

# **THE INSTITUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY: THE CURRENT DISCOURSE ON THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH SPACE**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The institution of the university is playing a significant role in the processes of the emergence of the common European higher education and common European research spaces. What is clear, though, is that in neither of them, the university is seen in a traditional way we know from the debates preceding the advent of globalization, the speeding up of the process of the European integration and the passage from the industrial and service societies to the postindustrial, global, knowledge and information societies (see Kwiek 2000). The institution, in general, has already found it legitimate, useful and necessary to be evolving together with radical transformations of the social setting in which it functions. The new world we are approaching assumes different names in different formulations and the social, cultural, and economic processes in questions are debated in multiple vocabularies of social sciences: for some theorists, the processes of recent two decades or so are referred to as “postmodernity” (Jean-François Lyotard, Zygmunt Bauman), for others – as “the second modernity” (Ulrich Beck), “reflexive modernization” (Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash), “glocalization” (Roland Robertson) or “global age” (Malcolm Waters); still other descriptions include “network society” (Manuel Castells), “knowledge and information society” (Peter Drucker) or, on more philosophical grounds, the “postnational constellation” (Jürgen Habermas). For almost all of these analyses, globalization widely understood is of primary importance. As a German sociologists, Ulrich Beck, vividly describes current transformations:

A new kind of capitalism, a new kind of economy, a new kind of global order, a new kind of society and a new kind of personal life are coming into being, all of which differ from earlier phases of social development (Beck 1999: 2).

In this new global order, universities are striving for their new place as they are increasingly unable to maintain their traditional roles and tasks. Both the official

discourses on the common European space in higher education and research as well as large part of the accompanying academic debates on the subject increasingly acknowledge that the current role of universities could be that of engines of economic growth of countries and regions, contributors to economic competitiveness of nations or suppliers of highly-qualified and well-trained workers for the new knowledge-driven economy – which is undoubtedly a radical reformulation of the traditional (see Sadlak 2000) account of the role of the university in society. Without much discussions about principles (such as those accompanying the emergence of the Humboldtian model of the university in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or such as the major 20<sup>th</sup> century debates about the “idea” of the university), the university in the European context seems to be about to enter willy-nilly a new era of its development (see Kwiek 2003d).

From among a plethora of factors, some should be especially emphasized here: the globalization pressures on nation-states and its public services and the strengthening of the common European political and economic project at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the end of the “Golden age” of the Keynesian welfare state (so positively inclined towards national public research and strong national public higher education systems) as we have known it in the almost three decades of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and the emergence of knowledge-based societies (and economies) in the countries of the affluent West. In more general terms, the processes directly or indirectly affecting the institution of the university today would be the gradual individualization (and recommodification) of our societies, the denationalization (and desocialization) of our economies, as well as the universalization of higher education and the commodification of research. The recent European discourse under scrutiny here leaves no doubts about the direction of changes in roles and social and economic tasks of the institution in emergent new societies.

The present paper focuses on recent debates about common European higher education and research spaces. Their emergence will have far-reaching consequences for both EU-15, the enlarged Europe and other postcommunist transition countries. The ideas of both European spaces are evolving and are still not clearly defined. One thing is certain, though: we are confronting a major redesign of what research and teaching in European public sector are supposed to be, of how public higher education institutions, including universities, are supposed to function and be financed (at least from EU funds), and what roles students and faculty are increasingly pressed to assume in European higher education systems. At the moment, the European Higher Education Area is much more of a desired ideal to be achieved within the ongoing Bologna process, with very limited funding available for its implementation in particular countries; the ideal of the European Research Area (ERA), by contrast, has already determined the shape of the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme of Research – the biggest source of EU research funds, totaling 17.5 billion EUR for 2002-2006 – and ways in which research activities in Europe are currently funded from EU sources. Thus while the effects of the ideal of the European Higher Education Area still remain largely at the level of governmental good wishes about the direction of changes of particular national higher education systems in the years to come, the effects of the ideal of the European Research Area are already visible at the practical level of where clusters of

research funds are channeled and what new research-funding instruments are available. The European Research Area is at the same time an operational component of a comprehensive “Lisbon agenda” of the European Union agreed on in 2000 which aims at redefining both European economy, welfare and education systems by 2010. Over the last couple of years, the vocabularies used in the processes of the integration of higher education (see Kwiek 2004) and of the integration of research in Europe have become increasingly similar; the visions of the future of our public universities – on the European level – have become more convergent than ever before; and the more or less tacit agreement on different speeds at which different parts of Europe will be changing their educational and research and development landscapes is becoming increasingly clear (with the major dividing line between EU-15 and accession countries, or the transition countries more generally).

