Chapter 2
Diversity in European Higher Education: Historical Trends and Current Policies

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2.1 Introduction

Europe and its universities have a strong and long-standing relationship. Over the centuries European universities have contributed significantly to the social, economic and cultural development of Europe. The very existence of the European universities reflects one of the most central dimensions of the "idea of Europe". Particularly from the age of the Enlightenment on, European universities became the institutional home of modernity and rationality. When, as Kant said, Europe broke out of its "self-imposed tutelage" during the Enlightenment, modernity became a fundamental European invention and modern science lay at the heart of that modernisation process. Rationality and the corresponding attitude to science and technology became essential and decisive elements of European identity. "Since Europe became Europe in its own eyes, science has been held up as its image and it emblem" (Daston 2005, p. 30).

Over time, European universities have changed considerably. Yet they also remained the central European institutions of reason, knowledge, criticism and learning. Plato's Academy was a centre of dialogue and critical enquiry. The medieval universities were open, self-governing communities of scholars. The "liberal university" of Cardinal John Newman was an institution for independent intellectual self-empowerment. And Wilhelm von Humboldt's proposals for the establishment of the University of Berlin were first of all aimed at preventing the search for knowledge being corrupted by social forces (Barnett 1990; De Ridder-Symoens 1992, 1996; Nybom 2003).

Through time, Nyborn = Nybom European universities have also regularly shown their "Europeanness". Although Plato's Academy was not the large community of students and teachers that we nowadays associate with the concept of the university, it was an open institution. Similarly, the medieval universities are known to have attracted scholars and *Wanderstudenten* from all over Europe. Helped by the fact that lectures were normally delivered in Latin, students and teachers moved easily from one university to the other, from Coimbra to Vilnius or from Uppsala to Salerno (Burke 2006, p. 237). In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many universities provided temporary academic homes for European scholars without

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consideration for national frontiers. Until the eighteenth century the European university was a European institution, reflecting European values of intellectual freedom and of a borderless academic community.

The rise of territorial states largely brought an end to these European academic peregrinations. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, newly-emerging national states fostered their unity along the lines of a strong and homogeneous cultural identity, forcing universities into national frameworks. The effect was a "nationalisation" of science and (higher) education. European universities received their core funding from the Nation States, with an assumption that they were to train the cadres for the national civil services and contribute to the new national cultural identities, underpinning the nation-building processes. As a consequence, European universities nowadays are still largely national rather than European institutions. However, we may also be on the verge of a new phase of academic "Europeanness".

In this chapter we will discuss the diversity of European higher education. We will (briefly) examine the history of that diversity. We will describe the new emerging European policy contexts, both at the supranational and (in some cases) the national level, and we will present the current situation regarding institutional diversity in European higher education.

2.2 A History of Diversity in European Higher Education

A brief exploration of the centuries of European higher education history shows that the concept of diversity can be helpful in describing the general development of European higher education.

In the Middle Ages the medieval universities jointly formed an early European higher education system. Although they were in many ways very different, medieval universities were largely similar in terms of their missions. "the sixty or so universities of the medieval West were … extremely various as regards their numbers, their intellectual orientations, their social role and the institutions themselves.… Nevertheless … the universities had, at least in ideal terms, a universalist vocation" (Verger 1992, p. 45, 41).

Early Modern Europe (1500–1800) brought about a growing diversification of types of higher education institutions. According to Frijhoff three major types of universities can be distinguished, showing different missions and profiles:

- "Universities in the strict sense of the term … recognised or legitimised by the *de facto* supreme authority in the territory, by its granting the rights to award degrees."
- "Teaching academics, higher or illustrious schools … which could claim university status but had not obtained all its privileges, especially that of awarding degrees."
- "Colleges, teaching … in the form of propaedeutic classes for university entrance or merely as an elementary form of higher education" (Frijhoff 1996, p. 68, 69).

Modern times in Europe (1800–) are first of all characterised by the rise of the Nation State, a process which has continued throughout the twentieth and into the early twenty-first centuries. As Davies notes: "of the sovereign states on the map of Europe in 1993, four had been formed in the sixteenth century, four in the seventeenth, two in the eighteenth, seven in the nineteenth, and no fewer than the thirty-six in the twentieth" (Davies 1997, p. 456). As mentioned earlier, the rise of the Nation State has produced the "nationalisation" of European higher education, creating higher education systems and institutions that were to meet the needs of the modern state. "The political culture represented by the nation demanded cultural domestication and social standardisation.… The university therefore took on the society-building role of providing a national education" (Henningsen 2006, p. 98).

The historical trends in diversity in European higher education show, on the one hand, a development from a broad European system to a set of national systems and, on the other hand, a certain diversification in terms of institutional missions and profiles, i.e. a process creating horizontal diversity (see Chapter 1).

Regarding this latter trend no clear information is available on the actual diversity of institutional missions and profiles in the various national higher education systems in Europe other than that provided in a formal, often legal sense. We may assume that a certain level of institutional diversity exists in many national European higher education systems. However, such an institutional diversity is more often based on regulation than on the actual characteristics or performances of the institutions involved.

Regarding the first trend, both the recent Bologna process and European Union (EU) policy initiatives (see below) have brought about a new pan-European approach to higher education. However, in these new European-wide approaches to higher education (both in the Bologna and EU contexts) the issue of the diversity of institutional missions and profiles has so far hardly been addressed. A major challenge for modern European higher education still appears to be to understand – and make transparent – its diversity.

