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The growing complexity of the academic enterprise in Europe: a panoramic view

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Factors generating change in European higher education have been multilayered, interrelated and often common throughout the continent. The article, drawing from current research and policy debates, discusses the three issues: marketization, privatization, and the competition for public funding; conflicting demands and the teaching/research divide in European universities; and European academics and their transforming institutions. The article concludes that emergent complexities, directly or indirectly, refer to the academic profession. Both academics and academic institutions are highly adaptable to external circumstances and change has always been the defining feature of national higher education systems. But the changes envisaged by policymakers, at both national and especially supranational levels, are structural, fundamental and go to the very heart of the academic enterprise.

Keywords: European universities; academic profession; university missions; higher education reforms; public funding

Introduction: major themes

The increasing complexity of the academic enterprise in Europe is due to several general factors: globalization and Europeanization, educational expansion and massification of higher education, the economic crisis, reform pressures in the public sector, growing pressures for accountability, and knowledge-driven economic competitiveness of nations and regions.¹ Some factors, like expansion, massification, reform and accountability pressures, have exerted their influence for a few decades; others, like the economic crisis, for a few years. Factors generating change in national higher education policies and in national higher education systems have been multilayered, interrelated and often common throughout the continent. Reforms increasingly, and throughout Europe, lead to further reforms rather than to reformed higher education systems, which is consistent with Nils Brunsson's arguments about all organizations in modern society: 'large contemporary organizations, whether public or private, seem to be under almost perpetual reform-attempts at changing organizational forms' (Brunsson 2009, 1).² Higher education has changed substantially in most European economies in the last two or three decades but it is still expected by national and European-level policymakers to change even more, as the recent European Commission's modernization agenda for 'universities' and for 'higher education systems' tend to show (see EC 2006, 2011a, 2011b and numerous

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related documents). Universities, throughout their history, change as their environments change, and the early twenty-first century is not exceptional (for theoretical perspectives in organizational theory, see two: a population ecology perspective as in Hannan, Pólos, and Carroll 2007; Hannan and Freeman 1989; Morgan 1986; Aldrich 1979 [2008], and a resource-dependence perspective, as in Pfeffer and Salancik 1978).³ Different directions of current and projected academic restructuring in different national systems add to the complexity of the picture at a European level.

There are a number of broad features that add to the complexity of the academic enterprise. We view the following as most crucial:

- (1) *The acceleration of national, European and global discussions.* In the last one or two decades, discussions about the future of the institution of the university at national, supranational (e.g. European) and global (e.g. by the World Bank and the OECD) levels have accelerated to an unprecedented degree. The university is viewed as becoming one of the most economically relevant social institutions in post-industrial societies in which social and economic well-being is increasingly based on the production, transmission, dissemination and application of knowledge (see Stehr 2002; Foray 2006; Kahin and Foray 2006; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004; Shattock 2008). The rising economic relevance of the institution is reflected, *inter alia*, in the breadth and scope of public, academic and political discussions about its future.
- (2) *Permanent renegotiations of the state/university relationships.* In the last two or three decades in Western Europe, there have been permanent renegotiations of the relationship between the state and higher education institutions (see Amaral et al. 2009; Amaral, Bleiklie, and Musselin 2008; Paradeise et al. 2009; Enders and Fulton 2002; Neave and Van Vught 1991, 1994). As developed economies are becoming ever more knowledge-intensive, the emphasis on university reforms leading to their economic relevance may be stronger in the future than today. At the same time, knowledge, including academically-produced knowledge, is located in the very centre of key economic challenges of modern societies (Geiger 2004, Leydesdorff 2006, Bonaccorsi and Daraio 2007). In most European systems, the relationship between the state authority and higher education institutions is far from being settled.
- (3) *Universities functioning under permanent conditions of adaptations to changing environmental settings.* The changing social, economic, cultural and legal settings of European higher education institutions increasingly compel them to function in the state of permanent adaptation; adaptations are required as responses to changes both in their financing modes and governance modes (see Clark 1998; Shattock 2008; Paradeise et al. 2009; Krücken, Kosmützky, and Torka 2007). Reforming universities does not lead to reformed universities, as examples from major European higher education systems show. Policymakers tend to view universities, like other public institutions, as 'incomplete'; reforms are intended to make them 'complete' institutions (Brunsson 2009). Reforming universities is thus leading to further waves of university reforms (Maassen and Olsen 2007; Clancy and Dill 2009).
- (4) *Renegotiations of the general social contract providing the basis for the post-war welfare state and its public services.* Europe faces a double renegotiation of the

post-war social contract related to the welfare state (which traditionally includes higher education, as in Stiglitz 2000; Barr 2004) and the renegotiation of the social contract linking, in the last 200 years, public universities and European nation states (see Jakobi, Martens, and Wolf 2010; Rothblatt and Wittrock 1993; Kwiek 2006). The future of the traditional ideas of the university in settings in which public institutions and public services are increasingly based, or compelled to be based, on the economic logics and (quasi-)market formulas of functioning is still unclear (see Dill and Van Vught 2010; Geiger 2004; Bok 2003; Weber and Duderstadt 2004; Clancy and Dill 2009). Current pension reforms and drives towards the (partial) privatization of various public services throughout Europe is a widely publicly debated aspect of the same social contract.