## **2. TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA**

The first communiqué about the European Research Area published by the European Commission in 2000, *Towards a European Research Area*, hardly ever mentions universities (actually the term is used three times or so in connection with the situation of research in North America). Higher education is not mentioned in the document at all. On reading the document, it is clear that neither European universities nor European higher education in general have been significantly taken into account at the outset of thinking about common research space in Europe. What figures prominently instead are the dynamic private investments in research, intellectual property and effective tools to protect it, creation of companies and risk capital investments, research needed for political decision-making, more abundant and more mobile human resources or “a dynamic European landscape, open and attractive to researchers and investment” (European Commission 2000a: 18). It is symptomatic for the initial period of the development of the European Research Area that while describing the situation of research in Europe, their traditional location at universities is not commented on at all. The opening paragraph of the paper states that

even more so than the century that has just finished, the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are now entering will be the century of science and technology. More than ever, investing in research and technological development offers the most promise for the future. In Europe, however, the situation concerning research is worrying. Without concerted action to rectify this the current trend could lead to a loss of growth and competitiveness in an increasingly global economy. The leeway to be made up on the other technological powers in the world will grow still further. And Europe might not successfully achieve the transition to a knowledge-based economy. Why such a negative picture? (European Commission 2000a: 4).

So the problem crudely stated is that “the situation concerning research is worrying”. What are the main reasons for this, according to the communiqué? The principal reference framework for research activities in Europe is still “national” and the static structure of “15+1” (Member States and the Union) leads to “fragmentation, isolation

and compartmentalisation of national research efforts and systems” (European Commission 2000a: 7; see also Agalianos 2003: 184ff). There is no “European” policy on research, and “national research policies and Union policy overlap without forming a coherent whole”. What is needed is a “genuinely European research agenda” that will “go beyond filling the gaps of national research programmes to include concerns which are of a Europewide relevance and which will address a number of problems that contemporary European societies are faced with” (Agalianos 2003: 186). What is therefore needed is a “real European” research policy, a “more dynamic configuration” (European Commission 2000a: 7). As it was explained three years later,

the nature and scale of the challenges linked to the future of the universities mean that these issues have to be addressed at European [rather than national – MK] level (European Commission 2003b: 10).

It should come as no surprise that the initial reaction of the Confederation of EU Rectors’ Conference (of May 2000) to the first communiqué about the European Research Area was more than reserved: “The Confederation finds it a source of concern that the central role of universities in research and training is not included in considerations concerning a European research area. Public research efforts which take place in universities are not recognized in the Communication. Not once are universities mentioned as places of research; not once are universities recognized as the institutions where the researchers of the future are being educated and trained; not once are universities represented as centres of national, regional or local acquisition and transfer of knowledge, nor is this function promoted” (EU Rectors’ Conference 2000: 1). The Confederation criticized the limited view of what constitutes “research”, the view that led to the downplaying of the role of universities in research activities. Research was limited to mean RTD only. It stressed the fact that universities are places where most public research takes place and by far most of basic research. Leaving out universities in discussions means “cutting out a very large part of the innovative and creative facets of research, as it means leaving out almost all basic research; and it means ignoring the education and training of future researchers” (EU Rectors’ Conference 2000: 2). As evidenced by further documents, especially following the communiqué on the role of universities of 2003, the reactions of the academic world to the initiative to work towards a common European research space were much more favorable.