2.3 Emerging European Policy Contexts

The establishment of the first European community treaties in the 1950s marks the beginning of the current European Union approach to higher education and research. In particular, the treaty creating the European Economic Community (EEC), signed in Rome in 1957, has been important: Article 235 of this treaty was the primary source of the EU's research policy.

Higher education has for a long time been "taboo" as an object of EU policy (Neave 1984, p. 6). Although some activities were developed at a European level during the 1970s (in particular in the field of vocational training), it took until the second half of the 1980s before the first EU policy initiatives appeared. The first EU programmes (such as Comett, Erasmus, Lingua and Tempus) were all proposed

within a very short time and had a major input on the development of the European policy domain of higher education, triggering a European policy context in higher education, and resulting in a "qualitative and quantitative leap forward for community cooperation" (European Communities 2006, p. 109).

Also since the 1980s the EU research policy domain has been fully developed. The Single European Act (1987) and the Maastricht Treaty (1992) created important foundations for EU policy on research and technological development. Key to the development have been the Framework Programmes (FPs), the multi-annual research prioritisation and funding instruments that operate as medium-term planning tools for EU research strategy. The Framework Programmes have been growing in size and importance over the years and have developed into the major policy instrument of the European Research Area (ERA).

The European Research Area was created in 2000 when EU government leaders decided on their "Lisbon strategy". Wanting to create the "European knowledge society", they agreed on the ERA as a context to integrate national research policies, to encourage cooperation between researchers at the European level and to stimulate the links between universities and industry. The European Commission argued that European research represents a jigsaw of often very different national policies and that a genuine European approach to research was needed. The compartmentalisation, dispersion and duplication of research needed to decrease. Critical mass of human technological and financial resources had to be stimulated (European Commission 2002). The 6th (2002–2006) and 7th (2007–2013) Framework Programmes were designed and implemented to address these priorities.

In 2007 the idea of the ERA was developed further. In the face of increasing globalisation and new socio-economic challenges, EU research must improve its effectiveness and efficiency, argued the Commission. More public and private investments are needed and stronger links with other EU policies called for. According to the Commission the ERA must comprise six features:

1. An adequate flow of competent researchers with high levels of mobility among institutions, disciplines, sectors and countries
2. World-class research infrastructures, accessible to all
3. Excellent research institutions engaged in public–private cooperation, involved in clusters and communities, and attracting human and financial resources
4. Effective knowledge sharing between the public and private sectors and with the public at large
5. Well-coordinated research programmes and priorities and
6. The opening of the ERA to the world (European Commission 2007)

As with EU research policy, the EU treaties of the 1990s formed further important milestones for the higher education policy context. The Maastricht Treaty (1992) created for the first time a legal basis for EU higher education policy initiatives. The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) put this in the broader context of the European knowledge society. The Treaty of Nice (2001) concluded that the European Union has a role to play in this policy domain that is complementary to the responsibilities of the Member States.

After 2000, higher education moved from the margins to the centre of EU policy-making concerns (Shaw 1999, p. 556; Corbett 2005, p. 11). One major policy initiative was the Socrates programme. After a first phase (1995–1999), the second phase of this programme (2000–2006) supported European cooperation in areas ranging from schools to higher education, and from new technologies to adult learning. The higher education sector of the programme continued the older Action Scheme on Mobility (the Erasmus programme, established in 1987) and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS, introduced in 1989). In 2003 the first Erasmus Mundus programme (2004–2008) was presented as a response to the challenges faced by European higher education in a globalising world.

Inspired by the well-known EU 2000 Lisbon ambitions (to making Europe "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world", European Council 2000), in 2003 the integrated Lifelong Learning programme (2007–2013) was proposed. The general objectives of this programme are to contribute to the development of the EU as an advanced knowledge society, and to foster cooperation and mobility between the EU's education and training systems. For higher education the aims are to reinforce the contribution of higher education to the European process of innovation and to support the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (European Commission 2003a, b).

The ambition to create a "European Higher Education Area" had been formulated in another, broader, policy context a few years before. In 1998 the education ministers of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom had agreed on the harmonisation of their higher education systems in the Sorbonne declaration. This declaration proved to be a quantum leap in the development of European higher education policy (Witte 2006, p. 124). As a follow-up, in the Bologna declaration (1999), 29 ministers formulated their wish to construct a European Higher Education Area, to promote mobility and employability and to increase the compatibility and comparability of Europe's higher education systems. The Bologna process became a major higher education policy context at a European-wide scale. In 2008 46 European (and other) countries were involved in this process, jointly developing a powerful intergovernmental policy-framework for European higher education. However, although often referred to as an important strength of European higher education, institutional diversity has played so far an ambiguous role in this policy context.

Both the EU and the (broader) Bologna policy contexts address European higher education and research at the supranational level (Van Vught 2009). For the first time since the rise of the Nation States, the twenty-first century appears to bring a renewed interest in the European-wide approach to these fields. In the higher education policy contexts the structural convergence of the various national systems is one of the major foci of attention. Increasing compatibility and comparability are the crucial objectives, but the importance of the diversity of European higher education is also regularly emphasised.

