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National Higher Education Reforms in a European Context

**Comparative Reflections
on Poland and Norway**

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Introduction

Changes in Higher Education in European Peripheries and Their Contexts: Poland, Norway, and Europe

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This book is an output of an intensive Norwegian-Polish research collaboration extended over a period of two years (2009-2011). The following research questions were addressed in this collaboration: What are the main transformations in European higher education? How do these transformations affect the national higher education systems of Norway and Poland? How do European-level higher education policy processes affect national higher education policies in Norway and Poland, especially in the areas of funding and governance? Europe and the two countries were units of analysis, with different authors choosing different research foci and different disciplinary approaches. This introductory chapter presents selected research themes relevant to national and European contexts and provides an overview of individual contributions. It focuses first on transformations of higher education in Central Europe in general, and Poland in more detail.

In general higher education in Central Europe, Poland included, is one of those social areas that have been exposed to various reform attempts following the collapse of communism in 1989. Reforms in the region throughout the two decades were intended, implicitly or explicitly, to bring Central European academics and students back into what was regarded to be the European higher education community of academics and students. Reform attempts were led by specific, regional post-communist concerns inspired by national higher education developments observed in Western Europe. Clearly national and regional reference points in reforms were accompanied by European reference points, especially when the Bologna Process started at the turn of the century and when this European intergovernmental initiative was used in national contexts in the region as a useful justification for further reforms.

The trajectory of policy changes in Central Europe is a special case in the second half of the 20th century: in no other part of the world a similar successful, massive transformation from command-driven economy to market economy was undertaken by ten (mostly neighboring) countries, all desperately seeking to “catch up with the West” after having been under communist regimes more than forty years. They wanted to join as soon as possible (both politically and economically) Western Europe, with its standards of democracy and its levels of material affluence. What later became known as the “transition” (Barr 1994, World Bank

1996) was actually a peaceful revolution in all economic and public service sectors, including the higher education sector.

During the last twenty years, the countries in the region were generally lumped together: first as “transition” economies, then as “accession” economies, and finally, following the 2004 and 2007 waves of the European enlargement, as “new EU entrants” (Barr 2005). While in the transition period the models of reforming all public services, including higher education, were coming mostly from the World Bank, in the pre-accession period and especially after the entrance into the EU as full members, the role of both intergovernmental European processes (the Bologna Process) and supranational European processes (the implementation of the Lisbon 2000 Agenda) was gradually growing.

Historically, the university model prevalent in the region in the pre-war period (before 1939) was the Humboldtian one, even though in some countries, for example, Romania, there were strong influences of the Napoleonic model. Current university models in the region, though, cannot be easily referred to as having clear Western European, i.e. French or German origins. Depending on the aspect under consideration, they can be termed both Humboldtian and Anglo-Saxon, just as current welfare state regimes in the region, Poland included, share characteristics of both conservative and strongly corporatist regimes and Anglo-Saxon liberal regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990). New models of higher education governance, as new models of public sector reforms and welfare state governance in general, are still only emergent in the region. Nonetheless, some scholars have started to discuss a potentially distinct “Central European knowledge production model” and “post-communist welfare state model”(see Kwiek 2011, Aidukaite 2009; see also the chapter by Gornitzka and Maassen in this Volume with reference to the Nordic countries). Polish reforms are a good example of a time sequence in reforming public services in general in the region: while pension and healthcare reforms were initiated in 1999, significant higher education reforms started only a decade later, in 2008-2011. As in many other parts of Europe, higher education reforms are viewed today as incomplete, and as leading, almost by definition, to next waves of reforms, especially in the context of the financial crisis in Europe.

In the communist period, the economy, welfare, and higher education had specific features. Communist-era welfare states were unique, and, similarly, communist-era higher education systems were unique. Following Mateju *et al.* (2007), they had six core characteristics that need to be taken into account if one wants to understand the change dynamics in post-communist countries: (1) higher education was heavily centralized and part of the central planning system, the overall number of students and their allocation to major fields of study and programs were decided centrally. (2) There was an intense bureaucratic control over the entire system, which included balancing the number of graduates with the number of jobs, displaced job competition, and educational credentials being more important in job allocation than actual knowledge, skills, and competencies. (3)

Curriculum guidelines, research goals, and requirement for filling teaching positions were defined and closely monitored by the communist party. (4) Traditional university education was a unitary system that lacked, for example, short bachelor's programs. (5) Decisions about the number of students admitted and enrollment procedures were based on central guidelines and quotas set by the communist party for controlling the proportions of students of various social backgrounds. (6) The funding of universities was entirely dependent on the government, based on incremental budgeting (Mateju *et al.* 2007: 374-375).

Surprisingly, while all other public sector services in Poland are increasingly being reformed in the direction of market or market-like models, higher education seems to be reconceptualized as a new governmental tool for national political agendas, with limited encouragement to be more market-oriented, as Marek Kwiek is arguing in his chapter on reforms in this Volume. The role of market mechanisms in new legislation, as well as in the two strategies for the development of higher education in Poland until 2020, seems much more modest than could be expected. Consequently, while the welfare policies generally are increasingly under pressure to become more marketized, higher education policies generally are under pressure to become more closely linked to the needs of the national economy and national economic priorities. Referring to Olsen's typology (2007) a strong market oriented vision of the university seems present at the level of rhetoric rather than at the level of national strategies, or at the level of higher education legislation.

Polish reform programs and accompanying public debates are, as in other European countries undergoing reforms, driven by an instrumental view of the university: in this view, the university "is involved in a set of contracts. Support, economic and otherwise, depends on contributions. Change reflects a continuous calculation of relative performance and costs, and the University, or some of its parts, will be replaced if there are more efficient ways to achieve shifting objectives" (Olsen 2007: 27). The logic of Polish reforms is clearly instrumental – while the undeclared, and not explicitly formulated nor properly understood logic of the Polish academic community is traditional and institutional. The clash between institutional logic represented in general by the academic community and the instrumental logic represented in general by the policymakers was especially evident when two competing national strategies for the development of Polish higher education were prepared and publicly debated in 2010: one prepared under the auspices of the rectors' conference (KRASP), and the other prepared under the auspices of a consortium of a company and a think tank (Ernst and Young/IBNGR, see EY/IBNGR 2010). Since 2010, a governmental national strategy has been under preparation in a ministerial committee which tries to link both proposals.

An institutional perspective, in contrast to an instrumental perspective, assumes that constitutive rules and practices have a value in themselves and that "well-entrenched institutions reflect the historical experience of a community, that they take time to root and that they are difficult to change rapidly and radically, except

under special circumstances such as widely agreed-upon performance crises” (Olsen 2007: 27). In the last two decades universities in Central Europe have been operating under specific conditions linked to their past: prior to 1989, they had been operating under communist regimes for almost three generations. Therefore in the region, the basic underlying ideas of the university, its rooted constitutive rules and practices, are less socially relevant than in Western systems. In Western Europe these ideas, rules, and practices have been taking roots in the last half a century, together with the emergence of the post-war Western European welfare systems in their different forms.