### **3. THE EFFECT OF SYNERGY: THE BOLOGNA PROCESS AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE COMMON RESEARCH AREA?**

Documents of the European Commission devoted to the European Research Area rarely refer to the Bologna process of the integration of higher education systems but if they do, they do so very approvingly: to give an example, as European higher education institutions are very diversified, “the structural reforms inspired by the Bologna process constitute an effort to organize that diversity within a more coherent and compatible European framework, which is a condition for the readability, and hence the competitiveness, of European universities both within Europe itself and in

the whole world” (European Commission 2003b: 5). At the same time while documents of the Bologna process refer to the ERA, the documents of the European Union related to the “Lisbon agenda” in general clearly refer to the Bologna process (to give an example, *Presidency Conclusions. Barcelona European Council*: “The European Council calls for further action in this field: to introduce instruments to ensure the transparency of diplomas and qualifications (ECTS, diploma and certificate supplements, European CV) and closer cooperation with regard to university degrees in the context of the Sorbonne-Bologna-Prague process prior to the Berlin meeting in 2003” (Barcelona European Council 2002: art. 44). Finally, the 2003 Berlin communiqué of the ministers of education involved in the Bologna process calls emphatically the European higher education area and the European research area “two pillars of the knowledge based society”, mentions “synergies” between them and sends a clear message to institutions of higher education: “Ministers ask HEI [higher education institutions] to increase the role and relevance of research to technological, social and cultural evolution and to the needs of society” (Berlin Communiqué 2003: 7). Comparing the Berlin communiqué and most recent documents about the ERA, apart from the necessary and unavoidable lip-service on both sides, a general convergence of views can be shown. The divergence in views is growing with respect to one issue in particular, though: while the European Commission (following the Lisbon agenda) uses increasingly economic perspective, the Bologna process again in Berlin confirmed the role of the “social dimension” in the process of integration of European higher education systems: consequently, as the Berlin communiqué states it, the need to increase competitiveness “must be balanced with the objective of improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area, aiming at strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and gender inequalities both at national and at European level. In that context, Ministers reaffirm their position that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility” (Berlin Communiqué 2003: 1).

Documents of the European Commission rarely refer to classical models of the university; if they do, they do not label them explicitly as outmoded but rather indicate trends undermining their significance. On the Humboldt tradition, the communiqué about the role of universities states the following:

European universities have for long modelled themselves along the lines of some major models, particularly the ideal model of university envisaged nearly two centuries ago by Wilhelm von Humboldt in his reform of the German university, which sets research at the heart of university activity and indeed makes it the basis of teaching. Today the trend is away from these models, and toward greater differentiation (European Commission 2003b: 5-6).

The communication, as is obvious with the Commission’s documents, takes a much more economic than cultural or social perspective (which in turn seems closer to the Bologna process documents) towards universities: “Given that they live thanks to substantial public and private funding, and that the knowledge they produce and

transmit has a major impact on the economy and society, universities are also accountable for the way they operate and manage their activities and budgets to their sponsors and to the public” (European Commission 2003b: 9). (How similar it is to what can be heard on the other side of the Atlantic: “colleges and universities are thoroughly dependent on the goodwill of the public and of their elected representatives in state and federal government” (Leslie and Fretwell 1996: 283). The tone and the perspective of the documents related to the higher education area and to the common research area differ here considerably.

#### **4. RADICAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES: TOWARDS A “HEALTHY AND FLOURISHING UNIVERSITY WORLD”**

Another issue raised by the European Commission is the following: are transformations facing European universities radical – and if so, why? As a recent (2003) communication on investing in education and training puts it, “the challenge in education and training is likely to be even bigger than envisaged in Lisbon”. The challenge can be summarized in the following way:

Providing an engine for the new knowledge-based European economy and society; overcoming accumulated delays and deficits in relation to key competitors; accommodating a severe demographic constraint; and overcoming high regional issues that will be exacerbated by enlargement during the vital transition period. ... Simply *maintaining the status quo* or *changing slowly* would clearly be *hugely inadequate* in the face of such a *massive challenge* (European Commission 2003a: 11, emphasis mine, MK).

Thus the European Union needs “a healthy and flourishing university world”; it needs “excellence” in its universities. At present, though, just as the situation of research is “worrying”, the situation of universities is bad as universities are “not trouble-free” and are not “globally competitive ... even though they produce high quality scientific publications” (European Commission 2003b: 2). European universities generally “have less to offer” than their main competitors. Following criticism of the first communications about the common European research space on the part of the academic community, this time the European Commission is trying to be as careful as possible about the role of universities, stating, *inter alia*, that universities – although not in general but only “in many respects” – still “hold the key to the knowledge economy and society” (European Commission 2003b: 5); universities are also “at the heart of the Europe of Knowledge” (European Commission 2003b: 4). At the same time the stakes are very high and universities in the form they are functioning now are not acceptable. The largely economic perspective is quite clear. The idea is conveyed in many passages in fairly strong formulations.