- (5) *A huge scale of operations and funding.* The scale of operations (and financing) of universities, both university teaching and university-based research in European economies remains historically unprecedented. Never before was the functioning of universities bringing so many diverse, both explicitly public and private, benefits. All aspects of their functioning are analyzed in detail from international comparative perspectives, and, indirectly, carefully assessed by international organizations (see Martens et al. 2010; Martens, Rusconi, and Leuze 2007; OECD 2008; Dill and Van Vught 2010; Weber and Duderstadt 2004). Measuring the economic competitiveness of nations increasingly means, inter alia, measuring both the potential and the output of their higher education and research and development systems (Kwiek 2011). Therefore, higher education can expect to be under ever more (both national and international) public scrutiny. The traditional post-Second World War rationale for resource allocation to universities has been shifting to a 'competitive approach' to university behaviour and funding (Geuna 1999) and the ever-growing need for setting research priorities through national science policies.
- (6) *The competing discourses about the future of the university and its missions.* There has been a growing divergence between two major sets of discourses about university missions in the last decade. The first is a set of global, supranational and EU discourses (reflected often in national public policy debates about systemic reforms of higher education). And the second is a set of nationally differentiated traditional discourses of the academic community, deeply rooted in traditional, both national and global, academic values, norms, and behaviours (see Novoa and Lawn 2002; Ramirez 2006; Kwiek and Kurkiewicz 2012). Struggles between them (the former set supported by the power of the changing modes of the redistribution of resources and legal changes relevant to universities' operations, and the latter set supported by the power of academic traditions, and, in general, of the academic community) lead in many systems to conflicts between alternative institutional rules (see March and Olsen 1989; Maassen and Olsen 2007) and conflicts between policymakers and the academic community about the substance of higher education reforms.
- (7) Finally, *the link between arguments about private goods/private benefits from higher education and arguments about its public subsidization.* Private goods (and private benefits) from higher education have been increasingly high on the

reform agendas and in public discussions that accompany them. Together with the increased emphasis in public policy on private goods (and private benefits), the threat to the public subsidization of traditional public institutions may be growing (Marginson 2007, 2011; McMahon 2009; Calhoun 2006). Viewing higher education more consistently from the perspective of private investment (and private returns) is more probable than ever before since the 1960s when the human capital approach was formed. This may have an impact on long-term public perceptions of social roles of universities and their services, and on long-term views about public funding of universities in the future.

In the general context provided above, the next three sections, drawing from current research and policy debates in Europe, discuss the three issues related to the growing complexity of the academic enterprise: marketization, privatization, and the competition for public funding; conflicting demands and the teaching/research divide in European universities; and European academics and their transforming institutions.

Marketization, privatization, and the competition for public funding

Firstly, there may be growing relevance of the market perspective in, and increasing financial austerity for, all public services (accompanied by the growing competition in all public expenditures: Kwiek 2006; Schuster 2011), strengthened by several factors. The factors include globalization and internationalization processes, the financial crisis, as well as changing demographics and its implications for national social and public expenditures. European higher education institutions in the next decade may be responding to increasingly unfriendly financial settings by either cost-side solutions or revenue-side solutions (see Johnstone 2006). A more probable institutional response to possibly worsening financial environments in which institutions operate is basically by revenue-side solutions: seeking new sources of income, largely non-state, non-core, and non-traditional to most European systems, termed 'external income generation' and 'earned income' by Gareth Williams in *Changing Patterns of Finance in Higher Education* with reference to British universities already two decades ago (see Williams 1992, 39–50; examples of academic entrepreneurialism so understood can already be found in most European systems, to different degrees, as empirical research, e.g. the EUERЕК project, *European Universities for Entrepreneurship*, demonstrates, see Shattock 2008; Kwiek 2008b).

