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Abstract

This article examines the impact of European integration on higher education of the Netherlands, Belgium/Flanders and Germany. The analysis of higher education policies in the three countries is part of a broader project, which focuses on a majority of E.U. member states. The selection of the three countries for this paper is not based of any methodological considerations. The question addressed is if higher education policies of member states are converging, diverging or not changing at all, and whether such developments are a consequence of the policies of the European Union (E.U.) or of other factors (e.g., the globalization of the market or of institutions imitating each other). A preliminary assessment leads to the conclusion that a number of important indications of convergence are present in national policy arrangements in the field of higher education (in particular student mobility and quality assurance, but less in the structure of higher education systems). My attention

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will be focused on the structure of higher education systems, on quality assurance and on student and teacher mobility. These domains appear to cover most relevant issues pertaining to higher education policies in the European Union member states (funding of higher education is sometimes considered as a separate domain, but it can also be regarded as an element of the structure of higher education systems, while it is also related to the issue of quality assurance). The European Union however, does not have much legal authority in the policy sector in question. Thus, an explanation for converging national policies may lie elsewhere, in part in the concept of "institutional isomorphism". (HRK / Abstract übernommen)