So universities face an imperative need to “adapt and adjust” to a series of profound changes (European Commission 2003b: 6). They must rise to a number of challenges. They can only release their potential “by undergoing the radical changes needed to make the European system a genuine world reference” (European Commission 2003b:

11). They have to increase and diversify their income in the face of the worsening underfunding. Good golden age of universities' Ivory Tower ideal (not mentioned) is over: "after remaining *a comparatively isolated universe* for a long period, both in relation to society and to the rest of the world, with funding guaranteed and a status protected by respect for their autonomy, European universities have gone through the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century *without really calling into question the role or the nature of what they should be contributing to society*" (European Commission 2003b: 22, emphasis mine - MK).

But it is clearly over now, and no one should be surprised. Thus the "fundamental question" is the following:

can the European universities, *as they are and are organised now*, hope in the future to retain their place, in society and in the world?" (European Commission 2003b: 22).

It is a purely rhetorical question in the context of the whole communication – the universities in Europe – as they are and as they are organized today – will not be able to retain their place. Restructuring is necessary, and a much wider idea of European social, economic and political integration applied to the higher education sector, expressed in the ideals of a common European higher education area, comes in handy. Let us remind the goal of the common research area in another formulation: "the creation of a frontier-free area for research where scientific resources are used more to create jobs and increase Europe's competitiveness" (European Commission 2000c:1).

## **5. UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR STAKEHOLDERS: TOWARDS MAXIMIZING THE SOCIAL RETURN OF THE INVESTMENT?**

Universities are responsible to their "stakeholders"; university training does not only affect those who benefit directly from it; inefficient or non-optimum use of resources affects the society at large. Thus the objective, the Commission argues, is to "maximise the social return of the investment" or "to optimise the social return on the investment represented by the studies it [society] pays for" (European Commission 2003b: 14). The communiqué sets three major objectives in creating a Europe of knowledge and in making European universities "a world reference". Let us discuss them briefly.

The first objective is "ensuring that the European universities have sufficient and sustainable resources". The communication acknowledges that the worsening underfunding of universities makes it difficult to maintain high profile of both teaching and research. It is difficult to keep and attract the best talent. In comparison with American universities, the means available in Europe, on average, per student are two to five times lower. Universities have to find new ways of increasing and diversifying their income, have to use available financial resources more effectively ("the objective must be to maximise the social return of the investment"), and they have to apply scientific research results more effectively, it is argued. The Commission identifies four main

sources of university income: public funding for research and teaching in general (traditionally the main source of funding), private donations, income by selling services (including research and lifelong learning) and using research results and, finally, contributions from students (tuition and enrolment fees). It realistically acknowledges that “given the budgetary situation in the Member States and the candidate countries, there is a limited margin of maneuver for increasing public support” which we can read as highly improbable, if not impossible (European Commission 2003b: 13). Private donations are not fiscally attractive to potential donors and universities are not able to amass private funds. Selling services and research results is not attractive to universities as regulatory frameworks do not encourage them to do so (e.g. royalties are paid to the state). As to tuition fees, they are “generally limited or even prohibited” in Europe (again some countries of Central and Eastern Europe are exceptions). As inefficiencies of the system are concerned, the communication mentions a high dropout rate among students (40 per cent on average), a mismatch between the supply of qualifications and the demand for them, differing duration of studies for specific qualifications, the disparity of status and conditions of recruitment and work for pre and post-doctoral researchers, and a lack of a transparent system for calculating the cost of research. European universities do not create technological (“spin-off”) companies and do not have well-developed structures for managing research results.

The second objective is “consolidating the excellence of European universities”. There is a need for long term planning and financing in creating the right conditions for achieving excellence in research and teaching, the paper argues. “Excellence does not grow overnight”, and yet governments still budget on an annual basis and do not look beyond a limited number of years. There is also a need for efficient management structures and practices: universities should have an effective decision-making process, developed administration and financial management, and have the ability to match rewards to performance. There is a need for developing European centers and networks of excellence. Areas in which different universities have attained or can be expected to attain excellence should be identified - and research funds should be focused on them.