The Bologna Declaration stressed that comparability and compatibility should be realised within the context of national legislative competences, "taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and of university

autonomy". But here the ambiguity creeps in: the declaration aims at structural convergence, but respects existing national diversities. The question emerging from this is whether attempts to converge go against or might clash with national competences. As such, clear-cut answers to the questions around institutional diversity are not offered by the Bologna documents. The Bergen Communiqué for instance stresses (again) that "[w]e must cherish our rich heritage and cultural diversity in contributing to a knowledge society" (Bergen Communiqué 2005). From the document it is far from clear which aspects of diversity are worthwhile to pursue and which are not, beyond general notions as language and cultural diversity.

The European Commission, in the context of the Lisbon ambitions, takes a slightly different slant to the issue. Instead of structural convergence, it takes institutional diversity as the point of departure: "The European university landscape … is characterised by a high degree of heterogeneity which is reflected in organisation, governance and operating conditions, including the status and conditions of employment and recruitment of teaching staff and researchers." Actors involved in European higher education should attempt to "organise that diversity within a more coherent and compatible European framework" (European Commission 2005, pp. 4–5). Also in a 2005 communication, the value of diversity is acknowledged up front: "There are deficiencies stemming from insufficient differentiation. Most universities tend to offer the same monodisciplinary programmes and traditional methods geared towards the same group of academically best-qualified learners … but Europe has too few centres of world-class excellence and universities are not encouraged to explain the specific value of what they produce for learners and society" (European Commission 2005, pp. 3–4). But despite raising the problem of a lack of diversity, the Commission at the same time, argues that there are limits to diversity: "European higher education is and needs to remain diverse with respect to languages, culture, systems and traditions. At the same time, sufficient compatibility between the different national regulations is indispensable in order to avoid breeding confusion rather than adding opportunities for citizen choice and mobility" (European Commission 2005, p. 6).

In sum, two supranational policy contexts (EU policies and the Bologna process) both support the idea of institutional diversity. But this support appears to be conditional. First, the policy documents are in favour of "organised diversity", thus setting some boundaries to institutional variety. Second, the policy documents are rather vague when it comes to specifying which elements of diversity are appreciated. It would not be too far-fetched to conclude that institutional diversity is appreciated as long as it does not go against the need for convergence of the fragmental European higher education system.

In the following sections we explore the effects of the emerging European policy contexts on the institutional diversity of European higher education and we try to assess the current situation regarding this diversity. We will do so, by first sketching the general trend across signatory countries along the Bologna action lines (building on Huisman 2008, 2009) and then by assessing the general diversity effects of the EU policies of research and higher education (building on Van Vught 2009). Next we will pay attention to some country examples to illustrate the particular

dynamics at the level of some higher education systems. Finally we will formulate our overall conclusions.

2.4 Diversity in the Bologna Process

If we take the findings from recent comparative research projects regarding the state of the art with respect to the Bologna process together (Crosier et al. 2007; Eurydice 2005; Huisman et al. 2006; Reichert & Tauch 2005; Witte 2006), the following picture emerges. All studies confirm that there is some convergence among the signatory countries, particularly when it comes to the structure of the degree systems. That is, in most countries structural regulations and conditions are in place concerning the degree structure (two or three cycles), the Diploma Supplement, a credit transfer system, a qualifications framework and a quality assurance system. Countries have taken up the Bologna process and implemented many of its elements. But it is important to mention that this does not imply a full convergence. Various studies on the Bologna process have taught us that there can be a considerable gap between the intentions set out in the Bologna documents and the reality at the shop-floor level within higher education institutions (e.g. Gornitzka 2006). Various factors contribute to this gap: national policy-makers adjust the Bologna objectives and instruments to fit the particular national context, interest groups within the system have their input in the further operationalisation of the Bologna agenda at the national level, and at the institutional level it is up to institutional leaders, managers and academics to further substantiate the Bologna elements at the operational level. Hence, issues of policy "translation", willful influence on or hindrance of the implementation have a considerable impact on what actually happens in reality.

The complete answer to the question of convergence would therefore be "yes, but …". We illustrate this by looking in a bit more detail at some of the Bologna elements: the three-cycle structure, the Diploma Supplement and quality assurance.

Regarding the three-cycle structure, the Eurydice report (Eurydice 2007, p. 15) is correct in stating that "[a]t the start of the 2006/07 academic year, the three-cycle structure was in place in virtually all signatory countries." But it is also correct to state that a huge variety of models looms behind the convergence towards the three-cycle structure. The following table (Table 2.1) illustrates this variety for engineering programmes (Huisman et al. 2006, p. 36).

In a similar vein, the Diploma Supplement has been introduced in most of the countries. But there are still considerable differences across the countries, when it comes to the actual implementation: the Eurydice report states that in 2006/07 the Diploma Supplement was to be issued for all programmes in all institutions in half of the signatory countries. If the Diploma Supplement is issued, it takes place in a variety of ways, ranging from automatic and free of charge to on request and/or not free of charge. Also the language of the Diploma Supplement varies considerably, although the majority of countries issue the supplement (at least) in English (Eurydice 2007, pp. 29–32).