In such Central European countries as Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary – as opposed to, for instance, Bulgaria and Romania – neither universities themselves nor societies at large perceive universities today as undergoing “widely agreed-on performance crises” (Olsen 2007). Radical reforms (of a big-bang type) seem therefore improbable. Support mechanisms for reform programs include reports, debates and data analyses intended to warn the public at large about the ill-performance of universities, but their social acceptance is relatively low, public interest in reforming higher education is short-term, and the overall social feelings of utter dissatisfaction, urgency for reforms, and systems being on the verge of collapse, do not seem to work as catalysts for change. The levels of overall satisfaction of students in the region are comparable, and often higher than those of their Western colleagues, as various Eurobarometer surveys seem to indicate.

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In different periods following the collapse of communism different international organizations were the major players in national educational, social and welfare policy making processes, including higher education policy processes. The three international organizations of greatest influence in the region were the World Bank, the OECD and, especially in the pre-accession period of the 2000s, the European Union. Other global and regional international organizations, such as e.g. ILO (International Labor Organization), the Council of Europe, the International Monetary Fund or various UN agencies (such as UNDP), were of much lesser importance, except for some countries (such as the Council of Europe in the post-conflict countries emergent from the former Yugoslavia). In Central Europe generally, “policy thinking and advice received differed in each country, often idiosyncratically, explaining a large part of the seemingly unsystematic differentiation in countries on more or less equivalent paths towards Europe” (Orenstein and Haas 2005: 143).

The role of the OECD in national policy debates and national reform projects in higher education in Central Europe, especially in Poland, was very important. A significant part of the “global script” (Gornitzka and Maassen 2011) in higher

education policy (rather than in social policies where the message has been consistently conveyed by the World Bank) in Central Europe has been conveyed by the OECD and its comparative and country reports. In Poland, interesting examples of international organizations' discourse on the reforms of higher education include World Bank's seminal reports. Policymakers' expectations from both OECD and World Bank reports have been very high; this concerns especially the 2007 OECD review of Polish Tertiary Education (Fulton *et al.* 2007). This review was translated into Polish and widely used in policy debates about reforms, especially as an outsider's (international) justification of the wave of 2008-2011 higher education reforms.

Probably the highest international influence on national policies in higher education came from the "European agenda" in higher education, though, especially in the areas most explicitly linked to the Bologna Process and its requirements in the 2000s. *Magna Charta Universitatum* of 1986 and the Bologna Declaration of 1998 were signed by most countries from the region. A new "open method of coordination" made the distribution of higher education policies in Central Europe much more effective (Gornitzka 2007, Dale 2009). Generally, initial enthusiasm of Central European countries (and high ranks in the implementation charts provided in subsequent *Trends* reports) gave way to current implementation problems in several areas (leading first to self-declared "red lights" in the 2009 *Bologna Stocktaking Report* implementation charts; see also the *Trends 2010 report* on Central Europe generally). In contrast, in terms of preparations to the UE accession in the first half of the 2000s in economic policies and not in higher education policies, it was the World Bank that was setting the agenda for Central European countries:

The World Bank tended to dominate the agenda, coordinating with the EU on issues of preparation for accession. Indeed, the World Bank conducted major reviews of east-central European countries' economic policies in preparation for accession that included extensive analysis of social welfare systems and state administration in addition to macroeconomic policy, financial sector regulation, and other economic policy areas that were central to the early transition agenda. As a result, east-central European countries found themselves part of a social policy discourse that primarily included their governments, the EU, and the World Bank, with the latter doing much to set the agenda for these discussions (Orenstein and Haas 2005: 146).

Between 1994 and 2004, as Orenstein reminds, eleven postcommunist countries partially privatized their pension systems – and the case of pension reforms shows that "transnational actors had a fundamental influence on the social-policy agenda in postcommunist countries after the mid-1990s. They exercised this influence in many other areas as well, setting standards for health reform and reshaping unemployment-benefit systems and many other programs" (Orenstein 2008: 86-87). Higher education in the 1990s and until mid-2000s was one of those social areas in which this influence was marginal, except for Hungary where the influence of the World Bank, on and off, was higher than anywhere else in the region.

Leszek Balcerowicz, the founding father of Polish economic reforms leading Poland from command-driven to market economy, never used the word “higher education” in any context whatsoever in his seminal book *Socialism, Capitalism, Transformation* (1996); not surprisingly, also Jeffrey Sachs in his *Poland’s Jump to Market Economy* (1994) never used it. In the transition period of the 1990s, there was generally very limited interest in universities and their performance, or in university reforms leading to their better performance: higher education and research and development systems were somehow missing from the general picture of Polish transformations. Most prominent figures involved in Polish economic reforms hardly mention reforms of both systems at all. Poland was not an exception: the lack of higher education reforms in the early 1990s was prevalent in Central Europe, perhaps partly to overwhelming Western views that communist educational systems did not need any substantial transformations, in contrast to economic systems and political systems which needed fast and deep changes. It needs to be added, by way of justification, though, that the 1990s in the region meant creating capitalism “from scratch”, creating “the very fundamentals of capitalism”; not surprisingly, “in Eastern Europe, both markets and private enterprises were virtually non-existent for about 40 years” (Elster, Offe and Preuss 1998: 157).

And in the meantime – in the 1990s – higher education landscape in Western Europe was undergoing profound transformations, most often according to governmental plans and national strategies (Gornitzka 1999, Maassen *et al.* 2011). Systems in both parts of Europe were dramatically changing in the 1990s but transformations in Central Europe were often unplanned, chaotic, uncoordinated, profit-driven, intuitive, and fragmentary; transformations in Western Europe in the 1990s consisted much more of government-coordinated changes, resulting from government-designed national strategies and emergent revised national policies. The difference between planned changes in higher education in Norway and unplanned changes in Poland can be clearly seen from chapters by all contributors.

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After 1945, Norway has developed a social welfare state, driven by a dominant Labor party but with broad support from practically all political parties. The Norwegian welfare state model included opening up access to all educational levels for the society at large, including from the late 1950s on widening access to higher education. Consequence of this has been a rapid continuous growth of the Norwegian higher education system with the accompanying funding, organization, governance, and quality issues being in need of regular adaptation/reform.

In Norwegian policy making an important role is played by national commissions. In most policy areas for addressing specific policy issues or problems the responsible Ministry sets up a national commission which is expected to

address the issue(s) in question in a report that can be regarded as a green paper, followed in most cases by a governmental White paper or a number of specific reforms or policy documents. Also with respect to higher education this has been the case, with the first commission addressing the problems related to the growth of Norwegian higher education being the Ottesen Commission (1968), followed by various other commissions, of which the Hernes commission (1988), the Mjøs commission (2001) and the Stjernø Commission (2007) are the most important. A common theme for all these commissions and the higher education policy discussions since the 1960s has been the focus on a more effective organization and structuring of higher education through cooperation, task-reallocation (division of labor), and concentration, amongst other things, through institutional and program mergers.

