is also typified by increasing interconnectedness and integration of activities, albeit on a smaller scale than within Europe). Three challenges arising from these issues will be discussed in the next section.

Some challenges ahead

The financial implications of European (degree) mobility

The way higher education is funded is fully located within the authority of the individual European nation states (or the subnational states in case of federations like Germany). If one looks at the amount of money spent on higher education, one sees rather substantial differences between the countries of the European Higher Education Area (Figure 7, based on purchasing power parity).

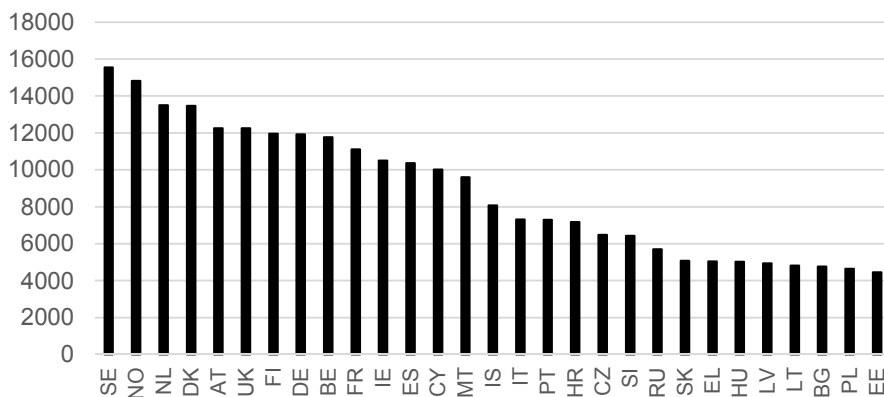


Figure 7. Annual public expenditure on tertiary educational institutions per full-time equivalent student in Euros PPS, 2008 (Eurydice, 2012)

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In some countries, public subsidies in higher education are supplemented by tuition fees. The United Kingdom, with many institutions asking tuition fees of more than 10000 Euros, has the highest fees in the EU. In many of the countries charging tuition fees, the fees are far from cost covering and the government still subsidizes the major part of a student's education. Finally there is the group of countries charging no tuition fees. In those countries where governments still fully or predominantly subsidize a student's higher education, major imbalances between inflow and outflow of students from or to the EER countries can cause financial problems. Usually this is not the case when we are talking about large inflows of students from outside the EER because a country can set higher fees for non-EER students. In several court rulings the ECJ, however, confirmed that tuition fees or other costs such as registration fees cannot be higher for foreign EER students than for domestic students. At the same time, these programs need to be accessible to those foreign EER students and certain requirements should not form an indirect form of discrimination based on nationality.

Countries like Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Czech Republic, and the Netherlands, will all face extra costs in subsidizing their higher education systems due to a net inflow of EER students (Figure 8). In the end, national governments will need to fund the education of these foreign students. Comparing this to a federal system like the United States makes an interesting comparison. In the United States individual states are allowed to charge in state and out-of-state tuition fees, this is not allowed in EU member states.

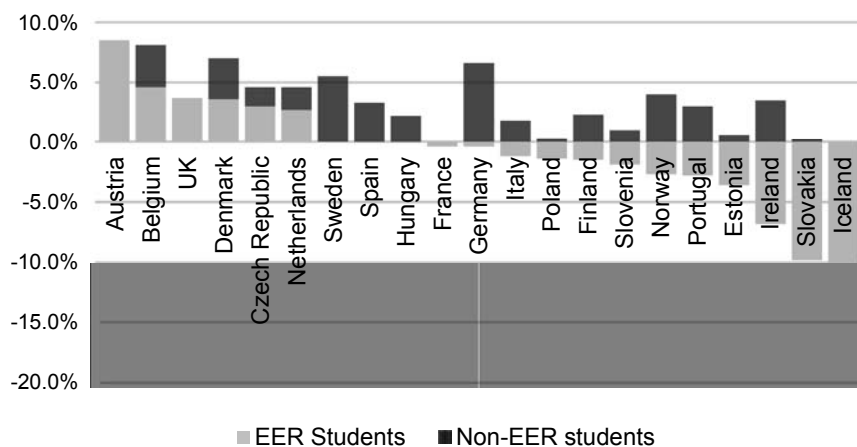


Figure 8. Net flows of foreign students (CPB, 2012; based on OECD data)

Whether this will actually lead to problems remains to be seen. It has led to public and political discussions in countries like Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Austria. Such discussions were either focused on the fact that countries could not limit the influx of foreign students to their regulated programs (e.g. medicine, veterinary sciences) or on the fact that national taxpayers' money was used for the education of foreign students. A study in the Netherlands – where the latter discussion emerged – however, found that every foreign student will contribute much more to the economy than he or she benefited from a Dutch higher education (CPB, 2012) and that, therefore, the Netherlands should remain open to foreign students (including EER students) but should also focus on retaining them for the Dutch labor market (SER, 2013).