Table 2.1 Structure of cycles in engineering in Bologna countries (From Huisman et al. 2006, p. 36)

Structure	Country
3 + 2	Croatia, Czech Republic, Latvia, Romania, Germany (and 3.5 + 1.5), Hungary, Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Iceland
4 + 1	Bulgaria, Malta
4 + 2	Turkey, Cyprus, Poland, Lithuania
Varying 3/4 + 1/2	Slovakia, Slovenia
2-cycle + undivided	UK, Ireland, Portugal
Moving to 2-cycle	Spain
No 2-cycle	France, Estonia, Sweden Austria, Finland, Greece

The last example concerns the action line of promoting European cooperation in quality assurance. In most countries national (or regional) agencies emerged to take up or have been assigned a role in quality assurance and control (Costes et al. 2008). And, indeed, various stakeholders (staff, management, students, employers) are involved in the quality assurance mechanisms. And yes, in the processes there is reliance on self-assessment and peer review. It can be assumed that the issuing of the European Standards and Guidelines and its underlying four-stage process (autonomy and independence of procedures and methods from government and institutions; self-assessment; external assessment by peer-review and site visits; publication of a report) have played and will play a role in the convergence process (Costes et al. 2008, pp. 44–47). At the same time, behind the general patterns, again, a myriad of variations can be found. These variations relate to the stress on quality control versus quality improvement, the roles of the various stakeholders in quality assurance and control, the level of analysis: programme and/or institutional level, and the specific tools at hand to carry out quality checks (see also Schwarz & Westerheijden 2004).

2.5 Diversity Effects of EU Policies

It may be too early to assess the effects of EU policies on the institutional diversity of European higher education. However, it can be argued that, generally speaking, the Lisbon ambitions clearly have triggered the wish to reinforce higher education's contribution to an integrated EU innovation strategy.

The EU research policy has a clear impact on European universities. The 6th and 7th Framework Programmes are among the largest R&D funding programmes in the world and provide vital opportunities for universities with limited research funding. In addition, for many universities the EU funding for collaborative research is a key element in their pursuit of international academic repute. In the context of research, there is a growing importance of the supranational EU policy echelon and a slowly increasing alignment between the EU policies and those of the member states. The EU research policy challenges European universities to increase their quality and reputation and to act at a global scale. European universities are being stimulated

to respond to the growing international academic competition and to contribute to economic growth and social cohesion.

In the higher education policy context, the EU calls for a "modernisation strategy". According to the European Commission, European higher education is too traditional, too egalitarian and has too little world-class excellence. It is too fragmented in small and medium-sized subsystems with national regulations and languages, too insulated from industry, too dependent on the Nation States, inefficient and inflexible; and it is overregulated and underfunded. The European Commission wants European higher education institutions to become more attractive, increase their academic quality, intensify their relationships with business and industry, strengthen their human resources and compete internationally. The EC sees the diversity of European higher education as a strength but also suggests that this diversity needs to be combined with increased compatibility (European Commission 2005, 2006).

As a result of the EU's higher education and research policy focus the "social contract" between society and European higher education appears to be changing. In their educational programmes higher education institutions are urged to develop closer links with industry and society at large. In their research programmes they are prompted not only to address knowledge creation but also knowledge diffusion processes. "There are now much more explicit and direct expectations that, in return for public funding, universities … should endeavor to deliver greater and more direct benefits to society" (Martin 2003, p. 25).

In addition, the overall governance model of European higher education institutions also appears to be changing. The move to more accountability has brought with it recognition of stakeholders' needs and interests, and hence the acceptance by higher education institutions of their social embeddedness and their relationships with and dependencies on various societal organisations. The result appears to be the emergence of a new, multi-stakeholder governance model with multiple funding sources, a stronger focus on autonomy combined with accountability, and a pressure to deliver innovation-relevant outcomes.

However, the effects in terms of institutional diversity are still hard to access. The EU policy ambition appears to be to combine diversity with compatibility, and to create an integrated European higher education system that can become a competitor to the dominant US system. In this integrated system a diversity of institutional roles and missions can possibly be seen as an important characteristic, or even as a condition to combine global academic competitiveness with socio-economic relevance and regional impact. But so far, the EU policy programmes remain relatively quiet, giving the impression that institutional diversity is not a major issue in an EU policy context.

Nevertheless, there appear to be two diversity effects of the EU *research* policy in particular that deserve attention. Both may be unintended "by-products" of EU policy, but both are real and increasingly visible.

The first of these two effects can be described as the academic stratification of the overall European higher education system, a process of increasing vertical diversity (see Chapter 1). This effect is the combined result of the changing

participation processes of the European higher education institutions in the research Framework Programmes (FPs) and the occurrence of a counterproductive consequence of the reinforcement policy regarding the interaction between higher education and industry. With regard to the latter, it has been noted that past success in the FPs appears to be an indicator for successful future participation in these programmes (David and Keely 2003). What appears to be happening is the occurrence of the well-known Matthew Effect. Research groups that have been successful in obtaining funding appear to increase their chances of getting funds in the future as well (Geuna 1999, p. 117). The other process is the counterproductive effect of the EU's push towards closer links between higher education and industry. It appears that particularly those higher education institutions in a relatively weak financial position are increasingly forced to accept industrial funding for often routine contract research. Faced with the impossibility of charging the real research costs, these institutions are often confronted with a further weakening of their financial situation and a decrease in their capacity to undertake academic research. (Geuna 1999). The combined outcome of both processes is an increasing differentiation between academically and financially stronger institutions and weaker institutions, and hence a growing vertical diversity in the overall European higher education system.