At the end of the 1980s the policy debates about the nature and organization of higher education intensified, also from the perspective of the (emerging) knowledge society, and the knowledge and 'bildung' needs of the Norwegian civil society. The Hernes commission addressed in its report (1988) many aspects of Norwegian higher education, and proposed to create to a clearer division of labor between the university and høyskole sectors. It also indicated the importance for the Norwegian society of general knowledge, and commission chairman Hernes (who later become a Minister of Education) discussed in a much cited newspaper interview the lack of ambition in Norwegian universities and the need to look at the issue of Norwegian elite universities.

With Hernes as Minister of Education (early 1990s) a number of reforms were initiated aimed at stimulating a more effective organization and structuring of Norwegian higher education. These included a merger operation in the university college (in Norwegian: *høyskole*) sector (from over 100 to 26 institutions) and the establishment of *Norgesnett* ('Norwegian network'). The latter was based on a proposal from the Hernes commission and was aimed at stimulating a division of functions and tasks between the higher education institutions. The idea was to create an integrated system of higher education and scientific research based on three elements, i.e. division of labor between institutions, the creation of nodes ('knooppunten') at each of the individual higher education institutions, and the strengthening of the connecting links between the institutions. The underlying idea was that through voluntary networking Norwegian higher education institutions would come to a more effective division of labor as well as cooperation between institutions, to institutional profiling, and to a more efficient use of public resources. Concretely four types of connecting links were mentioned in the government White paper (1991) preparing the ground for the introduction of *Norgesnett*: student mobility, contacts between academic staff, educational cooperation, and communication through ICT and mass media.

Looking back it can be said that the *Norgesnett* reform was an interesting attempt of the Norwegian government to combine the adaptation of Norwegian

higher education to the knowledge society demands with the handling of the consequences of the massification of Norwegian higher education. This reform attempt took place in a frame of voluntariness, i.e. without direct government interference, and without positive or negative incentives. The government did not make any additional funding available for the Norgesnettets reform.

Currently the general view is that the Norgesnettets reform was not very successful, in the sense that it did not lead to the expected division of labor and institutional cooperation, nor to the institutional profiling. One can argue that the underlying vision of the Norgesnettets, based to a large extent on the 'bildung' challenges of the public knowledge society were throughout the 1990s to a large extent overtaken by a focus on the knowledge and innovation needs of the private sector. By the time the next national higher education commission (the Mjøs commission) was set up (end of the 1990s), the marketplace had also entered the Norwegian political arenas, and the focus had moved somewhat from socio-economic development through consultation and compromise to development through competition. But obviously all within the Norwegian welfare state setting, in which also the traditional right wing parties have a relative high level of trust in the state and the public domain.

The Mjøs commission's report included a number of the 'continuous Norwegian higher education policy issues', while it also incorporated the main aspects of the Bologna Declaration. The Ministry of Education used the Mjøs commission's report to produce a major White paper that formed the basis for one of the most far reaching reforms of Norwegian higher education after WWII: the Quality Reform (2002). This implied that what were regarded as 'reforms long overdue' could finally be implemented with the Bologna process as their external legitimization. These reforms focused on the Norwegian degree structure, the long time it took students to finish their studies, and issues of educational organization (the need for modularization) and quality. These issues had been debated since the beginning of the massification of Norwegian higher education but had been very difficult to reform without the external legitimization that the Bologna process offered (Gornitzka 2006).

The Quality Reform led to increased institutional autonomy combined with greater institutional responsibility in a number of areas; to increased rights for higher education students; to a new degree system with Bachelor and Master Degrees as standard elements; to a new institutional governance system with executive institutional boards; to a greater emphasis on internationalization and student exchange; to a new public funding system with a 60% basic component and a 40% performance based component; and to an opening up of the binary system by allowing university colleges and specialised university institutions to apply for full university status if they fulfilled certain conditions. The latter conditions included the offering of at least five accredited Master programs and four PhD programs.

The Quality Reform represents an important contribution to the ‘modernization’ of Norwegian higher education, especially with respect to the educational tasks and the institutional governance structures. However, it did not stimulate the expected division of labor, institutional cooperation and institutional profiling. One could even argue that a contrary development took place after 2002: academic drift in the university college sector, leading to many university colleges sending in or preparing a full university status application; as part of the latter a rapid growth of new Master and PhD programs in the university college sector¹; a growth of professionally oriented Master programs in the university sector; and a decrease in formal institutional education cooperations because of the new funding system. In addition, the intentions of the then Minister of Education to change the legal status of the universities and university colleges from state-owned to public, self-owned corporations failed; Norwegian public higher education institutions are still state-owned. The main structural results of the Quality reform are that Norway currently has 8 universities² instead of 4; that the university colleges have invested extensively in the development of their research activities and capacity; and that all public higher education institutions have introduced new governance structures, including central executive boards.

While the Quality Reform is in general seen as a successful educational reform that has had a positive effect on the leadership & management, administration and organisation of Norwegian higher education institutions, it is at the same time felt that the modernization of Norwegian higher education is not finished yet. And again the ‘old’ topics of division of labor, institutional cooperation and institutional profiling have been debated after the Quality Reform, while also the university drive of many of the university colleges is seen as problematic. The latter is a process where the Ministry of Education does not have a direct possibility of influencing it, given that the responsibility for judging the university status applications lies in the hands of NOKUT, the Norwegian higher education quality assessment agency. Once NOKUT has approved an application it is in practice not possible for the Ministry of parliament to stop the process, and deny the institution in question university status. Additional issues that came up after the Quality reform’s implementation were: a rather negative set of evaluations by NOKUT of professional bachelor programs in the university college sector; signals from the university sector that the Quality reform has a negative effect on the research capacity and activities of the universities; complaints from Norwegian private sector about the quality of higher education graduates; worries about the lack of innovation oriented activities in the higher education institutions; and a lack of growth in the number of international students studying in Norway.

1 Currently (2012) more than 20 higher education institutions have formally a PhD awarding status.

2 University nr 8 (University of Nordland, Bodø) has formally received university status 1 January 2011.

All these issues together formed the basis for the Norwegian Ministry of Education already shortly after the Mjøs commission setting up a new national commission: the Stjernø Commission (2006/07). This commission consisted of 12 members, incl. two students and the chairman (former rector of the University College Oslo). This commission was asked to advise the government on the preferable development of the Norwegian higher education system until 2026. It had an extensive mandate that covered 'everything' with the exception of the degree structure (no need to change it after the Quality Reform /Bologna process implementation); tuition fees (no need to introduce tuition fees before 2026); and the state ownership of the public higher education institutions.