Wherever the benefits or costs may go, the complexity of national education funding in a Europeanized higher education area makes clear that it is necessary to look at such issues from a pan-European perspective. It is simply not possible anymore to calculate all the national costs and benefits in an area where more and more people move, be it for work, for education, or both. Such a pan-European view, however, is not yet reality in the current EU.

Inequalities in mobility and cooperation

Whether one looks at the 48 country European Higher Education Area as a whole, or at the 28 country EU, it is impossible to ignore the fact that developments have not taken place equally everywhere. Based on rankings and bibliometric data, there is still a considerable quality difference in Europe, in particular between Northwestern Europe and the rest of Europe. As a result one sees certain dynamics in European higher education and research.

If one looks at mobility between countries, one sees that the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Austria, and to a lesser extent, France, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, and Denmark are the most attractive destinations for European students (Figure 9). The countries receiving less than average foreign students are all Central and Eastern European countries. Similarly, if one looks at research cooperation, one sees that the central nodes of the European publication networks are formed by these same countries and that the newer member states are still at the periphery of this landscape (Figure 10).

Like most other countries, it is inevitable that Europe will also have its stronger and weaker regions. The fact that the redistributive role of the EU is very small compared to many other federalist states and especially the fact that this is mainly a division of the EU 15 and the newer member states, makes this a

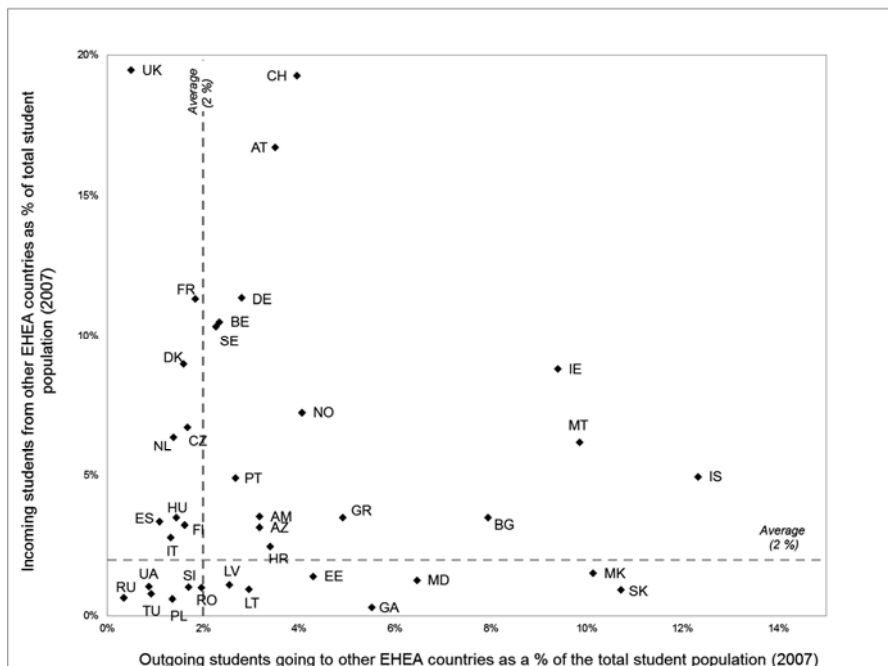


Figure 9. Incoming and outgoing foreign students from and to other EHEA countries (based on data from UNESCO Institute of Statistics)

politically undesirable situation. As a result, the European Commission has applied many instruments to close this gap. On the other hand, especially in the research domain, the Commission promotes excellence, and research funding is channelled towards the most excellent researchers and research groups. It is one major challenge of the new H2020 program to find a balance in this excellence versus inequality dilemma.

Homogenizing tendencies and the rise of English

A final challenge addressed here is the tendency towards convergence and homogenization, in particular in terms of language. Globalization in general and also processes of regional integration comprise tendencies towards convergence and homogenization. The Bologna Process was even more explicit in this through its focus on harmonization. The words convergence and homogenization, however, were painstakingly avoided. The idea of converging all education system into one Anglo Saxon model was and remains unpopular. European institutions, therefore, were careful to include aspects of cultural, linguistic and system diversity in the narratives surrounding the Bologna