The second unintended effect is a growing regional diversification in European higher education. This appears to be the outcome of three interrelated processes emerging from the EU research and innovation policies (Frenken et al. 2008). The first is the preference of researchers in "excellent regions" to collaborate with each other, rather than with colleagues in lagging regions. The EU research policy appears to stimulate the concentration of talent in the richer and academically better-equipped regions of Europe. Lagging regions find it difficult to participate in successful European research networks and appear to have to pass a threshold of quality and size before they can do so. Secondly, the EU policy objective of free movement of people appears to not only lead to an increased mobility of researchers but also to the concentration of talent in a selected number of excellent regions. The most talented researchers compete for the positions at the most prestigious universities, rendering it difficult for the lagging regions to retain talent within their borders. Thirdly, the sectoral structure of the poorer European regions is usually characterised by a dominance of low-tech and medium-tech activities that do not fit the thematic priorities of EU research policy. The FPs almost exclusively concern high-tech sectors, thus creating a situation in which the research subsidies are becoming concentrated in the richer regions. The result is an unintended but nevertheless real effect of regional diversification. The geography of European higher education and research is changing from one based on the priority of national borders into one based on the clustering of talent. Wealthier regions are increasingly able to profit from the general European innovation policy, while poorer regions are left with the resources of the cohesion policy. This process also appears to lead to a growing vertical diversity in Europe's higher education system. In wealthier regions the academic reputation of higher education institutions increases, leaving poorer regions with the academically weaker institutions.

Both processes, of academic stratification and regional diversification, are diversity effects of the EU's higher education and, especially, research policies. Both processes are indications of an increasing institutional diversity in the European higher education and research areas. But both also are largely unintended "by-products" of policies that so far have not clearly and intentionally addressed the issue of diversity in European higher education. It appears that the time has come to do just that.

2.6 Diversity in National Higher Education Systems

The analysis above has shown the variety across Europe when it comes to the actual implementation of elements of the Bologna process and to the effects of the EU higher education and research polices. With regard to the Bologna process one might suggest that diversity has increased: in many countries old and new structures and procedures still co-exist, which increases – at least temporarily – the variety within those systems. However, it would also be safe to argue that when the countries are beyond the transition stage, there is some structural homogeneity across these countries, but much micro-level variety (sometimes hidden diversity) behind these communalities. With respect to the EU context diversification effects appear to result from especially the application of the powerful EU research policy instruments (the FPs). Here the suggestion can be that diversity is increasing, perhaps not as an outcome of intended policy but nevertheless as an emerging reality. However, this growing diversity mainly regards institutional and regional differentiation along the more or less traditional lines of academic performance and reputation (vertical diversity). Differentiation in terms of institutional missions and profiles (horizontal diversity) has so far not been addressed in the EU policy context.

In order to add to our general picture of the current diversity in European higher education we now focus on the national level of higher education in Europe. What are the recent developments with respect to diversity in the national European higher education systems? We take the examples of five countries, sketching the most important trends in each of these countries pertaining to institutional diversity.

2.6.1 France[1]

The French higher education system is very diverse and thus often difficult to understand for external observers. The term "university" is used for institutions allowed to deliver the degrees DEUG (2 years after the *baccalauréat*), the *licence*, the *maîtrise* and the DEA (research oriented) or DESS (more profession oriented).

[1] We thank Christine Musselin, Centre de Sociologie des Organisations (Sciences-Po and Centre National de Recherche Scientifique) for drafting the section on France.

Developed as degree-granting institutions, French universities only relatively recently – compared to most other continental higher education systems – were considered as research institutions. To cope with the low levels of research activity of universities, many national research centres have been created. Moreover, French universities are not considered as the most prestigious training places. The so-called *grandes écoles* have become the leaders in the training of the French elites and top executives in engineering, business and management and public administration. Whereas the universities are open to all *baccalauréat* holders, the *grandes écoles* are highly selective training institutes; students prepare through 2-year *classes préparatoires*. A few of the *grandes écoles* are research-intensive, but others only recently became so. On top of the university/*grandes écoles* divide, there are two degrees leading to a professional higher education degree. The first one (DUT, *diplôme universitaire de technologie*) is delivered by the IUTs (*Instituts Universitaire de Technologie*) which are specific entities within the universities. The other one, the BTS (*brevet de technicien supérieur*) is delivered in post-high school classes by private or public high school as a 2-year higher education degree. Graduates of the DUT and BTS programmes have access to the third university year (leading to the *licence*), implying a fair amount of flexibility across sectoral divides.

Apart from horizontal diversity in the system, addressed above, vertical diversity can be found as well, but only in the *grandes écoles* sector. Rankings for this sector were developed well before Bologna (but were mostly based on the level of wages earned by graduates). The dominant rationale for universities, however, was that university degrees (and therefore the degree-granting universities) were equivalent.

After Bologna most of the above-described boundaries are blurred, although the Bologna process has not been the main cause. In fact, universities were the only places to widely adopt the bachelor–master scheme. The IUT still deliver a specific degree in 2 years, the same holds true for the BTS and the *classes préparatoires*. The *grandes écoles* do not deliver bachelors but have their own masters. Nevertheless, different trends push for closer relationships between the universities and the *grandes écoles*. First, they both deliver a degree which has the same name (master) even if the legal status is different (national degrees at universities, institution-based degrees at *grandes écoles*). Second, some universities and *grandes écoles* offer co-masters. Third, the 2006 *Loi d'Orientation et de Programmation de la Recherche et de l'Innovation* allowed the creation of meta-structures called PRES (*Pôles d'enseignement supérieur et de recherche*) in which different institutions focusing on specific research activities can join and develop common activities such as graduate schools and research projects. In some of the PRES, universities and *grandes écoles* are involved, again favouring closer relationships between the two institutional groups. It has to be emphasised however, that collaboration across the sectors was visible before Bologna; the Bologna process has accelerated that cooperation (Musselin 2008).

