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**Abstract**

While the Europeanisation of Higher Education (HE) systems has triggered much debate, the relationship between European factors and domestic economic processes, has been less thoroughly analysed. This article analyses HE reforms in the light of two parallel processes, which have shaped this sector: the introduction of market mechanisms and a gradual Europeanisation. The Polish HE makes a good case study of the relationship between both processes as it has been shaped by the contingencies inherent to the establishment of a liberal economic regime. Another set of inputs originated from the conditionality of the EU accession process, which coincided with the launching of the Bologna Process. While the post-communist transformations entailed the large-scale privatisation of the HE system, the Bologna Process defined the role of the sector as supporting a 'knowledge-based economy', an agenda promoted by the Lisbon strategy and international institutions in the field. Trying to combine the study of policy practice and narratives this article takes

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into account the legislative outcomes as well as the reform debates based both on economic arguments and on the necessity to 'catch up with Europe?' (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Dakowska, Dorota, E-Mail: [dorota.dakowska@unistra.fr](mailto:dorota.dakowska@unistra.fr)