The commission has made an extensive analysis of the current change dynamics of Norwegian HE and has come to the following conclusions:

1. There is no national higher education & research strategy in Norway. The regional policy forms the main frame also for higher education & research policies.
2. Norway is the only OECD country with a 'technical' university definition, based mainly on the number of Master and PhD programs.
3. The (former) Norwegian binary system is moving towards an integration of the two main sectors.
4. The ambitions of individual institutions and not politics are the driving force behind the main structural system changes in Norwegian higher education, and in essence most ambitions are concentrated around the issue of university status for the university colleges and elite university status for (3 of) the 4 old universities.
5. There are major quality concerns about bachelor level professional education at the university colleges. One argument used in this is that the most ambitious university colleges have used bachelor level funding for the development of new Master and PhD programs.
6. Master and doctoral level education is highly fragmented and in large parts of the higher education system unproductive and inefficient.
7. There is a large influence of unions on academic salary structure. One of the consequences is limited flexibility for the higher education institutions to introduce performance based salary schemes. This has caused a low average salary level for senior academics.
8. There is a growing diversity of knowledge needs in the Norwegian society, and especially the university college sector is important for addressing the needs related to the practice and developments of the large public and private professional sectors.
9. The forecasted demographic developments show that there will be a growth of the Norwegian student population at least until 2015. However, this growth is not equally spread over the country, since there is also a growing move of young people to urban areas.

10. There are major worries, expressed, amongst others, by the Norwegian research council, about (top) basic research funding, recruitment and quality.
11. There is no effective institutional or national support system for international research funding acquisition. This has become visible, e.g. in the relative low success of Norwegian applicants to the FP/ in general and the ERC in particular.
12. The public funding system for higher education is not effective: it ‘punishes’ cooperation; the basic component is not transparent and (too) large; and the performance part is controversial.
13. In general the growing importance of the international (and especially European) dimension in higher education and research policy and practice is largely neglected in public debates on HE.
14. There is a growing difficulty for many regional higher education institutions to attract (and keep) senior academic staff, and for some of them it has even become difficult to attract (enough) students.

On the basis of its analyses and the internal discussions the Stjernø commission identified four alternative models for the future development of Norwegian higher education:

- a. Multicampus universities in every major region (model based on geography), which also integrate the regional university colleges.
- b. Large university colleges next to a limited number of universities (continuation of the binary model)
- c. Network approach (renewal of the *Norgesnett* model of the 1990s)
- d. A stimulation of differentiation of Norwegian higher education (process and diversity-model).

The commission has two plans, i.e. a plan A consisting of an integration of the above models a. and d. In case the main actors would reject plan A, the commission has suggested a plan B consisting of a large number of problem solving reforms and policies.

As with each official Norwegian policy paper, also the report of the Stjernø Commission (published January 2007) was sent out to all major stakeholders for comments and feedback. It is usual practice that the Ministry takes the feedback and comments into account when determining how to handle the proposals, recommendations and suggestions of a commission. In the case of the Stjernø commission’s report the general tendency in the ‘hearing’ round was that all stakeholders agreed with the analyses, but not with the proposed models (plan A). Also the then Minister carefully indicated that she did not want to support the proposed overall model of 8-10 large, integrated multi-campus institutions. This meant that plan A was rejected. While the Minister and the main stakeholders from the sector had rejected the main recommendation (plan A), the Minister and her Ministry took the analyses and plan B recommendation very seriously. The

consequence is that the commission's work is not followed by one overall reform (like the previous Quality Reform), but instead is translated into a large number of smaller and larger adaptations, policies and reforms, implemented since late 2007. In addition, a number of the higher education institutions have taken the commission's analyses and report as a frame of reference for a regional cooperation and/or merger process. For example, the University of Tromsø and the Høyskole of Tromsø have merged into a new institution (university); the University of Bergen has developed a close cooperation (network) structure with three regional høyskoler, amongst other things, in the area of PhD education; the University Colleges in Oslo and Akershus have merged into a new institution in 2011, and this new institution intends to apply for university status in 2015; various other merger and cooperation agreements have been agreed upon in the larger Oslo region. Interestingly, even though these processes were institutional initiatives, and even though the Ministry has from 2007 on indicated to not interfere in these processes, still the Ministry decided to make extra funds (annually Nok 50 million) available (from 2010 on) for stimulating and supporting the further development of these process. This is regarded as an important signal from the Ministry in the sense that even though the Ministry will not interfere directly, it still wants to indicate that the ongoing division of labour, merger and cooperation processes, and concentration efforts are very important elements in the process to come to a more effective organisation and structuring in Norwegian higher education.

What else has the Ministry of Education done? The list is rather long, and the process is not finished yet, but the Ministry's actions are most clearly visible in the following areas:

- a. PhD education: stimulation of the establishment of national research schools. Several rounds for establishing national graduate schools have in the meantime been organized, with funding from the Norwegian research council. At the same time, the number of higher education institutions that is offering a PhD degree has increased to 22 and it seems difficult for the Ministry to put a stop this process.
- b. University definition: While the definition of what is a Norwegian university has not been changed dramatically, the Ministry has asked NOKUT to focus in the applications for new PhD programs more on quality than quantity. NOKUT (and the Ministry) have recently introduced new criteria for høyskole based PhD programs, focusing indeed more on quality and capacity. This implies in practice that it has become more difficult for university colleges to introduce new PhD programmes.
- c. Small higher education institutions: The Ministry has indicated that small institutions do not have to close, and that instead they will receive extra funding from the Ministry to strengthen their recruitment and staff foundations.

- d. Bachelor professional education: Various measures have been taken to strengthen bachelor level professional education. This includes the announcement of the establishment of centers of excellence for education.
- e. Internationalization: The Ministry has published a green paper on the renewal of the internationalization of higher education policies.

All these measures and the action of the institutions themselves mean that the Norwegian higher education system is going in the direction indicated by the Stjernø commission in its report, but not as drastically as the commission proposed. Already voices are heard in the higher education policy arena that sooner or later the Norwegian government has to take a stronger grip on the development of the higher education system. The continuing fragmentation of PhD (and Master level) education; the continuing difficulties of smaller regional institutions to attract students and staff; the continuing ambitions of the stronger university colleges to apply for full university status; the continuing inefficiencies of the public funding system; the worries about the continuing move of students to the urban areas; the continuing worries about the international competitiveness of Norwegian top fundamental research; as well as the continuing decrease of Norwegian success in FP7 (and especially the ERC), all are mentioned as policy problems that need to be addressed structurally by the Ministry. However, the Minister of Education has indicated regularly that she is satisfied with the current change dynamics, both through her Ministry, and the institutional initiatives, and does not see a need for more far reaching higher education reforms, or a new national commission.