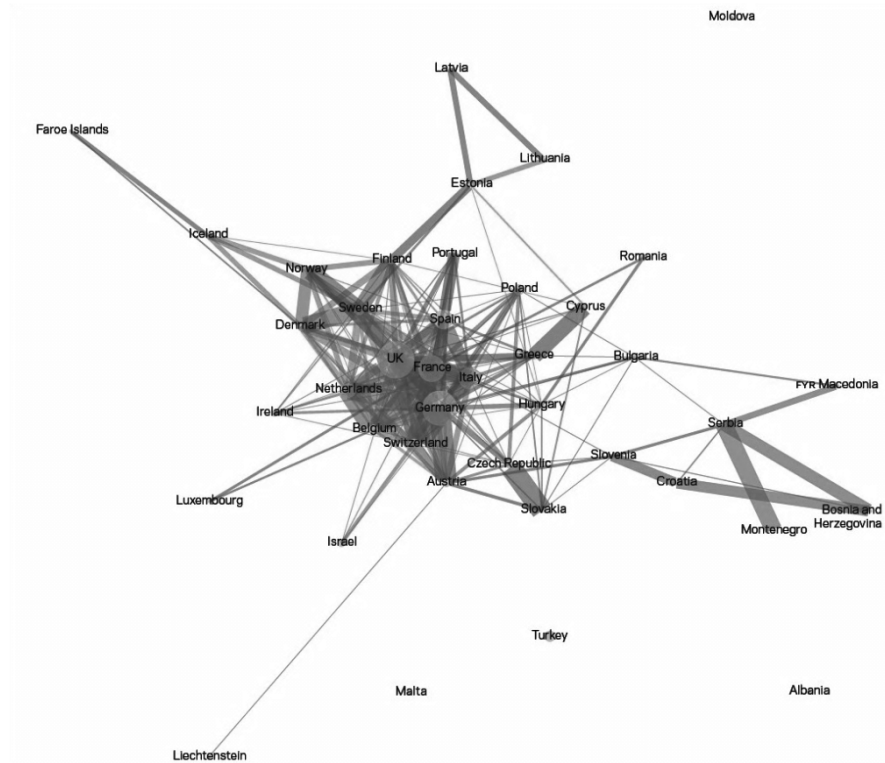


Figure 10. Network map of research collaboration between European countries, 2007-2011 (Kamalski & Plume, 2013⁴)

Process. In terms of the diversity of systems one can conclude that sufficient discretion was given to the participating countries to fulfil the Bologna demands and still keep their own historically and culturally grown versions. The focus has not been on removing obstacles through diminishing differences but through making differences transparent and comparable.

The linguistic diversity in Europe has always been an attractive aspect of the European Higher Education Area and the early Erasmus programs were very much focused on exploiting this linguistic diversity. However, with the global rise of English as the lingua franca of academia, the increase in global mobility and the introduction of the two cycle structure in many European countries, a move towards more English taught courses can be observed. With the two

⁴ Outputs included are articles, reviews and conference papers indexed in sources covered by Scopus, primarily journals, conference proceedings, book series, and trade publications. Collaboration is inferred by the pattern of co-authorship.

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cycle structure, it became easier for countries to provide part of their programs in English. Leiden University in the Netherlands, for instance, decided to offer nearly all of its Master programs in English when the two cycle structure was implemented in the early 2000's. Similar transitions have been made at other Dutch universities and universities throughout Europe. Especially the smaller countries – and smaller languages – show a relatively high number of English taught Master programs (Figure 11). Most Bachelor programs are still taught in Dutch, but a selection of courses is provided in English in order to enable international student exchanges in the Bachelor. The last decade we also witness a growth in English taught Bachelor programs, especially in those programs with an international dimension.

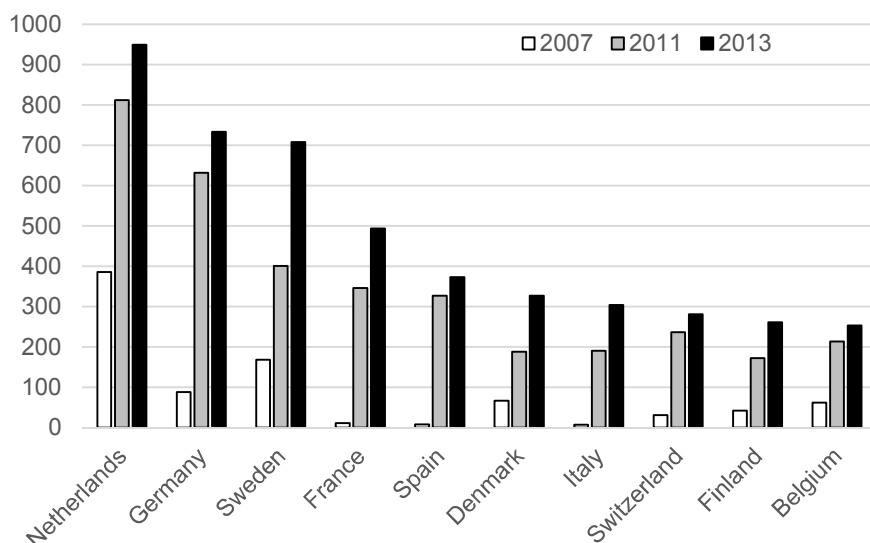


Figure 11. English taught Master programs in Europe 2007-2013 (IIE, 2013)

This new linguistic situation in continental European universities is not without challenges. Teaching staff need to be trained to teach in English, courses need to be converted into English and an international perspective needs to be added. But also support staff will need to deal with international students, communication should be done in English or be bilingual, *etc.* Since an academic education does not end when students set foot out of the classroom, the introduction of English as a language of instruction has wide-ranging effects on all aspects of academic life.