A further trend, unrelated to the Bologna process, concerns the blurring divide between the universities and the national research institutions. The 2006 Research

Act and the 2007 University Act invite the universities to be strategic actors in research production and national research institutions are asked to redefine their role and their relations with the universities. As a result, there is an emerging trend towards converging missions between the different sectors and a concomitant increase in prestige of universities. At the same time, vertical diversity in the university sector is also increasing. First, with the introduction of 4-year contracts between each university and the Ministry from the beginning of the 1990s onwards and the preparation of strategic plans, there are clear incentives for universities to demonstrate what makes them different. Second, the current government develops a discourse on performance and excellence, emphasising the existence of differences among universities and the need to assess and differently reward this. Different forms of competition have been recently implemented. Universities with the "best" plans to improve their bachelor programmes and to reduce their drop-out rates have been identified. Universities have also been invited to compete for the best institutional project (partly based on scientific objectives and partly on campus development) in a contest called "Campus operation".

2.6.2 Germany

In Germany, we see a blurring of the boundaries between the *Fachhochschulen* and universities, because the former are – in the context of the Bologna process – now allowed to offer master's programmes as well. This change is not extremely radical, because the *Fachhochschulen* were already supposed to carry out (practice-oriented) research in the pre-Bologna period. As a consequence, the doctorate degree was not uncommon among *Fachhochschul* staff. In addition, the access routes between the two institutional types were not that clearly demarcated: for some *Fachhochschul* programmes, the entry rates for *Abitur* holders were higher than for the universities (Witte 2006, p. 160 and 370–376).

Some other developments regarding diversity are more striking. This was mainly due to the so-called *Exzellenzinitiative* launched in 2004. The then Minister Bulmahn announced a national competition among universities to support high-quality research and its international visibility, to support academic *Nachwuchs*, to strengthen cooperation across disciplinary boundaries and to strengthen international networking (Wissenschaftsrat 2008). How the idea emerged exactly is not totally clear from the literature, but it can be assumed that the EU policy context and particularly the ambitions of the Lisbon process played a considerable role. Fallon (2007, p. 57–58) also points at the fact that German policy-makers – in their search for solutions to problems around quantity (overloaded universities, high teacher to student ratios) and quality (lack of visible diversity) – increasingly looked at the US, a system characterised by explicit diversity, as an exemplary model. The government made a budget of €1.9 billion available for the period 2006–2010 and universities could propose initiatives in three areas: graduate schools (about 40 to be awarded), centres or clusters of excellence with international reputation (about 30

to be awarded), and full-scale institutional development plans towards excellent universities (about 10 to be awarded). The initiative was revolutionary in the sense that in German higher education, equality in opportunities for and treatment of all higher education institutions has been a long-standing hallmark of the system (Kehm & Pasternak 2008). There was an overwhelming amount of proposals (253 graduate school experiments; 280 excellence cluster proposals; and 47 excellence plans) (Fallon 2007). Decision-making has taken place only recently, 37 out of 88 universities were – in one way or another – prize-winners (Fallon 2008). The impact on the higher education system remains to be seen, but the attempt is there to bring more vertical differentiation to the landscape and the first signs are that this impact is strongly felt, both by winners and losers (Kehm & Pasternak 2008).

2.6.3 The Netherlands

Pre-Bologna, the Dutch higher education system was a clear example of a binary system of higher professional education (provided by *hogescholen*) and universities (Huisman & Kaiser 2001). The three distinctive features demarcating that boundary relate to formal access, the research function and the degrees awarded. The formal route to higher professional education is the 5-year senior general secondary education track (HAVO) and the formal secondary education route to universities is the 6-year pre-university track (VWO). Regarding the research function, universities are assumed – according to the national legislation – to carry out independent research and to prepare students for independent scientific work in an academic or professional setting. *Hogescholen* are supposed to offer theoretical instruction and to develop the skills required for practical application in a particular profession. In other words, universities carry out basic and applied research and *hogescholen* are allowed to do applied research. The demarcation with respect to the research function is reflected in the type of degrees awarded. *Hogescholen* offered 4-year bachelor degrees and universities offered master's (i.e. a 4–6-year integrated programme) and Ph.D. degrees. As will be understood, the two latter distinctions had an impact on the composition of staff at *hogescholen* and universities as well. The number of teachers at *hogescholen* with a Ph.D. was very small, certainly compared with the number of staff with a Ph.D. at the universities, where a Ph.D. generally is required for a long-term or tenured appointment at a university.

The current situation is much more dynamic and transparent than the relatively stable pre-Bologna situation. Universities and *hogescholen* have implemented the two-cycle system. For *hogescholen* this implied largely a change of terminology, but no comprehensive overhaul of the degree system. But, the *hogescholen* saw in the Bologna processes a window of opportunity to lobby for approval to offer (professional) master's degrees. To some extent, *hogescholen* already offered master's degrees, but these were co-operative efforts with UK universities on a kind of franchise basis and the number of programmes was limited. Obviously, the universities did not want to enter into competition with the *hogescholen* in the master's programme market and

the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science had its reservations, particularly in terms of the financial consequences. A "solution" was found by proposing that the Ministry was willing to fund a master programme if the programme would be accredited by the Dutch/Flemish accreditation organisation (NVAO) and a *hogeschool* could convincingly argue – to the Ministry – that the programme would contribute significantly to the Dutch knowledge society. As a result of the decision, almost half of the *hogescholen* now offer a limited range of professional master programmes – in total a bit more than 100, compared to 900 masters at universities (2007 data) – most acknowledged and funded by the government.