4

Both Polish and Norwegian higher education systems seem to have been in the peripheries of Western European systems (Tomusk 2006). There were different reasons for this (relative) isolation: one is political – Poland entered the European Union in 2004, Norway is outside of it. Another is cultural: higher education policies in both countries have never been closely following European Continental debates and discourses on changing educational systems. Poland was certainly too busy changing its whole political and economic architecture, leaving higher education somehow outside of the major track of changes; Norway was involved much more in debating and analyzing changes in the Nordic countries than in Continental Europe. The Polish isolation has far-reaching consequences, though: while Western European systems were changing gradually in the last two decades, Polish universities were generally left on their own until the 2008-2011 wave of reforms, despite several governmental attempts to stimulate the changes (especially through the new Law on Higher Education of 2005, with its basic aim to adapt the Polish system to the Bologna Process requirements). In this context it is not surprising that the 2008-2011 changes, as viewed by the academic community in general, seem to threaten the stability of the Polish academic world. Gradual

changes taking two decades of adaptations in major European systems are now compressed to a few years in Poland. But the justification for this compression in time is made explicit: Polish universities cannot remain virtually one of the last unreformed sectors of the Polish economy while universities are changing, or forced to be changing, throughout the rest of Europe.

In the last decade, discussions about the future of the institution of the university at national, supranational/European and global levels have accelerated to an unprecedented degree. The university, often to its own surprise, is becoming one of the most important socio-economic institutions in societies in which social and economic well-being is increasingly based on the production, transmission, dissemination and application of knowledge (see Stehr 2002, Bok 2003, Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, Foray 2006, Kahin and Foray 2006, Shattock 2008, Maassen and Stensaker 2011). Discussions about the future of universities in Norway and Poland in the last decade were not unique in Europe; indeed, they were as fundamental in these two peripheral European systems as they were in the core European systems. There were discussions in the community of policy-makers and in the academic community, as well as clashes between the two communities. Tentative conclusions from the policy-makers' and academic discourses often do not seem to converge, as is demonstrated in various chapters in this Volume. There is a deep cleavage between ideas produced by academics, often expressed through various national and international associations or national rectors' conferences, and ideas produced by policy-makers at both supranational, intergovernmental and national levels. In Poland, there is deep mistrust between the two communities, accompanied by a lack of a common working conceptual framework (also at the level of shared vocabulary). In the last two decades, Polish debates were never systematically referred to European debates, with their evolving arguments and major concepts, such as resources and outcomes, accountability, relevance, productivity and efficiency, public and private returns from education, Europeanization, globalization, and internationalization in higher education. In the 2008-2011 wave of reforms, there is a powerful clash between traditional, Humboldtian (and communist) parlance of academics, rooted in traditional humanistic apologia of the university, and the public sector reformers' parlance rooted in the human capital theory and international and supranational discourse on European universities, as expressed, for example, in OECD and World Bank reports on Polish higher education and the "modernization agenda of European universities" developed by the European Commission in the last decade. The clash, in terms of organizational theory, is between competing institutional and instrumental visions of the university, and in more general terms is between competing "cultural" and "economic" visions of the university (Olsen and Maassen 2007).

The Polish Ministry was heavily involved in preparing reforms in two stages: new laws on the research sector (of April 30, 2010) and on the higher education sector (of March 18, 2011). The consultation about subsequent draft laws has been

organised with involvement of the academic community, the rectors' conferences, business and employers' associations and other stakeholders. The two packages of legislation from 2010-2011 are substantially reforming the two sectors, for the first time since 1990 when the new law on higher education was introduced. The six new laws reforming the research sector (in force since October 1, 2010) are the law on financing research, on the National Council for Research and Development (NCBiR), on the National Research Council (NCN), on research institutes, on the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the law on regulations introducing new laws reforming the system of research. The reform of the research sector introduced a new model of financing research based on competition, quality, and transparency of procedures and a new system of evaluation of research units. The guiding principles of the reform of research include the following: to develop a transparent system of financing research institutions linking financing with the quality of research performed in them; to allow the concentration of research funding in top research institutes; to allocate research funding on a purely competitive basis through two independent national agencies: the NCN to finance fundamental research in all fields of science (with 20% of research grants allocated for junior researchers) and the NCBiR to finance applied research; to transform research and development units into research institutes whose major goal will be research and development focused on the economy needs and technology transfer from the research sector to the economy; and to develop a comprehensive evaluation system of research institutes. Research institutes became entitled to offer doctoral studies and postgraduate studies, to merge with other research institutes, units of the Polish Academy of Sciences and with higher education institutions. Units of the Polish Academy of Sciences became entitled to develop research centers (with research institutes and enterprises) focused, for example, on regional needs and on doctoral education. The NCN will be also involved in allocating doctoral and postdoctoral stipends. The new laws contributed to the goal of the future integration of the research and higher education sector, so far operating in isolation. The reform has introduced the competitive basis for employment in public research institutes and provided instruments for increased institutional and geographical mobility of academics.

The new law on higher education³ is focused on the better integration of higher education institutions and their socio-economic environment, the introduction of pro-quality funding mechanisms, the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework, the adjustment of study programmes to emergent labor market needs, the internationalization of higher education, and the promotion of lifelong learning and an entrepreneurial culture in universities. It has four strategic goals: more university differentiation, more university autonomy, performance-based, competitive funding and better quality. The six areas where the changes are most

3 It concerns in fact a substantial amendment of the law on higher education of July 27, 2005 and the law on scientific degree and scientific title of March 14, 2003.

far-reaching include increased autonomy of universities in selecting their study programs offered, the emergence of KNOWs, or Leading National Research Units, a simplified career ladder for academics (with the disputable degree of Habilitation still in place, with simplified procedures, though), closer links between universities and the economy (with a possibility of engaging employers in preparations of study programs), and further decentralization of higher education, including the abolition of the hitherto existing requirement to have university rulebooks and statutes approved by the Ministry and more power given to rectors with respect to opening, transforming and closing down university units.

A recent important initiative related to resource utilization, as included in the new legislation of March 2011, is KNOWs: Leading National Research Units. Higher education funding is expected to be complemented with a new national “pro-quality subsidy” (230 million PLN or 80 million USD in 2012), intended to be allocated on a highly competitive basis to top performing organizational units of public and private sector institutions, i.e. faculties rather than institutions; those units will be accorded the status of KNOWs. This subsidy will be used for increasing the level of PhD stipends of 30 percent best performing PhD students; will be allocated to those faculties which receive “excellent” notes from the State Accreditation Commission (PKA), and for the best private higher education institutions to subsidize their doctoral studies. Finally, it will be used for the implementation of internal quality assurance mechanisms linked to the National Qualifications Framework. University autonomy will be increased through leaving the decision of opening new study programs to faculties rather than the Ministry. A closed national list of study programmes, so-called “standards of education”, will be abolished, and most top research performing faculties will be able to open and close down their study programmes at their discretion. Other faculties will still need the Ministry’s approval for new programmes. Study programmes offered will be defined by learning outcomes, linked to the National and the European Qualifications Framework. Higher education institutions will be obliged to prepare their own regulations concerning intellectual property and principles of the commercialization of research results.