In the frontrunner countries in terms of the relative number of English

taught programs – the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, and Sweden – there might not be a fear that English will take over the local language as such. There are, however, fears for losing the local language as a ‘language of science’. In addition there are worries about the way learning in a second language affects the process of learning. On the other side, these countries all recognize the value of internationalization, cooperation and intercultural interaction. In this regard, the rise of English taught programs should be seen as a pragmatic one. International cooperation and exchange simply needs a common language, and the only real candidate for such a lingua franca in the current world is the English language.

Conclusions: Europe as an exceptional case study?

This paper analyzed how higher education in Europe has become more European and international and what challenges arise from this development. What can be concluded is that Europe has been successful in internationalizing its higher education, in terms of academic activities, but also in terms of the emergence of a European polity and harmonization in Europe’s diverse systems of higher education. This concluding section explores to what extent these developments and challenges are particular for Europe and to what extent they can extrapolated to the global level.

The internationalization of academic activities is a development that can be observed in most regions in the world and is also driven by the process of globalization. The increasing mobility of student and researchers is a phenomenon that can be observed in other places in the world as well. Europe, however, has played a pioneering role in this process because – already at an early stage – internationalization was high on the EU’s agenda.

The harmonization of systems is also a process that extends beyond the European higher education area. The Lisbon Convention on recognition was signed and ratified by many countries outside Europe. What’s more, a process of convergence can be observed throughout the world. This is not driven by international or supranational entities or imposed by certain powerful countries, but it is more a process of educational borrowing and lending (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004) or policy transfer (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). Through these processes certain models for higher education spread throughout the world and, even though those models are adopted differently on a local level, this contributes to the global convergence in higher education (Beerkens, 2010). In Europe, however, the process of harmonization has been facilitated by the fact that an

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organizational infrastructure to facilitate this process was already in existence. In addition, the EU members of the Bologna participants had a legal and political infrastructure to support certain measures.

This infrastructure has led to the Europeanization of the higher education and research policy domain. In this regard, the developments in Europe are truly different than those in other parts of the world. There are regional blocs where also some limited form of authority transfer can be observed (*e.g.* ASEAN, MERCOSUR, EAC, SADC) but this is politically far less developed than the EU. For now it is the only regional block where one can really talk about a form of supranational government and where nation-states have truly given up autonomy voluntarily to this higher level of governance.

If one looks at the challenges that were identified, one can also conclude that these constitute challenges at the global level, albeit in very different forms. Considering there is no supranational authority coordinating the distribution of higher education as a global public good, the financial arrangements in the international student market are based mainly on free market principles supported by numerous national and international loan or scholarship systems to provide opportunities for those who do not have sufficient resources. The challenge observed in Europe are not apparent in the global market because governments and/or institutions are autonomous in the amount of fees they charge.

The inequity in international student flows and the uneven distribution in research networks is clearly something that can also be observed at the global level. As is the case in Europe, mobility of students is characterized by South-North and East-West flows, and the nodes in the networks of research collaboration are still concentrated in Europe, North America and Japan. Nevertheless, at the European as well as the global level there are signs of emerging knowledge countries. In Europe they are located mainly in the East (Poland, Czech Republic, Baltics), globally they are located mainly in Asia and Latin America (China, Korea, Singapore, Brazil). Yet there are still many parts of Europe and parts of other continents that see too many of their talented people leave and are not able to benefit from the current mobility patterns. Despite of terms like brain exchange and brain circulation, brain drain is still very much a part of the current global knowledge system.

The rise of English as a lingua franca is undoubtedly a global phenomenon. Although languages like French and Spanish are still very influential in determining student flows, these large language systems become more isolated. In order to be truly open to students throughout the world, offering education in

English is almost a *sine qua non*.

Europe has played a pioneering role in the internationalization of higher education and research. This is thanks to the process of regional integration that the EU started at a relatively early stage. This has given Europe an advantage in adapting its universities to this process. At the same time, it has also led to a rather inward looking Europe. While European countries and European universities are busy with the expansion of their activities to the European level, the rest of the world also finds itself in a rapid process of globalization. Here, European universities face many untapped opportunities that they can and should pursue.

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