

Editorial

The present issue of the *CEPS Journal* focuses on reforms and developments in higher education in Central and South-Eastern Europe. During the last decade or two, research on higher education has represented an important part of overall educational research on a global scale; however, researchers from Western Europe and North America have mainly dominated research production, and research has been largely limited to higher education processes and phenomena in these world regions.

This fact reflects the state of affairs in global higher education research, but at the same time it is also an indicator of the limitations of the contemporary global research discussion. Processes and phenomena that have been widely analysed in a given national or regional context could appear different in another. They should, therefore, be considered differently, and research findings may lead to different conclusions when observed from the perspective of another context. Research in higher education has also begun to grow and spread in those regions of the world that were previously “peripheral” in this regard. This is increasingly the case in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Consideration of these factors provided the principal impetus last year for the editorial board to issue a call for papers on recent reforms and developments in higher education in this part of Europe.

Central and South-Eastern Europe have always been at the crossroads of social, political and cultural influences and interferences, and this is directly or indirectly reflected in higher education traditions in the region and in recent developments. When higher education research plays the role of informing higher education policy making – on the national level, but today also on the European level – it is particularly important to be familiar with and to take into account particularities, small details, special phenomena, etc. within a particular regional context; if these particularities are ignored, even the “best intentions” of policymakers may lead systems into trouble. For this reason, we need to know more about particular regional dimensions of higher education, and we need more research on these dimensions.

With the call for papers, we identified a number of issues that could be particularly relevant for further discussion in the field. On one hand, there is the relationship between national and European and/or international higher education policy discourses. During the last two decades (a period that has been called “the transition” in large parts of Central and South-Eastern Europe), global trends and developments in higher education have fundamentally changed the higher education landscape everywhere; however, the impact of these trends has been rather diverse across different countries, while the effects of the international (or European) “reform agenda” have also varied. In today’s Europe, the implementation of the Bologna Process is an issue that is rather high on the research agenda, but original research

from the region, in particular from South-Eastern Europe, is still weak. Higher education reforms have opened a number of issues worth analysing in detail: either on a systemic level (e.g., the question of the diversification of higher education), or at the level of “structures” (e.g., the famous “BA-MA” question or the question of the “new Doctorate”, etc.). Finally, there are also issues relating to specific areas within higher education, such as teacher education.

Of the draft articles that arrived subsequent to the call for papers, five were selected for publication. They deal with the various aspects of higher education mentioned above and reflect diverse social and political contexts. These five articles have been written by nine authors, almost all of whom originate from the region in question.

The first article is authored by Janja Komljenovič from the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), who addresses the connection between international/European and Slovenian higher education policy discourse. The author starts with the observation that the new cultural political economy in Europe, which paves the way to the growing importance of supranational decision making, offers a new meaning of higher education. Her article aims to identify the discourses of various international policy documents relevant to the European higher education area, considering the horizontal dynamics of policy making. It focuses on the new meaning of higher education and the expected roles of higher education institutions. On this basis, using a case study approach, the extent to which these discourses are present in Slovenian higher education policy is demonstrated, focusing on two national strategies of the Republic of Slovenia for higher education, research and innovation. The article suggests that two main discourses are constructed: “the research-based society and economy”, and “reforming the university”. These present the emergence of a new idea of higher education on the international and national levels. The author investigates the extent to which these discourses are present in Slovenian higher education policy, and her findings show that Slovenian discourse hesitates to embrace them fully.

Zoran Kurelić and Siniša Rodin, both from the University of Zagreb, have already published their critical analyses of the Croatian “Bologna” reform. For the present issue of *CEPS Journal*, they wrote a new article analysing the complex reasons for Croatian higher education reform since 2003, as well as its consequences. The main proposition of their paper is that the implementation of the Bologna Process in Croatia has failed due to a fundamental misunderstanding of the goals of the process, a lack of correspondence between the cycles of higher education and the European Qualifications Framework, and a lack of international pressure, resulting from the nature of the open method of coordination. The authors also present the internal market rules of the European Union and how they affect the national regulation of higher education. The paper deals with the main characteristics of the higher education reform and how it has affected the structure of higher education

programmes, the comparability of degrees and qualifications, and student mobility. Finally, the authors propose an agenda for a “reform of the reform” that could bring the Croatian system of higher education back onto the European track.