KNOWs will be selected in eight fields of knowledge, including social sciences, humanities and the arts, and there will be no more than three of them in each field. Their funding will be allocated for five years, and their selection will be related to evaluations performed by a new quality assurance agency, KEJN (the Committee for the Evaluation of Research Units). A new model of academic career means less complicated procedures to obtain PhD degrees, Habilitation degrees, and Professorship titles; formal procedures will be more transparent and more closely related to measurable, objective criteria. A new model of education includes closer links between study programmes and labor market needs, increased internationalization of studies, and increased rights guaranteed to students as consumers of educational services in both public and private higher education

sectors. The implementation of the higher education reform, in the ministerial view, is expected to allow for the following: the development of more motivation-based leadership and management of higher education through the implementation of a coherent assessment system for research and teaching, linked with financial bonus instruments; special focus on quality assessment through the specification of provisions on quality assessment methods (taking into account formal and legal aspects, as well as importance of learning outcomes and quality of research); and an efficient use of available resources and promotion of a competitive-based funding, as well as attracting investors from the private sector (diversification of resources).

Academic discussions in the last two decades in Europe were intended to either advance higher education reforms, or to slow them down, or to change their course. In Poland, perhaps for the first time in the whole post-1989 period, throughout the last three years there were fundamental differences in the visions on the future of universities between the academic and policy-makers' communities, leading to sharp public letters of concern and letters of protestation signed by representatives of the academic community. The cleavage led to two parallel tracks in working on changes in higher education: the policy-makers' and the academic, in which parallel draft laws and parallel national strategies for higher education were produced (2005-2010).

The cleavage between the policy-makers' reform attempts and the academics-driven reform attempts seen for the first time in Poland at the end of the 2000s, was not uncommon in Europe, though. Discussions in the Polish context were strongly linked to the past two decades of Polish universities operating under democratic and free market conditions. And, unlike in Norway, or unlike in Western Europe, for that matter, the discussions in 2008-2011 were overshadowed, implicitly or explicitly, by a fundamental question about the future of private higher education (see chapter 5 by Marek Kwiek in this Volume). The European context in the most recent wave of reforms was, declaratively, very important. But the specific national conditions of the last two decades shaped reforms to a much larger degree: in a system which was operating under significant financial austerity throughout the 1990s, and which brought about a high degree of public-private symbiosis throughout the two decades, the funding dimension was much more important than the governance dimension. Funding issues discussed included not only funding for public sector institutions and the possible introduction of fees for full-time students in the public sector – part-time students have been paying fees since 1990 – but also public funding for private sector institutions. The public subsidization of the private sector, although legally possible since the previous law on higher education of 2005, is not technically possible without lower-level regulations; and the introduction of fees in the public sector was postponed, and has not become part of the current (2008-2011) reform package.

In the last three decades in Western Europe, there have been permanent renegotiations of the relationship between the state and higher education systems (see Neave and Van Vught 1991, Goedegebuure *et al.* 1994, Gornitzka *et al.* 2005, Enders and Jongbloed 2007, Amaral *et al.* 2008, Paradeise *et al.* 2009.). As most developed European economies are becoming ever more knowledge-intensive, the emphasis on deep university reforms becomes ever stronger. At the same time, knowledge, including academically-produced knowledge, is located in the very center of key economic challenges of modern societies (Geiger 2004, Leydesdorff 2006, St. John 2006, Bonaccorsi and Doraio 2007, Olsen 2007). The relationship between state, society and the university is currently “redefined and reorganized” (Gornitzka *et al.* 2007: 212) and the current dynamics of changes could be conceptualized as “a search for a new pact” between the university and its environments (Maassen and Olsen 2007).

Research presented in the present Volume supports an argument made in the research agenda presented in Maassen and Olsen (2007) according to which

the University is in a “critical period” with a potential for a major rebalancing of internal and external relations of authority, power and responsibility in university governance. Behind labels such as “a Europe of knowledge” there is a search for a new pact between the University, political authorities and society at large (Gornitzka *et al.* 2007: 184).

Both in Norway and in Poland, the relationships between universities and the state have been changing in the face of the demands of the knowledge economy, as discussed above, in Norway through the subsequent Mjøs and Stjernø commissions of 2001 and 2007, and in Poland recently via the 2005 and 2011 laws on higher education. In Poland, the new law has tightened substantially the link between both individual and institutional performance and funding, both for teaching and for research. The combination of governance and funding reforms of 2011 made more research funding available on a more competitive basis; and work on linking teaching performance with teaching funding much more closely is in progress. But even in Norway funding and performance have become directly linked through the public funding mechanism for higher education introduced in 2003.

The changing social, economic, cultural and legal setting of European higher education institutions increasingly compels them to function in the state of permanent adaptation which requires changes to both their funding and governance modes (see Clark 1998, Shattock 1998, Krücken *et al.* 2007, Maassen 2008, Paradeise *et al.* 2009). Reforming universities does not lead to their completed reforms, as examples from major European higher education systems show. Reforming, instead, is leading to further waves of reforms (Maassen and Olsen 2007, Clancy and Dill 2009).⁴ This is the Polish case in which the current wave of

4 As organizational research shows, there is no surprise that reforms based on “simple prescriptive models” seldom succeed in achieving their aims: “such reforms often increase rather than decrease the felt need, and probability of, new reforms. ... it is often observed

reforms is not perceived by policymakers as making universities finally “complete” or “true” organizations (Brunsson 2009); more legal changes are expected in the next few years, which reflects a more general observation known from the field of organizational studies according to which “institutional reforms breed new demands for reforms rather than making reforms redundant” (Olsen 1998: 322).

There seem to be two major sets of discourses about the university missions, and they have been divergent: there is a set of global and supranational discourses, coming from the World Bank, the OECD and the European Commission, reflected often in national public policy debates about systemic reforms of higher education, and there is a set of traditional discourses of the academic community, deeply rooted in traditional academic values, norms, and behaviors (Novoa and Lawn 2002, Ramirez 2006). They seem to be far away from each other. Struggles between the two sets of discourses – the former set supported by the power of the redistribution of resources and legal changes, the latter set supported by the power of academic traditions – lead in many systems to conflicts between alternative institutional rules (March and Olsen 1989). The case is especially clear in Poland in the last few years when governmental reform plans and their fundamental premises were being presented in an international, OECD-derived policy discourse, while the reform plans and their fundamental premises prepared by the academic community through its main representative body, KRASP, or the Rectors’ Conference of Polish Academic Institutions, were formulated in the traditional discourse of the academic community (see EY/IBNGR 2010 and KRASP 2019).