New sources of income may thus come from various forms of academic entrepreneurialism in research (consulting, contracts with the industry, research-based short-term courses etc.) and various forms and levels of cost-sharing in teaching (tuition fees, at any or all study levels, from undergraduate to graduate to postgraduate studies), depending on academic traditions in which systems are embedded, as well as incentives for institutions and for entrepreneurial-minded academics and their research groups within institutions. In general, non-core income of academic institutions includes six items: gifts, investments, research grants, research contracts, consultancy and student fees (Williams 1992, 39). What also counts (and determines the level of cross-country variations in Europe) is the relative scale of current underfunding in higher education – most underfunded systems, such

as, for instance, some systems in Central and Eastern Europe, may be more willing to accept new funding patterns than Western European (Continental) systems, with traditionally more lavish state funding. 'Academic entrepreneurialism' and various forms of 'third mission activities' seem to attract ever more policy attention at both national and EU levels in the last few years (see an overview in my monograph, Kwiek 2012a).

Secondly, in the times of the possible reformulation of most generous types of welfare state regimes in Europe (see Palier 2010; Powell and Hendricks 2009; Pestieau 2006; Iversen 2005), higher education institutions and systems will need to be able to balance the negative financial impact of the possible gradual restructuring of the public sector on the levels of public funding for higher education. And overall trends in welfare state restructuring have seemed relatively similar worldwide (Pierson 2001, 456). In the case of higher education, the economic outlook of the sector 'vis-à-vis the intensification of competing social needs, is ever more problematic' (Schuster 2011, 3). The competition for tax funding between various social needs and different public services is bound to grow, regardless of the future of the current financial crisis. The reason is simple, as both students of welfare and students of demography show: European welfare state regimes were created mostly for the 'Golden age' period of the European welfare state model, or a quarter of a century between the 1950s and the oil shock of the early 1970s: 'taking a long-term view, we can say that this was a most unusual period' (Lutz and Wilson 2006, 13; Hurrelmann et al. 2007 on the 'golden-age nation state').

While the cost containment may be the general state response to financial austerity in the public sector across European countries, seeking new external revenues may increasingly be an institutional response to the financial crisis on the part of higher education institutions. It was already a response of impoverished universities in most Central and Eastern European economies in the 1990s, following the collapse of communism. Certainly, the introduction of fees or their higher levels will be in the spotlight in most systems in which universities will be seeking additional non-state funding. The post-war (Continental) European tradition was tax-based higher education, and (high-level) fees still look non-traditional in most systems.

Trends in European demographics (especially the aging of European societies, see a decade-long OECD *Public Pensions Series*) will be directly affecting the functioning of the welfare state (and public sector institutions) in general, with strong country-specific variations. In most European countries, demographics will be affecting universities only indirectly, through the growing pressures on all public expenditures in general, and growing competition for all public funding. In some countries in Central Europe (especially in Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia; see Kwiek 2012a), the indirect impact of demographics on all public services will be combined with direct adverse effect of declining demographics on educational institutions. Strong higher education institutions will be able to steer the future changes in funding patterns for higher education in their countries – rather than to merely drift with them.

Thirdly, in the last half century, despite immense growth in enrolments, public higher education in Europe remained relatively stable from a qualitative point of view. Its fundamental structure remained unchanged. Currently, the forces of change worldwide are similar (see Johnstone and Marcucci 2007) and they are pushing

higher education systems into more market-oriented and more competitive arenas (as well as towards more state regulation, possibly combined with less state funding, available on a more competitive basis, Teixeira et al. 2004). As Fazal Rizvi observed from a global perspective, privatization has become globally pervasive, ‘increasingly assumed to be the only way to ensure that public services, including education, are delivered efficiently and effectively’ (Rizvi 2006, 65; Kwiek 2007, 2008a). This is also the case in Europe, and perhaps especially in Central Europe. Historically, ‘the market’ had no major influence on higher education: the majority of modern universities in Europe were created by the state and were subsidized by the state. Today market forces in higher education are on the rise worldwide and non-core non-state income of universities is on the rise too (see a recent report on funding in European universities by CHEPS 2010; Shattock 2008). While the form and pace of these transformations are different across the world, changes are of a global nature and are expected to have a powerful impact on higher education systems in Europe.

Conflicting demands and the teaching/research divide in European universities

The second issue is new (or rather: substantially more powerful than before) stakeholders in higher education and the changing teaching/research nexus in European universities’ missions. Universities under conditions of massification are increasingly expected to be meeting not only changing needs of the state but also changing needs of students, employers, labour market and the industry, as well as regions in which they are located (Jones, McCarney, and Skolnik 2005). Demands put on academics are increasingly conflicting, though. Globally, for the vast majority of academics, the traditional European combination of teaching, research, and service is beyond reach: as a whole, globally, the academic profession is becoming a predominantly teaching profession; gravitating toward more emphasis on teaching is also the case, to varying degrees, in both Europe and in the US (Schuster 2011; Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley 2009). Future developments may fundamentally alter relationship between various stakeholders, with the decreasing role of the state (perhaps especially, in terms of funding), the increasing role of students and the labour market (for the more teaching-oriented sector of higher education), and the increasing role of the industry and the regions (for the more research-oriented sector of higher education). These processes are already advanced to different degrees in different European countries (Kwiek 2009).

