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**Title**

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**Abstract**

Excellence and frontier research have made inroads into European research policymaking and structure political agendas, funding programs and evaluation practices. The two concepts travelled a long way from the United States and have derived from contexts outside of science (and policy). Following their conceptual journey, we ask how excellence and frontier research have percolated into European science and higher education policies and how they have turned into lubricants of competition that buttress an ongoing reform process in Europe. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)