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The present volume consists of this introductory chapter, followed by eight thematically focused chapters and concluding reflections from the editors. Peter Maassen in his chapter on “Higher Education Diversity in Europe” argues that from the 1950s on, Europe has been a continent with a strong focus on equality of opportunities, and a negative attitude towards the use of the marketplace and competition in public sector governance. This applies also to higher education, where like in the rest of society, trust in the government was in general larger than trust in market forces. This starting point is important to him for understanding the developments with respect to higher education diversity in Europe. He stresses that from a governmental policy perspective, diversity in European higher education has not been linked primarily to student demand or student characteristics per se, but rather to structural features of higher education systems. In many European countries differences between students have to a large extent been neglected in national policies, and the underlying ideological driving force for the governance,

that organizations work well precisely because naïve reforms have *not* been implemented” (Brunsson and Olsen 1998: 30).

organization, and (public) funding of higher education have for long been equality and equity at all relevant levels. Amongst other things, the formation of elite institutions, the selection of students on the basis of merit, and, in many countries, the charging of tuition fees, have been taboos. But over the last ten years, he stresses, cracks have appeared in European basic attitudes towards the governance, organization and funding of higher education. At the European level, as well as nationally, a new modernization agenda has emerged that addresses the issues that higher education policy in Europe has avoided for so long. These include the introduction of professional institutional management, a move towards high(er) tuition fees, the creation of elite or top universities, establishing partnerships with the private sector, an organizational and funding separation of the best (institutions, staff, students) from the rest, the introduction of performance based salary systems for academic staff, etc.

Peter Maassen in this chapter discusses how these reform efforts are affecting higher education diversity. In doing so he discusses structural issues at the national level – the traditional way of addressing diversity in European higher education – but also two major new developments, i.e. the issue of research excellence, and the growing European level focus on Vocational Education and Training (VET). He argues that European higher education is in a transition period. This concerns its academic foundations, as well as the political and socio-economic ideas underlying higher education. As a consequence, one can observe a rather endless set of reforms aimed at adjusting national higher education systems to national as well as European level common political agendas and strategies. Overall, one of the aims of the reforms is to reduce the “shocking diversity” of European higher education (Neave 2003). And indeed, some level of convergence around degree structures and curriculum organization has been realized, as well as a more common understanding of how to promote research excellence and the role of the university in this. On the other hand, the emergence of vocational education and training programs at higher education levels has led to an increase in inter-country higher education structure diversity. Another important point he raises is that after 2000, the European level took most initiatives concerning higher education (and research) policies and reforms. This had in many ways a converging effect, but there are also diverging effects emerging from the European level focus on higher education and research. But more recently, the focal point for higher education reform has moved back to the national level. This development will most likely not stimulate the diversification of European higher education. The higher education (and research) reform agendas of European countries, he claims, have become more alike, but the reform instrumentation and reform outcomes are leading to a greater structural diversity in European higher education. All in all, he argues, in some respects the “shocking diversity” of European higher education has been reduced around certain structural aspects, such as degree structures, but at the same time there is a growing

diversity around other aspects, such as funding, the legal status of higher education institutions, and the institutional governance structures.

In her chapter on "Competing or Complementary? Qualification Frameworks on the Agenda", Mari Elken focuses on the increasing European integration in higher education and some of the underlying tensions and contradictions this new multi-actor and multi-layer environment poses for higher education. After providing a general background history of the European-level involvement in higher education, she focuses on the development of qualifications frameworks and the two parallel processes of developing the qualifications framework for the Bologna process and the development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Questions are posed with respect to the complementarity of these two frameworks and the underlying values they include. By examining the implementation processes in Norway and Poland, she proposes three potential scenarios for the future of qualifications frameworks in Europe: a) the NQFs will be implemented fully; b) the NQFs will be introduced in a partial manner; and c) continued resistance. The first option would imply that a major shift in thinking about higher education and qualifications has to take place. The second option would mean that there would be some compliance and an introduction of NQFs as a reaction to European and peer pressures. At the same time, it would be in a form of window-dressing with no actual change in the very institutional core of higher education. The third option would be that the active resistance and stalling of the process, as indicated in the case of Poland, would continue, and if this is done by a sufficient amount of countries, the idea of qualifications frameworks would just lose its momentum. Looking at the developments and role of higher education in European policy, Elken argues that there is a shift in how higher education is being perceived but, at the same time, there is little evidence that the implementation of these European solutions would be as self-evident and simple as one would guess from reading European policy documents.

Dominik Antonowicz discusses in his chapter "External Influences and Local Responses. Changes in Polish Higher Education 1990-2005". He focuses on the timeframe 1990-2005, as this was a period in which the higher education system in Poland was heavily impacted by external influences. This timeframe is marked by two major legal events – the approval of the Laws on Higher Education by the Polish Parliament. The years between 1990 and 2005 saw the Polish higher education system experiencing a struggle between an expectation to adopt Western European model(s) of governance (in line with the economy and political system) and aspirations of the academic community to restore the mythical concept of the university as the "Republic of Science" (Olsen 2007). Transformations in Polish higher education were also part of a much grander agenda of socio-economic and political changes. After the communist regime was brought down in 1989, a number of institutions had to be reinvented or restructured. Leaving the Soviet Block, Polish higher education was exposed to the intensive processes of

Europeanization. At the same time, higher education in particular experienced growing internationalization. However, transnational pressures to restructure higher education are not unique to post-communist Poland, as it has been widely acknowledged that globalization is deeply affecting various aspects of higher education worldwide. The aim of this chapter is to present the logic behind the changes in Polish higher education during the period 1990-2005. The analyses aimed to demonstrate that changes in Polish higher education during the post-communist transformation (1990-2005) did not come from the western European script because it was in a state of intensive change. In addition, higher education reforms of the 1980s were introduced largely against the will and interests of the academic community. There were loose ideas that underpinned western universities that appear to be shared in most western European countries. The main ideas in his view are the notion of university autonomy and the mass system of higher education, which became a driving force of changes in Polish higher education. Both of these factors were the subject of translation and interpretation, though dominant values, interests of political actors were incorporated/imitated in a Polish institutional context. Neither university autonomy nor the expansion of the university system was the idea of the government, he stresses, which over fifteen years remained static or even largely absent. Thus, the academic oligarchy was able to gain a foothold in the greater society. Expansion of higher education was accidentally sparked by the law of higher education and was subject to uncontrolled processes that either came from the spirit of capitalism or were diffused from western countries. The private sector of higher education was an antidote to the collectivist, state owned, egalitarian and bureaucratic higher education system from the past.

In a chapter entitled “University Reform and the Nordic Model”, Åse Gornitzka and Peter Maassen discuss factors that have shaped the direction and content of university governance reforms in three national Nordic cases, Denmark, Finland and Norway. The main assumption underlying the chapter is that by selecting from the Nordic countries three ‘most equal’ cases, it is possible to analyse whether the higher education reform instrumentation and reform outcomes within the overall framework of the communalities of the Nordic model are becoming more similar or more varied. This also makes it possible to discuss the relevance of the Nordic model for higher education in other regions. The authors associate the Nordic model with a particular mode of public sector reform implementation, in the sense that there are similar structural and cultural characteristics of political regimes and reform trajectories that these countries have followed. In the study of public sector reform the Nordic countries are characterised as eager reformers, but oriented towards participatory modernisation and consensus. Similarly, it is argued that these countries represent a “Nordic exceptionalism” with respect to compliance to European Community law and in their consensus orientation with respect to resolving conflicts regarding

implementation, which is rooted in domestic traditions and styles of decision making in the Nordic countries. Also in terms of political institutions it can be argued that there is a specific Nordic model. The authors argue that to the extent that this is true one would expect that also the process of public higher education reform would be played out in the same way in the Nordic countries.