On a more general plane, the massification of higher education is tied up with the growing significance of those new (or only re-emergent as powerful, as is the case of students under the Bologna Process transformations) stakeholders (Palfreyman and Tapper 2009). At the same time, in the midst of reforms, in order to flourish, universities, and especially research universities, most of all need to continue to be meeting (either traditional or redefined) needs of academics, the core of the university (Clark 1983, 1987; Altbach et al. 2009). As pointed out throughout the last two decades by Philip G. Altbach:

The academic profession is central to the success of the university everywhere. A research university requires a special type of professor – highly trained, committed to research and scholarship, and motivated by intellectual curiosity. Full-time commitment and adequate remuneration constitute other necessities. (Altbach 2007, 106–107)

Increasingly differentiated student needs – resulting from differentiated student populations in massified systems – already lead to largely differentiated systems of institutions (and, in a parallel manner, a largely differentiated academic profession). The expected differentiation-related developments may fundamentally alter the academic profession in general, further increase its heterogeneity, and have a strong impact on the traditional relationships between teaching and research at European universities, especially in second-tier institutions. And the relationship between teaching and research is, as Peter Scott put it, ‘among the most intellectually tangled, managerially complex, and politically contentious issues in mass higher education systems’ (Scott 2005, 53).

Most non-elite and demand-absorbing institutions in Europe (and especially private institutions in Central and Eastern Europe, Kwiek 2008a, 2008b) are already teaching-oriented while traditional elite research universities are still able to combine teaching and research, albeit often with different mission pursued by academics with different job descriptions, with the UK as a prime example. Research funding seems to be increasingly competitive in most systems, with competitive calls for proposals for research teams, rather than with undifferentiated block grants for institutions, to be internally distributed. The funding for research in European universities has been undergoing a transformation from being allocated on a ‘predominantly recurrent, block grant, basis’ to being dependent on ‘success in competitive bidding for project grants.’ This has led to the changing authority relationships in the sciences, including ‘the changed authority relationships governing the selection of scientific goals and evaluation of results in many OECD countries’ (Whitley 2010, 5). At the same time, excellent research institutions are expected to be far more student-centred. Students as university stakeholders are becoming increasingly powerful (often strongly supported by governments seeking allies for their reforms) and they are reconceptualised as ‘clients’ by institutions themselves and as future well-trained graduate labour force by governments. University missions are becoming increasingly conflicted, and new demands on academics lead to new pressures in different directions.

University missions are already being strongly redefined, and their redefinition may require a fundamental reconstruction of roles of educational institutions (as well as a reconstruction of tasks of academics). The main characteristics of current European university systems – the combination of teaching and research as the core institutional mission – may be under ever greater pressures. Consequently, for instance, implications of the Bologna process at both European, national, institutional and individual (academics’) levels seem still not to be fully realized. The concentration of research funding in ever smaller number of top institutions is observed throughout European higher education and research systems: there are winners and losers of these new processes of the allocation of financial resources, in accordance with what Robert K. Merton described in the 1960s as the ‘Mathew effect’ in science (‘the richer get richer at a rate that makes the poor relatively poorer’ [Merton 1973, 457]; as shown in the statistics of research grants received from a prestigious European Research Council, half of all grants until 2012 went to 50 European universities, the other half went to 450). The social, political, and economic contexts in which universities function are changing, and so are changing student populations and educational institutions (increasingly compelled to meet their changing demands). Higher education is subject to powerful influences from all

sides and all – new and old alike – stakeholders: the state, the students, the faculty, employers, and the industry.

The complexity of the academic enterprise is growing also because different stakeholders may increasingly have different needs from those they traditionally had, and their voice is already increasingly taken into account (as in the case of students, especially under Bologna-inspired reforms in Europe). Institutions are thus expected to transform themselves to maintain public trust (and to have good rationale to use public subsidies). The role of the market in higher education (or of government-regulated ‘quasi-markets,’ see Teixeira et al. 2004) seems so far to be growing, as the market seems to be increasingly affecting our lives as humans, citizens, workers, and finally as students/faculty.

The university has been under the changing (and increasingly conflicting) pressures of different stakeholders and it has been perceived by many, academics and politicians alike, all over the world, as not meeting the needs of students and those of the labour market (the literature on the supply/demand mismatch is substantial, and growing). Therefore the question which directions higher education systems will be taking while adapting to new social and economic realities in which the role of the market is growing and educational credentials received by graduates are increasingly linked to their professional and economic futures – seems to be open.