A related development at the *hogescholen* was the emergence of a new personnel category (with a historical name): *lectors*. The idea of the lectorate was introduced to establish and maintain linkages and networks between the domains of (higher) education, the professions and applied research. Currently there are more than 400 *lectors*. One could see the emergence of the lectorate as a kind of professorship in applied research and thus an element of academic drift; it could equally be seen as an evitable development in a knowledge society, where all kinds of contributions to knowledge sharing and exchange are appreciated and a society in which boundaries between basic and applied research are becoming more and more blurred (see also Gibbons 1995 on mode 1 and mode 2 research).

In sum, through a variety of drivers the Dutch higher education landscape is changing considerably. Whereas the division of labour between *hogescholen* and universities used to be (relatively) clear-cut, the current situation is much fuzzier. *Hogescholen* offer master's programmes and call themselves "university" (of applied science). They also become more seriously involved in research of an applied nature. The Bologna agenda played a role in this development, in that the bachelor–master discussion in the Netherlands was a trigger for the *hogescholen* to claim the right to offer master's programmes. In addition, the EU policy context offers the attractive prospect of extra funding and international prestige to both universities and *hogescholen*.

2.6.4 Norway

In the mid-1990s the Norwegian college sector was reorganised, and the then largely vocationally-oriented colleges (about 100) were merged into 26 state colleges. From that period on, Norway has had a formal binary system of colleges and universities (including specialised university institutions), organised through unified legislation for both sectors. Kyvik (2008) argues that since then several aspects of academic drift can be observed, e.g. the vertical extension of teaching programmes at colleges (the offering of master's and Ph.D. degrees), the development of research activities at colleges, and colleges introducing an academic appointment and reward system. The case of Norway can be distinguished from the Dutch and German cases. First of all, there are hardly tendencies towards vertical diversity, although it is implicitly acknowledged that the University of Oslo is a high-quality

research-intensive university with the most prestige and status. A second difference relates to the instruments in place to regulate sectoral boundaries. In the Netherlands and Germany, the government (still) maintains those boundaries through legislation, whereas the Norwegian government has put in place mechanisms to allow colleges to gain specialised status as either a university institution or university. The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) must approve the application for a change of status. Once NOKUT approves a case, the Ministry of Education and Research then makes the authoritative decision, but does not necessarily have to accept NOKUT's assessment. Criteria that play a role in this process are: the award of master's and Ph.D. degrees and successful master and Ph.D. graduations in a number of disciplines; meeting accreditation standards for the masters' and Ph.D. programmes; R&D production; research staff with formal qualifications; infrastructure for research activities, and well-established national and international academic networks (Stensaker 2004). Since the new regulations were put in place, three institutions (two former colleges and one former specialised university institution) have acquired full university status and there are applications pending. In addition, some colleges are considering merging to be able to make the transfer to university status easier. Concerns have been raised about processes of academic drift leading to a (too) homogeneous higher education system. Kyvik (2008, p. 187) states that "the development over the last two decades has shown gradually more emphasis on academic norms and values at the expense of traditional vocational and practice-related education" and "the binary system is eroding". Also an evaluation of NOKUT points in this direction, stating that the accreditation mechanisms may be too geared towards being or becoming a research-intensive higher education institution (Langfeldt et al. 2008) threatening the overall diversity of the system. An expert review (Stjernø Commission 2008) has concluded that the Norwegian system is too fragmented and scattered and suggests that the number of institutions (now about 35) should be brought back to eight to 10 larger institutions by 2020, with each new institution aiming to establish a specific, distinct profile in the Norwegian landscape. But national coordination and institutional cooperation would have to play an important role as well. How such plans – if implemented – would affect the higher education landscape (beyond the sheer number of institutions) is unclear.

The Norwegian case shows a binary system under pressure, because the regulations offer the opportunity for the emergence of cross-sectoral divides. The pressure particularly relates to academic drift. There are serious concerns about the preservation of diversity, but also about fragmentation and the large number of higher education institutions relative to the size and population of the country.

2.6.5 United Kingdom

In the UK EU policy initiatives and the Bologna process – despite UK involvement in its initiation – have not stirred much debate. Obviously, given that an undergraduate-graduate system was already in place and quality assurance institutionalised, there

was not much left on the political agenda. Only recently has the question been raised as to whether the UK is too laid-back (Cemmell & Bekhradnia 2008 refer to a "spirit of aloofness") and point out that the UK's 1-year master programmes could be out of step with the intentions of other Bologna countries and that high master's fees for international students may put the UK at a disadvantage compared to other European countries offering similar programmes (many of which are delivered in English).

With respect to diversity, the issues at stake – tensions between sectors – do not differ much from those in Germany, Norway and the Netherlands, the big difference being that in the UK the formal binary system of universities and polytechnics was resolved in 1992. At present universities and former polytechnics are governed by similar regulations, quality assurance and funding mechanisms. The most important remaining divide between the two former sectors is the amount and quality of research carried out. The bulk of basic research is carried out by the research-intensive pre-1992 universities and the role of the former polytechnics is marginal. This situation is not due so much to political or institutional choices in the past decade, but largely to historical legacies. But exactly this legacy – or better the consequences of this in terms of a lack of equal research development capacities for the former polytechnics *vis-à-vis* the universities – is an ongoing point of debate. The formation of certain coalitions and interest groups around the research-teaching nexus can be seen as an example of a new process of differentiation emerging in the UK sector. The most research-intensive universities have formed the Russell Group to promote the interests of universities in which teaching and learning are undertaken within a culture of research excellence. The Russell Group of about 20 universities, set up in 1994, accounts for about two thirds of UK universities' research grants. At the other end of the spectrum of interest groups the University Alliance group can be found. Some 20 universities are members of this recently (2006) established group, consisting mainly of former polytechnics. Their primary objective is to bring about changes to the Research Assessment Exercise and teaching funding.