The third article discusses one of the central aspects of recent Romanian higher education reforms: the issue of institutional diversity. Lazăr Vlăsceanu and Marian-Gabriel Hâncean from the Bucharest University (Romania) present key elements of post-1990 historical developments in the Romanian higher education system. The emphasis is on recent (2011) policies of increasing higher education institutional differentiation. The view is that, in policy design, due attention should be paid to both historical roots and predicted developments. Building on an institutional analysis approach, the authors put forward a theoretical model that aims to explore the predictive implications of some recently promoted higher education policies. These policies are expected to increase institutional differentiation at the systemic level and enhance quality in teaching and research at university level. In the authors’ analysis, the predictive capacity of a model of reference is tested against a concurrent model. The key assumption of the latter is that of considering higher education institutions as “cooperative systems” that are unable to generate those outputs and outcomes that, by aggregation, would contribute to the construction of an institutionally diverse and heterogeneous higher education landscape.

Nataša Pantić, recently appointed to the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, contributes the fourth article in which she “reviews the evidence and scopes the issues” connected to teacher education reforms in the Western Balkans region. In particular, her article considers reforms and developments in teacher education in the region as part of overall reforms in higher education, and in light of changes in general education that impact teachers and their preparation. The author reviews the literature and reports from the region that offer some evidence of and insights into the issues surrounding teacher education reforms in the contexts of post-socialist education transformations. She scopes the issues relating to structural and curricular changes in teacher preparation, coordination of reforms across different levels, development of a common vision of good teaching in cooperation between teacher education institutions, schools and communities, and quality assurance of teacher preparation. The findings include the superficial nature of structural reforms and the neglect of substantial curricular changes, the dearth of opportunities for reflection linking theory and practice, insufficiently developed cross-curricular approaches to teacher education reforms, the fragmentation of teacher education along a number of lines, and the absence of a common vision of quality teaching and of formative links between quality assurance systems for teachers, schools and teacher education providers. Finally, the article outlines potential avenues for future developments and implications for teacher education policies and practices.

In the fifth article, the focus shifts again from the Western Balkans to Central Europe: Hans Pechar, Gulay Ates (University of Klagenfurt, Vienna Location, Austria) and Lesley Andres (University of British Columbia, Canada) analyse the “New Doctorate” in Austria by asking: “Progress toward a professional model or status quo?”. The authors stress that, until recently, both policy direction and public awareness of the Bologna Process has been focused almost unilaterally on the introduction of the Bachelor’s degree to European universities. They find this fact understandable, as for most European countries, and particularly in Central and South-Eastern Europe, the Bachelor is a new academic degree and the “BA-MA” dichotomy brings a series of challenges to traditional structures. Commencing with the Berlin Ministerial Conference (2003), reform of doctoral studies has been highlighted as a second equal pillar in the Bologna reform process. The authors begin their article by providing an overview of the general policy background and the rationales that underlie the attempts to restructure doctoral studies in Europe, and then focus on the specific situation in Austria, where peculiarities of the status quo collide with uniquely Austrian approaches to reforming doctoral education. Through two case studies, the authors finally examine initial attempts to implement the “New Doctorate” in Austria and the related challenges.

The “*varia*” part of the present issue corresponds to the “focus” part and complements it nicely: Veronika Bocsi from the University of Debrecen (Hungary) presents research findings on the relationship between social gender and the world of values in higher education. The author starts by asserting that the category of social gender and the world of values are closely connected, and that the logic of this connection is quite unambiguous. In her analysis, she seeks an answer to the question as to what difference can be observed between male and female students in the world of values in a population where the thinking structures and behavioural norms of social genders are expected to appear less characteristically than in the average for Hungarian society. In conclusion, she addresses the questions as to what attitudes towards education will be formed in the different layers of society by the value systems conveyed by changing gender roles, what reactions will be formed as a response to them in the world of education, and how the two genders’ career prospects and their opportunities to enter the different levels and stages of education will be affected by changes in higher education. This could also be an agenda for future research.

In the concluding part of the present issue, Katarina Aškerc and Romina Plešec Gasparič review Mark Bray’s publication *Confronting the Shadow Education System: What Government Policies for What Private Tutoring?* (Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning, 2009).