Following transformations of other public sector institutions, universities in Europe – traditionally publicly-funded and traditionally specializing in both teaching and research – may soon be under powerful pressures to review their missions in view of permanently coping with financial austerity in all public sector services (see Pierson 2001). Universities may soon be under pressures to compete more fiercely for financial resources with other public services, also heavily reliant on the public purse. Public priorities are changing throughout the world, and new funding patterns and funding mechanisms can be experimented with (Central Europe, Poland included, has long been experimenting with various forms of privatization of public services). The rationale for European university research funding has been changing throughout the last two decades, often with ‘negative unintended consequences’ (Geuna 2001, 607). The consequences for the teaching/research agenda at universities of the growing competition for public resources are far-reaching. The trend of the concentration of research in selected institutions is powerful in several countries (Vincent-Lancrin 2006). The perspective of further future delinking of teaching and research, especially in first-tier institutions, may run counter to traditional expectations of the academic profession as studied over the decades, both globally, in Europe, and in the USA. Research, rather than teaching, has been traditionally related to prestige, and prestige-seeking is the core of the academic enterprise (Brewer, Gates, and Goldman 2002). Reputation is ‘the main currency for the academic’ (Becher and Kogan 1980, 103) and it derives from research rather than from teaching (Clark 1983, 1987; Altbach 2007). In the developing countries, research and teaching have always been separated except for national flagship institutions. Further differentiated academic profession(s) can be expected to emerge, of which only small segments will be involved in (usually, in the higher education sector, state-funded) research.

European academics and their transforming institutions

The third issue of the present panorama is the extent to which meeting conflicting demands of new and evolving stakeholders is a major challenge to the academic profession. Massified educational systems (and an increasingly massified academic profession) unavoidably lead towards various new forms of academic system differentiation and stratification. Universities in most European countries seem still quite faculty-centered and their responsiveness to student and labour market needs is reported to be low. The broadening of the debate about social and economic roles of universities (and especially about graduates' employability) with employers, students, parents and other stakeholders can be expected in the next decade. And employability is bound to be a key notion in rethinking the attractiveness of European institutions to both European and international students in the future, especially if viewing higher education as a private good becomes prevalent. European research universities will be attractive workplaces if they are able to meet current (sometimes conflicting) differentiated needs. These needs sometimes seem to run counter the traditional twentieth century social expectations of the academic profession in continental Europe, though.

Consequently, European higher education systems will have to find a fair balance in expected transformations so that the academic profession is not deprived of its traditional voice in university management and governance; so that the European professoriate still unmistakably belongs to the middle classes; and so that universities are still substantially different in their operations from the business sector, being somehow, although not necessarily in a traditional manner, 'unique' or 'specific' organizations (see Musselin 2007a; Perkin 1969; Maassen and Olsen 2007). Close relationship with the industry, the responsiveness to the labour market needs and meeting students' vocational needs – have not been traditionally associated with the core values of the academic profession in continental Europe (perhaps despite verbal declarations of the academic community and despite universities' mission statements). It is unclear to what extent these core values are already under renegotiation in massified systems. Increasingly differentiated student populations in Europe require also increasingly differentiated institutions, and (possibly) increasingly differentiated types of academics. The academic profession is clearly becoming a myriad of academic professions, even within the same national system, not to mention cross-country differences. Higher education is 'no longer an elite enterprise,' with 'dramatic implications for the academic profession' (Altbach et al. 2012, 4).

The point is that, amidst reforms of the higher education sector, the academic profession is at the core of the academic enterprise, as reminded over the decades by Burton Clark and Philip G. Altbach (it is, as Harold Perkin [1969, 227] put it, 'the key profession in modern society,' 'the profession which educates the other professions'). The institutional capital of universities is in academics rather than in buildings, laboratories, libraries and student halls. Academics are not 'replaceable' in the way industrial workers are replaceable in the industry sector under the conditions of globalization, with industry or service jobs migrating often to cheaper labour force destinations; the academic business (at least in public universities) cannot be outsourced, either in its teaching or research or service functions.⁴ The very idea of the university rests with the academic profession; it is inherently present in its rules, norms and values, habits, procedures, and routines (on failing norms and

habits, see Kwiek 2012b; Kwiek and Maassen 2012). Universities are linking the world of learning and the world of work (Teichler 2009), as well as research and innovation (Dill and Van Vught 2010). But universities may become much less significant in the knowledge-driven economy if the academic profession is not fully committed to academic missions (and fully optimistic about its own career opportunities in the future). This is what the logics of the political economy of higher education reforms suggest in our 'highly reformistic' modern society (Brunsson 2009, 1). We will discuss the theme of academic optimism under increasingly diversified pressures and ever-more conflicting demands in more empirical detail below.