In a chapter on “The Public/Private Dynamics in Polish Higher Education. Demand-Absorbing Private Sector Growth and Its Implications”, Marek Kwiek links several interrelated processes in Central and Eastern European higher education: expansion through two types of privatization – external: new private providers, and internal: public universities charging fees in a nominally free public sector, severe fiscal constraints limiting further tax-based growth of higher education, and gradual denigration of the research mission of universities caused by almost two decades of their continuous focus on the teaching mission and by general underfunding of university research in the region. Long-term consequences of the unprecedented growth of the private sector in Poland in 1990-2010 are discussed, with special emphasis on the consequences of accompanying processes of the deinstitutionalization of traditional academic norms taking place in public universities: the decreasing role of traditional academic institutional rules and norms and traditional institutional patterns of academic behavior in Polish universities. A new wave of reforms (2008-2010) is discussed, possibly leading to revised rules, norms and patterns of institutional behavior. Poland, with 31.5% of student enrollments in the private sector in 2010 (out of 1.84 million students), provides a unique case to study the two decades of demand-absorbing growth of private higher education with all its advantages and limitations. Experimenting with privatization in higher education, substantially increasing access to it in the last ten to fifteen years, were especially strong in Central European systems, Poland being the biggest system in the region and the most notable example. New “public-private dynamics” (Enders and Jongbloed 2007) emerged in Europe and the chapter focuses on those systems which have used privatization processes for the expansion of their higher education in the context of increasingly competitive public funding for all public services generally, not only for higher education (and focuses on Poland in particular). Especially, it intends to study the long-term consequences of the expansion through privatization for the system as a whole and for the public sector institutions. The chapter concludes that after two decades, the potential for demand-absorbing growth in both sectors in Poland has exhausted itself and the negative implications of demographics are becoming more important than ever before. Poland is the fastest aging society in Europe and the decline in enrollments in the next decade may hit hardest the private sector – fee-based rather than tax-based.

Marek Kwiek in the next chapter on “Higher Education Reforms and Their Socio-Economic Contexts: Shifting Funding Regimes and Competing Social Narratives” argues that adaptations of Polish universities to new postcommunist

and market realities were much slower than adaptations of other public sector institutions and organizations, including other parts of the traditional welfare state: social assistance, pension schemes, healthcare provisions and primary and secondary education. The latter were substantially reformed in the period from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s. The core of the system, including its relatively non-competitive funding modes and heavily collegial governance modes, and a complicated, obsolete, multi-level system of academic degrees and academic careers, remained largely untouched until the end of the 2000s. Clearly, in the wave of recent reforms and discussions preceding them (2008-2011) Polish universities were viewed by policy-makers as “instruments for national policy agendas” (see Olsen 2007: 26-28) and they were only to a limited degree encouraged, through new governance approaches and funding mechanisms, to become more market-oriented. He argues that the academic communities in Central Europe in the last two decades have been successfully producing powerful self-protecting narratives about universities as institutions which should be heavily guarded against any influence of market- or competition-oriented mechanisms. Throughout the region, the narrative of national “academic traditions” and that of “institutional exceptionalism” were extremely successful. It is only in the last few years that supranational ideas, especially of the European Commission and the OECD, were gaining enough strength to become gradually translated into national legislation, as in the Polish case, with a new law passed in March 2011. Consequently, self-protective narratives are losing grounds and their social appeal is diminishing. Marek Kwiek argues that the two narratives of academic “traditions” and of “institutional exceptionalism” existed in internal and external versions: with respect to other public sector organizations locally, and with respect to Western European universities internationally. They were so powerful that, in general, privatization policies, so widely spread all over the region and all over the public sector, were basically not applied to higher education sector, except for revenue-driven, autonomously self-imposed, internal privatization: charging fees from part-time students.

Rómulo Pinheiro argues in his chapter “Knowledge and the ‘Europe of the Regions’: The Case of the High North” that knowledge has been a cornerstone of the European project for more than a decade. Discussions around the ‘Europe of Regions’ have emphasized the need for balancing economic competitiveness and social cohesion. Given their unrivalled socio-economic and cultural contributions to society, universities are seen as key actors in the “Europe of Knowledge”. This chapter draws upon developments across Northern Europe as a means of shedding light on the importance attributed to knowledge structures, in general, and the role undertaken by universities, in particular. The Norwegian government’s ‘High North Strategy’ is used as an illustration of ongoing developments across the continent. The case highlights the critical role undertaken by the University of Tromsø, both as an *engine* for economic development of Northern Norway as well as the *de facto*

knowledge hub for the much broader (transnational) area of the High North. This chapter is an attempt to address the existing knowledge gap by focusing on dynamics occurring within a larger European context and within the scope of peripheral regions facing major socio-economic challenges. As is the case with many regions across the Continent, Northern Norway is currently undergoing a historical transition from a predominantly primary sector driven towards that of knowledge-based economy. The backdrop for the investigation is a far-reaching national policy initiative aimed at transforming the region into a global contender across a number of strategically selected fields. Particular attention is given to the strategic role of the regional higher education sector.

Finally, Martina Vukasović in her chapter on “Europeanization of the Education Function of Universities: Preliminary Comparison of Norway and Poland” presents an attempt to test the relevance of an analytical framework developed on (a) perspectives on Europeanization of public policy and (b) perspectives on institutional change for discussing changes in higher education in the context of European integration. The chapter focuses on changes in the elements of the education function of universities in Norway and Poland, and, on the basis of the analysis of changes in curricular governance that took place in Norwegian and Polish higher education, provides a set of preliminary observations on the scope and mechanisms of change. Her chapter is followed by a concluding chapter from the editors, “Higher Education in Turbulent Times”.

This book presents through a number of thematic and conceptual lenses the current change dynamics and their recent historical roots in two systems that are in many respects positioned in the periphery of European higher education. The discussion of the themes, ranging from university governance, qualifications frameworks, regional role of higher education, private higher education to university funding, provides a unique inside into perspectives from which national policy-makers and institutional representatives approach their country specific policy debates on higher education. The conceptual discussions, including the institutional versus instrumental approaches with respect to higher education, regional development models, Europeanization interpretations, and the variations of capitalism approach (through the Nordic Model), provide an important general insight into the state of the art of the set of conceptual frameworks and analytical tools in comparative studies on higher education.

We realize that the specific set of chapters presented in this book represent highly contextualised developments, policies, reforms, and debates. Nonetheless, we feel that sharing the outcomes of the work undertaken in the framework of our joint research project, which has allowed the authors in this Volume to present and discuss their original papers in a number of seminars in Oslo and Poznan, should be of interest and relevance to a wider audience. Therefore we hope that what we as authors have gained from our paper presentations, mutual discussions and

commenting, and finalizing of the chapters, is reflected in the benefits and new insights the readers of this Volume will gain.*

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