As important as these intra-university sector dynamics is what happens on the boundaries of the university and non-university sector. The latter sector consists of higher education colleges and further education colleges, together catering for about 20% of all higher education students. While these institutions have existed for decades and some for centuries, the current and past Labour governments (see, e.g. DfES 2003; Parry 2006) have emphasised the importance of these institutions in contributing to widening access and participation (towards a 50% participation rate). Foundation degrees – short-cycle degrees leading to an intermediate qualification, implemented in 2000 – to be provided through partnerships between further education colleges, higher education colleges and universities were seen as major instruments to achieve the objectives around access and participation. As another element of the package for widening participation and the stronger emphasis on excellent teaching, the government proposed to relax the rules for degree-awarding powers. In future, the title of university could be granted to an institution (private or public), without needing to have research degree-awarding powers. Since the launch of this policy, a number of non-university institutions have gained the title of university and a number of proposals are pending.

The formation of interest groups like the Russell Group and University Alliance may be an expression of increasing institutional diversity. But there is a problem regarding this process. One outstanding characteristic of the UK system is its steep hierarchy (despite a unitary system) of institutions. Institutions such as Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College and University College London are known as prestigious world-class universities which are definitely in a different league when it comes to available resources (e.g. endowments), the tough entry selection, and – partly consequently – its output and performance. But given that in the context of this steep hierarchy, the focus is largely on prestige and status (with some attention to output indicators), there is a lack of transparency regarding what is actually behind the labels of prestige and status.

2.7 Conclusion

Generally speaking, it appears that from a cross-national and longitudinal perspective European higher education is in a state of flux. Analysis regarding the Bologna process shows that there is some system-level convergence around the core elements of this process. At the same time, we see many national and regional/local idiosyncracies that make it difficult to conclude that a full harmonisation is taking place. There remains a large (sometimes hidden) micro-level variety behind the façade of the new structures and procedures.

Regarding the EU policy contexts, in particular the EU research policy appears to create diversity effects that may be unintended but are nevertheless becoming increasingly visible. On a European scale both a growing academic stratification and an increasing regional diversification appear to be emerging. These two processes of differentiation follow the traditional path of increasing diversity in terms of academic performance and reputation, thus creating a growing vertical diversity.

The five national higher education systems discussed in this chapter show that the landscapes are changing considerably at national level as well. In the Netherlands, Norway and the UK processes of academic drift are taking place at the boundaries of the sectors, partly as reaction to governmental policy initiatives. In France a convergence in missions between universities and research institutions is taking place and an increasing vertical diversity appear to be the trends in the university sector. In Germany a differentiation process is beginning to emerge from the *Exzellenzinitiative*, potentially resulting in an academic stratification process (vertical diversity) and eventually leading to a hierarchy similar to the one in UK higher education.

We conclude that the current situation regarding diversity in European higher education shows that the two sets of variables (mentioned at the end of Chapter 1) that are assumed to have an influence on differentiation processes in higher education systems, clearly appear to have an impact on the present European higher education system dynamics. Both the environmental conditions of higher education institutions (and particularly governmental policies, whether supranational or

national) and the attraction of certain normative systems (particularly academic norms and values) appear to be highly relevant in the diversity dynamics of present-day European higher education. As the German case shows, at a national level governmental policies intended to create diversity are able to do so by means of shaping clearly different environmental conditions for different groups of institutions. On the other hand, governmental policies that allow the boundaries between categories of institutions to become blurred see the level of institutional diversity decrease. In these latter cases, the prestige of academic norms and values (often coupled with attractive funding conditions) leads to academic drift, creating a tendency towards uniformity and decreasing levels of horizontal diversity. At the supranational level the high level of uniformity of policy conditions (both in the Bologna process and in the EU contexts) implies that no direct differentiation effects can be expected to occur. However, the already existing differences in contextual and internal conditions of higher education institutions either appear to continue to exist (as is the case in the large micro-level diversity in the Bologna process) or are even being intensified (as is the case in the EU research policy context). In this sense especially the EU policy context is creating some unintended diversity effects of academic stratification and regional diversification, leading to increasing levels of vertical diversity.

Finally we can also conclude that the various differentiation (and homogenisation) processes taking place in Europe higher education lack transparency. It is becoming increasing difficult to discern what actually is to be found behind the label "university". Similarly, labels such as *hogescholen*, *Fachhochschulen*, and related names are increasingly covering a wide variety of institutional profiles. The only indicators that so far appear to play a role in the dynamics of diversity are those related to (academic) prestige and status. The diversification that is being triggered and amplified by national and supranational policies is that of prestige, creating an academic stratification process and a hierarchical ordering of institutions along the well-known lines of academic reputation. Such an approach clearly is inadequate to address the diversity of European higher education. If we really want to understand the dynamics in European higher education we need to increase the transparency of its diversity.

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