The changes in the academic profession in Europe occur in a specific context defined by common realities faced by European higher education systems: they include processes related to financial constraints, differentiation, accountability, societal relevance, market and competitive forces. As Enders and Musselin pointed out, 'we live in times of uncertainty about the future development of higher education and its place in society and it is therefore not surprising to note that the future of the academic profession seems uncertain, too' (2008, 145). The modernization of the institution of the European university means the change in rules constituting its identity. Institutions are defended by insiders and validated by outsiders and because their histories are encoded into 'rules and routines,' their internal structures cannot be changed or replaced arbitrarily (March and Olsen 1989). 'Great expectations' shared by higher education reformers has traditionally led to 'mixed results' in terms of their implementation, and reforming higher education is closely linked to reforming states in which it operates (Cerych and Sabatier 1980).

A short section on the changing academic profession in Europe below is based on recent large-scale empirical studies. The empirical data is drawn from the EUROAC project dataset (an 'Academic Profession in Europe' which follows a global format of a CAP 'Changing Academic Profession' project, based on country data from 12 European countries, with over 20,000 returned surveys and 600 semi-structured in-depth interviews (the present author has been coordinating the Polish EUROAC project which included more than 3,500 returned surveys and 60 semi-structured interviews).⁵ We focus now briefly on the 'academic optimism' theme, viewed through the proxy of 'job satisfaction' and related parameters empirically studied throughout Europe, with the general idea that optimism among academics regarding their current and future careers will be one of the most important dimensions of successful ongoing and future reforms in higher education (see more from a comparative European perspective in Kwiek and Antonowicz, forthcoming).

Overall, academic profession in Europe in the countries studied seems to derive relatively high satisfaction from their work in universities. On the scale from 1 = 'very high' to 5 = 'very low,' senior academics in Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Italy rate their job satisfaction in the 1.9–2.1 range, in Austria, Finland, Poland and Norway they rate it as 2.2 and in Germany rated 2.3. As Table 1 shows, the ratings are 2.4 each in Portugal and Ireland, while the mean of 2.6 in the UK expressed the highest level of dissatisfaction in Europe. The ratings by junior staff are slightly less positive (2.4 as compared to 2.2) across the countries. Junior staff differs from senior staff most visibly in a lower degree of satisfaction in Portugal (2.8 vs 2.4),

Table 1. Job Satisfaction: How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your current job? (arithmetic mean), all higher education institutions.

	2010					2007/08					
	AT	CH	IE	PL	NL	DE	FI	IT	NO	PT	UK
Arithmetic mean											
Senior	2.2	1.9	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.6
Junior	2.4	2.2	2.5	2.4	2.2	2.6	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.8	2.8

Note: Question B6: How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your current job? (Scale of answer 1 = Very High to 5 = Very Low, universities and other higher education institutions combined).⁶

in Switzerland (2.2 vs 1.9) and in Germany (2.6 vs 2.3). Again, the most dissatisfied junior academics work in Portugal and in the UK (the satisfaction rate of 2.8 each).

The respondents have also been asked to react to the following statement: 'This is a poor time for any young person to begin an academic career in my field.' As Table 2 shows, this view is shared most frequently both by senior and junior academics in universities in Austria and Italy (1.8–2.0). The most optimistic views of the academic career opportunities for young people come from Norway, Switzerland and the Netherlands (Norwegian junior and senior academics showing the highest optimism in Europe, rated as 3.7 and 3.4, respectively). It is interesting to note that the career opportunities are not viewed most pessimistically in those countries where academics express a low degree of job satisfaction. Academics in the United Kingdom and Portugal – i.e. the countries with a low average job satisfaction – do not view the future of young academics especially bleak.

Job satisfaction has been also addressed in an additional statement posed in the questionnaire: 'If I had it to do over again, I would not become an academic.' Actually, on average across countries, 15% of the senior academics and 17% of the junior academics state that they would not do again. As Table 3 shows, the most negative views are expressed in this respect by academics at universities in the United Kingdom (22% among seniors and 30% among juniors). It is worth noting the responses by academics in Finland: While senior academics respond very positively to this statement with only 9% negative responses, juniors are among those reacting quite negatively (20%).

Table 2. Junior and senior academics' assessment of young persons' academic career prospects (arithmetic mean, universities).

	2010					2007/08					
	AT	CH	IE	PL	NL	DE	FI	IT	NO	PT	UK
Senior academics	1.8	3.2	2.6	2.9	3.1	2.9	2.5	2.0	3.4	2.9	2.6
Junior academics	1.8	3.2	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.7	1.8	3.7	2.9	2.6

Note: Question B5: Please indicate your views on the following: 'This is a poor time for any young person to begin an academic career in my field.' Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = Strongly agree to 5 = Strongly disagree.

Table 3. Junior and senior academics stating that they would not become academics again (percent, universities).