And the third objective is “broadening the perspective of European universities”. European universities are functioning in an increasingly “globalized” environment, the paper acknowledges. But the European environment is less attractive. Compared with the USA, “financial, material, and working conditions are not as good; the financial benefits of the use of research are smaller and career prospects are poorer”. Another important dimension for universities is serving local and regional development and strengthening European cohesion. Technology centers, science parks, local partnerships between universities and the industry should be encouraged (European Commission 2003b: 11-21). The three objectives sound very reasonable but are merely sketched in the present document. Given their importance, and often controversial character (tuition fees, “spin-off” companies, transformations of the academic profession etc), each of the objectives would deserve a separate treatment in the future.



## 6. HOW THE EUROPEAN UNION BECAME A KEY PLAYER IN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY: THE MAASTRICHT TREATY REVISITED

Let us refer briefly to a booklet published by the European Commission, *Education and Training in Europe: Diverse Systems, Shared Goals for 2010*. The introductory picture of European higher education systems is as follows:

The Europe of education and training reflects the diversity of languages, cultures and systems that are an inherent part of the identity of its member countries and their regions. Education and training have for a long time developed within national contexts and in relative isolation from each other. Countries and regions have a wide variety of education and training institutions, apply different admission rules, use different academic calendars, award hundreds of different degrees and qualifications reflecting a wide variety of curricula and training schemes. This diversity is valued very highly by nations as well as citizens: diversity is one thing all Europeans have in common. ... In the European Union the organisation of education and training systems and the content of learning programmes are the responsibility of the Member States – or their constituent regions as the case may be (European Commission 2002d: 5).

But the Lisbon Council of 2000 and its aftermath brought about a dramatic shift in thinking about national vs. European levels of competence in higher education:

At its meeting in Lisbon in March 2000, the European Council (the Heads of State or Government of the EU countries) acknowledged that the European Union was confronted with a quantum shift resulting from globalisation and the knowledge-driven economy, and agreed a strategic target for 2010: *To become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*. These changes required not only *a radical transformation of the European economy, but also a challenging programme for the modernisation of social welfare and education systems*. The European Council called on the Education Council (the education ministers of the EU countries) and on the European Commission *to undertake a general reflection on the concrete objectives of education systems, focusing on common concerns while respecting national diversity* (European Commission 2002d: 7).

Current developments, especially the creation of the European Research Area, are consequences of this shift of interest which signaled taking the idea of knowledge-based economies in Europe very seriously (the term “knowledge-based economy” was apparently first defined in 1996 in OECD’s book under this title; the description runs as follows: “the term ‘knowledge-based economy’ results from a fuller recognition of the role of knowledge and technology in economic growth. Knowledge, as embodied in human beings (as ‘human capital’) and in technology, has always been central to

economic development. But only over the last few years has its relative importance been recognized, just as that importance is growing. The OECD economies are more strongly dependent on the production, distribution and use of knowledge than ever before” (OECD 1996: 9; see Peters 2001, 2003; Delanty 2001). What followed with both common European higher education and research areas, must be viewed in this context.

European universities have not been the focus of reflection on the European Union level since 1991 when *Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community* was published. The competencies of the European Commission for higher education policy are limited. As *Towards a European Research Area* puts it, “the Treaty [of Maastricht, 1992] provides the European Union with a legal basis for measures to help to support European cooperation in research and technological development. However, *the principal reference framework for research activities in Europe is national*” (European Commission 2000a: 7, emphasis mine).

The Treaty of Maastricht introduced two new articles in the section on “Education, vocational training and youth”: article 149, point 1, states that “the Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while *fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity*”. The authority of EU is limited by a statements that the Community shall support and supplement the action of the Member States “*while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training*”. At the same time, EU shall adopt measures to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article, “*excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States*” (The Treaty on European Union 1992: art. 149, 150). It is certainly a good point to remind the principle of subsidiarity and its scope of application:

the Community shall act within the limits of the powers conferred upon it by this Treaty and of the objectives assigned to it therein. In areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Community shall take action, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, only if and insofar as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community (The Treaty on European Union 1992: art. 5).

Higher education is one of those areas which do not fall within exclusive competence of the European Union; the involvement of the EU is strictly defined and limited to some actions only (de Witt and Verhoeven 2001).