	2010					2007/08					
	AT	CH	IE	PL	NL	DE	FI	IT	NO	PT	UK
Senior academics	16	13	14	17	18	17	9	9	15	15	22
Junior academics	17	14	13	18	15	19	20	15	17	15	30

Note: Question B5: Please indicate your views on the following: 'If I had it to do over again, I would not become an academic.' Responses 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 = Strongly agree to 5 = Strongly disagree.

Overall, the European picture of the academic profession differs considerably from the American picture where the share of contingent faculty has been substantially increasing, first (as reported by Finkelstein 2010, 214) as part-time appointments

(in the 1970s and the 1980s) and then (in the 1990s and the 2000s) as full-time non-tenure track appointments. The phenomenon of increasing numbers of contingent staff is much less prominent in European systems where full-time employment dominates and therefore higher job stability is reported (see two recent studies on the US: Kezar and Sam 2010a, 2010b). Viewed from a global perspective, already in the 1990s, European academic employment patterns were substantially different from American ones: as Philip Altbach reported about global developments a decade ago, 'a growing portion of the profession is part time, and many full-time academics are employed in positions that do not lead to long-term appointments. The traditional full-time permanent academic professor, "the gold standard" of academe, is increasingly rare' (Altbach 2000, ix). Europe, by comparative standards, still provides globally unique academic workplaces (as it provides a unique, although under renegotiations, European welfare state model).

The attractiveness of academic careers in European systems is linked to the academic income and to the combination of, or balance between, teaching and research. The academic income is an important factor determining the overall shape of the academic profession: it is connected to the ability of academic institutions to attract and to retain able individuals (Schuster and Finkelstein 2006, 234; Altbach et al. 2012). Competitive salaries can also be expected to draw brightest graduates and doctoral students to the academic profession, especially that universities, following the New Public Management rationales, are increasingly treated like other organizations from both public and private sectors. The prestige of the academic profession in Europe is still relatively high but, globally, it is diminishing (Altbach et al. 2009). Young academics are being compared to young professionals, and university professors are being compared to advanced professionals. High job security and a relatively friendly, non-competitive work place is increasingly less common globally, but it is also so throughout Europe, as reported by such EUROAC/CAP indicators as personal stress, individual affiliations, academic freedom and pressures to publish or pressures to obtain competitive, outside funding.

Academic salaries are crucial parameters of working conditions; they are crucial for maintaining optimism among academics and among those recruited to the academic profession in the future. They are crucial to the full-time commitment of the professoriate. And they are crucial for those nations which realistically consider

having ‘world-class’ institutions (Altbach and Salmi 2011; Schuster and Finkelstein 2006, 234–286). University professors in Europe and in North America have traditionally been members of the middle classes and their financial status in the post-war period was relatively stable. In most European countries, though, in the last two decades, academic incomes seem not to have caught up with incomes of other highly advanced professionals. References to the ‘proletarianisation’ of the academic profession have been heard ever more strongly in higher education research in the last decade and financial instability of the professoriate may grow higher under the conditions of the global financial crisis.

The growing complexity of the academic enterprise discussed throughout this article may change the professional optimism among academics and the academic commitment to university missions, still prevailing in most European systems. And optimism and commitment is needed in the midst of ongoing and envisaged reforms challenging the academic profession.

So far, the general rules regarding the academic status and remuneration were clear: ‘along with full-time commitment, salaries must be sufficient to support a middle-class lifestyle . . . professors must be solid members of the middle class in their country,’ as Altbach (2007, 105) put it. In all European countries studied, the above condition still seems to be met for senior academics. But in ever more complicated settings, overburdened and frustrated academics would not be able to make European universities internationally competitive. With a new, potentially more pessimistic academic mindset, the complexity of the academic enterprise would be even more complex than assumed here.

Traditionally, the role of research in academia was clearly defined: as Burton Clark formulated it:

it is research, as a task and as a basis for status, that makes the difference. . . . The minority of academics who are actively engaged in research lead the profession in all important respects. Their work mystifies the profession, generates its modern myths, and throws up its heroes. (Clark 1987, 102)

And the attractiveness of European research universities has traditionally been in its ability to combine the two core missions (teaching and research). The academic prestige and institutional promotions in research universities are still related almost exclusively to research achievements (Clark 1987, 101; Clancy and Dill 2009). Time spent on research competes directly with time spent on teaching, considering that time spent on administration cannot be easily reduced, and there are powerful tensions between both university missions, with resulting personal stress revealed through the EUROAC survey (on the trade-offs between teaching and research times as central to European universities, see Enders and Teichler 1997; Bonaccorsi, Daraio, and Simar 2007, 166).