In most general terms, the new (Draft) *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe*, submitted to the President of the European Council in Rome (and then rejected in

December 2003) follows the same lines of thinking about education and training. Section 4, “Education, Vocational Training, Youth and Sport”, consisting of two articles (art. III-182 and III-183), does not introduce any major changes. The Union is supposed to contribute to quality education by “encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and complementing their action”. In the spirit of the previous formulation of the issue, the Union shall “fully respect the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity” (*Draft Treaty 2003*: art. III-182).

## **7. THE LISBON AGENDA AND EDUCATION. RESPONDING TO A “QUANTUM SHIFT” TOWARDS KNOWLEDGE-DRIVEN ECONOMY**

Following the European Council meetings in Lisbon (which gave rise to the “Lisbon agenda” of transformations of European economy, welfare, and education) in 2000 and in Barcelona in 2002 (Barcelona European Council set a goal of European universities becoming “world quality reference” by 2010), the European Commission is clearly “enlarging its field of operation and policy implementation in education” (van der Wende 2003: 16).

The reason is clearly stated by the Commission: while responsibilities for universities lie essentially at national (or regional) level, the most important challenges are “European, and even international or global” (European Commission 2003b: 9). The divergence between the organization of universities at the national level and the emergence of challenges which go “beyond national frontiers” has grown and will continue to do so. Thus some shift of balance is necessary, and the Lisbon agenda combined with the emergence of the European Research Area provides new grounds for policy work at the European level no matter what particular Member States think of it and no matter how they view restrictions on engagement in education issues imposed on the EU by the Maastricht Treaty.

Lisbon European Council of 2000 described the new economic and social challenge of the following decade as a “quantum shift resulting from globalisation and the challenges of a new knowledge-driven economy. These changes are affecting every aspect of people’s lives and require a radical transformation of the European economy”. Reaching a “strategic goal” (already quoted) for the next decade requires setting programs for building knowledge infrastructure, enhancing innovation and economic reform, and – of most interest to us here – “modernising social welfare and education systems” (Lisbon Council 2000: 1). The shift to a digital, knowledge-based economy will be a powerful engine for growth and competitiveness, the communication argues. Consequently, the idea of a European Area of Research and Innovation was affirmed, with research and development’s role in “generating economic growth, employment and social cohesion” mentioned. The communication evoked the full exploitation of “the instruments under the Treaty and all other appropriate means” (Lisbon Council 2000: 3).

It is interesting to note that in the case of presidency conclusions of Lisbon Council and of Barcelona Council (of 2002), both stressing the role of education, research and development, universities are not mentioned at all, the word is non-existent except for two minor contexts: university degrees and an enhanced communication network for libraries, universities and schools. The necessary steps mentioned in Lisbon include mechanisms for networking, improving the environment for private research investment, benchmarking of national R&D policies, high speed transeuropean communication network, taking steps to increase mobility of researchers and introducing Community-wide patents (Lisbon Council 2000: 3-4). Again, neither higher education institutions nor universities appear as subjects, or objects, of these steps.

Let us remind here Roger Dale's argument about the selectivity of shift in educational policies from the national to the European level: "as the politics of education moves to a European level as national economies become increasingly Europeanised, the education sector settlement – the arena on which the agenda for education comes into contact with the means of achieving the agenda – shifts *selectively* from the national to the European level. Very broadly, we might suggest that those elements linked directly to the reproduction of national social formations will remain at the nation-state level, while those more directly associated with the extended reproduction of the mode of production will move to the European level (increasingly the site and focus of that extended reproduction) (Dale 2003: 5; see Robertson and Dale 2003). The shift Dale evokes is seen in subsequent communiqués about the ERA.