The complexity of the academic enterprise increases also because academic activities become increasingly diversified: the ability to raise research money and to manage research projects based on external funding ‘is no longer something academics can do: it is something they must do’ (Musselin 2007b, 177). Not surprisingly: ‘the traditional job of the professor is expanding to include entirely new kinds of responsibilities’ (Altbach 2007, 153). This seems to be increasingly the case throughout most competitive European higher education systems. Consequently,

'blurring boundaries between traditional roles and quasi-entrepreneurial roles' are observed (Enders and Musselin 2008, 145; Kwiek 2008b). While further systematic concentration of talent and resources in most competitive academic places is unavoidable, it also means the deprivation of other, less competitive places, of talents and resources (see Geuna 2001). Amidst new challenges and incompatible missions in massified systems, the traditional rules about selectivity in academia still hold: as in decades past, 'research is not an egalitarian profession. It is a rigorous pursuit, where incompetent performance, as signaled by persistently low achievement, eventually clogs up the system' (Ziman 1994, 258–259).

Conclusion

Almost all emergent complexities of the academic enterprise sketched in this article, directly or indirectly, refer to the academic profession. Both academics and academic institutions are highly adaptable to external circumstances and change has always been the defining feature of national higher education systems. Academics are clever creatures and operate within clever academic institutional cultures, with the necessary balance of change and stability always at play. But the sweeping changes potentially expected now are far-reaching indeed, and go to the very heart of academia. Traditionally, universities demonstrated what Ulrich Teichler called a 'successful mix of effective adaptation and resistance to the adaptations it was called to make' but today the research university in Europe is more endangered than ever before (Teichler 2006, 169). It might even become a 'historical parenthesis,' as a subtitle of a book on *The European Research University* runs (Neave, Blücker, and Nybom 2006). From the perspective of the academic profession, the interplay of change and stability, or change and continuity, and its perceptions by the academic community, is one of the most important parameters of ongoing higher education reforms.

The scope of changes expected for all major aspects of higher education operations (management, governance, funding, missions, and staffing) is much bigger than academics commonly believe. The changes envisaged by policymakers, at both national and especially supranational levels, are structural, fundamental and go to the very heart of the academic enterprise. The university business is becoming more complex than ever in its history due to a variety of interrelated factors. Some are external to the university sector, and some are internal and result from its endogenous transformations in the past few decades. The current complexity of the academic enterprise is related to the biggest public investments in this sector in history; the highest numbers of those involved, students and academics alike, in history; and its high and increasing relevance to the economic growth and job creation in increasingly knowledge-driven economies. It is also powerfully linked to increasing expectations of economic 'relevance' of universities from society at large and policymakers. While there are no one-size fits all type of answers across European systems to current dilemmas, at the same time – due to globalization, Europeanization and internationalization – any idiosyncratic, specifically national answers to them are ever more problematic in the increasingly interconnected world. European higher education and European academic profession seem to be challenged by the growing complexity of the academic enterprise; while both initial multi-dimensional conditions and drivers of change are known, the direction of change is still in the making.

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Notes

1. This is a revised version of a Keynote Speech presented at the Polish Presidency of the European Union Council Conference 'The Modernization of European Universities' in Sopot, October 2011.
2. As Kogan and Hanney emphasized a decade ago, 'perhaps no area of public policy has been subjected to such radical changes over the last 20 years as higher education'; also for Cerych and Sabatier, the late 1970s and the early 1980s were 'a most critical period'; Kogan and Hanney 2000, 11; Cerych and Sabatier 1986, 3). Not surprisingly, because, as observed in organizational research: 'Decisions to change often do not lead to change, or they lead to further unanticipated or unintended change' (Olsen 1998, 322; see also Brunsson and Olsen 1993).
3. Population ecology perspectives stress the critical role of environments in transformations of organizations, and the resource-dependence perspective stresses the mutual interdependence of organizations and their environments. For a traditional powerful defense of higher education as a 'unique institution,' see John D. Millett (1962) or, recently, Christine Musselin (2007a) on universities as 'specific organizations.' See also Maassen and Olsen's distinction between universities as organizations (e.g. as 'instruments for shifting national political agendas') and as 'institutions' throughout their edited book (Maassen and Olsen 2007), used in Kwiek (2012b) to study a recent Polish wave of reforms.
4. The delinking of universities and public good may lead to increasing vulnerability of universities as publicly-subsidized institutions. Higher education needs a 'foundational public purpose,' devoid of the public good it may become replaceable (Marginson 2011, 3; see a recent defense of the public mission of the research university in Rhoten and Calhoun 2011; especially Calhoun 2011, 1–33).
5. The research team included also Dr. Dominik Antonowicz. Research conducted in Europe in 2009–2011 was coordinated by Ulrich Teichler of Kassel University and funded by the European Science Foundation and national funding agencies.
6. For Tables 1 through 3, the source is EUROAC project database, January 2012, University of Kassel; the count (n) is generally 900–1500 academics per country studied, and it is much higher – more than 3500 – for Poland.

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