## **8. THE UNIVERSITY AND PRIVATE FUNDS, OR INVESTING EFFICIENTLY IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**

The European Commission, except for the 2003 communiqué on "universities", prefers a much wider reference to "education and training". In *Investing Efficiently in Education and Training: an Imperative for Europe* (2003), the role of higher education is relatively simple, as an introductory sentence puts it: "education and training are crucial to achieving the strategic goal set for the Member States at the Lisbon European Council to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy (and society) in the world". No mention of "more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" is made this time (European Commission 2003a: 4) which clearly shows that the second part of the ideal is somehow inferior to the first. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that what provides the perspective of looking at higher education is the "relevance of education/training to the Lisbon goal" rather than relevance to anything else or anything more general (European Commission 2003a: 6). Making Europe a leading knowledge-based economy would be possible "only if education and training functioned as factors of economic growth, research and innovation, competitiveness, sustainable employment and social inclusion and active citizenship" (European Commission 2003a: 6). What is needed today is a "new investment paradigm" in education and training – what is going to change are not only variables of the investment model but also the underlying parameters (European Commission 2003a: 9). The communication mentions briefly the Bologna

process (and the Bruges process in vocational training) as examples of moves in the right direction but hastens to add that “the pace of change does not yet match the pace of globalization, and we risk falling behind our competitors if it is not increased” (European Commission 2003a: 10). Again, it is interesting to note the extent to which the phenomenon of globalization is present in the documents related to the common European research space while being largely neglected in the Bologna process documents.

In terms of financing, generally, in several recent communiqués, the issue of *private* investment in both research and higher education was raised. *More Research for Europe. Towards 3% of GDP* makes it clear that the increase in R&D investments in EU (from current 1.9% to 3% of GDP in 2010) is expected to come largely from private rather than public funds. Thus the main challenge is “to make R&D investment more attractive and profitable to business in the European Research Area” (European Commission 2002c: 5). And what is needed is “boosting private investment in research” as another communiqué calls one of its subsections (European Commission 2002a: 12-13). Still another communiqué reminds that

it is very important to realize that the largest share of this deficit stems from the low level of private investment in higher education and research and development in the EU compared with the USA. At the same time, private returns on investment in tertiary education remain high in most EU countries (European Commission 2003a: 13).

Consequently, if we take together low *private* investment levels in higher education (low private share in costs of studying) and high *private* returns on university education (higher professional status combined with higher salaries), the answer provided is to add to public funding by “increasing and diversifying investment in higher education” (European Commission 2003a: 13). As Henry and colleagues described the apparent paradox, “though education is now deemed more important than ever for the competitive advantage of nations, the commitment and capacity of governments to fund it have weakened considerably” (Henry et al. 2001: 30-31).

It is obvious that the idea conveyed to universities is that they should “do more (teaching and research) with less (public money)” but possibly with more private funds; when and how private investments are to come for research activities of universities is a much more pressing issue in Central and Eastern Europe than in EU-15; it is enough to review the statistical data about share of business sector’s funding for research in both parts of Europe. From the perspective of transition countries, “boosting” private investment in research seems largely unrealistic today, as opposed to boosting private investment in studying which already happened in hundreds of both public and private institutions with considerable share of fee-paying students (see Tomusk 2003; Kwiek 2003a and 2003c). For most accession countries, though, to reach the EU goal – the level 3% of their GDP for research and development by 2010 – is largely impossible, especially taking into account current levels of funding in most of them. It is also interesting to note that the policy of the revenue diversification in

higher education in less industrialized countries (including some parts of Central and Eastern Europe) may be not effective (Johnstone 2003).

## **9. THE HETEROGENEITY OF THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY LANDSCAPE: THE EUROPEAN POSTCOMMUNIST TRANSITION COUNTRIES IN FOCUS**

How do the documents about the European Research Area refer to universities in Central and Eastern Europe? They emphasize “frequently difficult circumstances of universities in the accession countries as regards human and financial resources” (European Commission 2003b: 3), “the worsening of these factors [divergence between national organization of universities and European challenges they face] which will come with the enlargement of the Union, owing to a greater level of heterogeneity of the European university landscape which will ensue” (2003b: 10). Similarly, a communiqué on *More Research for Europe* reminds that the share of business funding is very low in most accession countries and concludes: “the diversity of situations in Europe calls for differentiated but co-ordinated policies to establish a common upward momentum to reach the 3% objective (European Commission 2002c: 8). Even though we may be not especially fond of describing the catastrophic situation of both private and public funding for research activities in most accession countries by way of euphemisms like “difficult circumstances of universities”, “heterogeneity of the European university landscape”, and “diversity of situations in Europe”, we must acknowledge the fact that huge gaps between EU-15 and most of the accession countries are clearly recognized in the documents about the emergent European Research Area. The Bologna process documents, by contrast, do not use even euphemisms to describe different points of departure in the integration project. Not a single official document acknowledges the massive difference between universities in affluent countries of the West and universities in transition countries, signatories of the Bologna process (which now comprises 40 European countries). What is widely acknowledged instead is a wide linguistic and cultural diversity among European institutions. Let me quote here a passage from the Salamanca Convention’s message, “Shaping the European Higher Education Area”:

European higher education is characterized by its diversity in terms of languages, national systems, institutional types and profiles and curricular orientation. At the same time its future depends on its ability to organise this valuable diversity effectively to produce positive outcomes rather than difficulties, and flexibility rather than opacity (Salamanca Convention 2001: 2).

While the documents related to common European research area at least mention problems faced by transition countries (or rather by the ten accession countries), the Bologna documents do not try to see and conceptualize this important issue.

## 10. UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS: KNOWLEDGE-BASED EUROPE HAS ARRIVED

The Bologna process is based on the underlying assumptions (not really formulated in a single place; see the substantial criticism in Neave 2001) that both Europe and the world are entering a new era of knowledge-based and market-driven economies competing against each other; Europe as a region has to struggle with its two main competitors in higher education and research and development: the USA and Japan (Australasia); the knowledge society depends for its growth on the production, transmission, dissemination, and use of new knowledge, or as the *Towards ERA* communication described it: “in the final years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we entered a knowledge-based society. Economic and social development will depend essentially on knowledge in its different forms” (European Commission 2000a: 5); the underlying goal behind current transformations of educational systems and research and development, whether expressed directly (in documents about the common European research area) or indirectly (and accompanied by the “social dimension”, in the Bologna process documents), is more or less to meet the target set out by the European Council in Lisbon (in 2000): Europe by 2010 must become “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”. Also the creation of the European Higher Education Area must be completed by 2010 (how to develop the benchmarks of success and what is going to happen after the deadline are other issues). Europe is at the crossroads; it is trying to combine higher competitiveness and social cohesion in an increasingly globalized world and it is in the process of transition towards a “knowledge society”. Thus knowledge becomes the key issue in the years to come. As a *Third European Report on Science & Technology Indicators 2003* argues,

of course knowledge per se is not a new asset; it has always been a basis for human activity. However, what is radically new is the pace of its creation, accumulation and diffusion resulting in economies and society following a new knowledge-based paradigm. Working and living conditions are being redefined; markets and institutions are being redesigned under new rules and enhanced possibilities for the exchange of information. Moreover, knowledge is not only becoming the main source of wealth for people, businesses and nations, but also the main source of inequalities between them (European Commission 2003c: 1).

With respect to the Bologna process, even though the *Trends III* report prepared for the Berlin summit mentions “globalization” no more than five times in total, it states overtly that ministers and higher education institutions should “ride the tiger of globalisation rather than hope it will disappear” (Reichert and Tauch 2003: 57). In general, though, the underlying assumptions are not developed in more detail in any of its documents or reports.

## 11. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, let us repeat briefly our initial claims: the recent European discourse (exemplified here mainly by the documents of the European Commission) leaves no doubts about the direction of changes in the roles and social and economic tasks of the institution in new societies. The institution of the university seems already to have found it legitimate, useful and necessary to evolve together with radical transformations of the social setting in which it functions. For in the new global order, against the odds, universities are striving for maintaining their traditionally significant role in society. The role of universities as engines of economic growth, contributors to economic competitiveness and suppliers of well-trained workers for the new knowledge-driven economy is more and more often acknowledged – which is undoubtedly a radical reformulation of their traditional social roles. The university in the European context seems about to enter willy-nilly a new era of its development. The main reasons worth mentioning here include the globalization pressures on nation-states and its public services, the strengthening of the project of the “common Europe”, the end of the “Golden age” of the Keynesian welfare state as we have known it, and the emergence of knowledge-based societies and knowledge-driven economies. More generally, the processes affecting the university today are not different from those affecting our world today: under both external (like globalization) and internal pressures (like changing demographics, aging of societies, maturation of welfare states, post-patriarchal family patterns etc), the processes in question are the individualization (and recommodification) of our societies and the denationalization (and desocialization) of our economies. On top of that, we begin to feel the full effects of the universalization of higher education and the commodification of research.



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