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## THE ACADEMIC PROFESSION BETWEEN NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

**Abstract** It is widely assumed that higher education systems converge across economically advanced countries, and the term “globalisation” is often for claiming that a bundle of factors implying modernisation and worldwide competition are the drivers of convergence. Surveys of the academic profession undertaken jointly in a substantial number of countries in the 1990s and in recent years provide the opportunity of examining whether scholars at institutions at higher education note an increasing similarity of conditions and become themselves more similar in their activities. In summing up the findings, we certainly note some examples of extreme differences by country. Altogether, if we believe in a strong convergence of higher education across Europe, we could describe the academics’ views and activities as substantially varied. But if we take into consideration traditional differences in the character of national higher education systems, we could consider this spread as moderate.

### 1. Introduction

In looking at the scene of higher education research in Europe (see Brennan & Teichler, 2008; Teichler, 2005; cf. also Kehm & Musselin, 2013), we note that two themes are relatively often addressed: Curricula, teaching and learning as well as governance and management. In contrast, various areas might be called under-researched. Among others, studies on the academic profession – the theme of this article – are rare, even though we can consider the views and the activities of academic profession – the knowledge workers in the higher education system – as central for the performance and for the impact of higher education.

For many years, higher education research has had a quite national focus, thereby reflecting the predominantly national policy discourses in most countries. Although higher education has universal knowledge features, is strongly characterized by international interactions and comprises many actors with cosmopolitan views, many features have strong national elements, e.g. curricula, funding, administration and academic careers. And most research on higher education has been funded from national sources in the past.

However, there are comparative statistics available on students and institutions of higher education. Also comparative studies on life and study of students as well as on employment and work of graduates have been undertaken gained momentum since a couple of years. Most recently, the academic profession became a focus

of comparative studies. These studies will be discussed here, because they belonged to the most complex comparative endeavors in higher education research and they yielded interesting results.

## **2. The International Survey 2007**

In 2004, higher education researchers from various countries all over the world agreed to establish a network aimed at conducting a representative questionnaire survey on the career and work situation of academics as well as their views about various features of higher education and its social context. In four preparatory workshops held from 2004 to 2006, they screened the public discourses and the respective state of higher education research, developed a conceptual, explored opportunities of realizing such a project, designed the logistics and eventually formulated a master questionnaire expected to serve as a base line for the various national surveys.

This initiative succeeded. Scholars in 18 countries and one special administrative unit (Hong Kong) succeeded in raising funds nationally. In various analyses, the countries were grouped into 13 “mature”, where the future generation of professors is trained primarily within the country, and 6 “emerging countries”, where the high quality professoriate is trained in large numbers abroad. Actually, the former group comprises Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and the latter Argentina, Brazil, China, Malaysia, Mexico and South Africa.

The scholars of individual countries were asked to establish a nationally representative sample of full-time or part-time – at least half-time – employed academic staff in charge of teaching and/or research at institutions of higher education providing courses leading at least to a bachelor degree. Thus, persons were excluded who are exclusively in charge of management and service, who have a marginal working time in higher education, who teach single courses on honorarium basis, auxiliary staff, etc., and finally those only involved in shorter or lower-level courses than that of a bachelor degree. The respondents were sub-divided in various analyses according to two dimensions: (a) rank – professors (equivalent to full professor and associate professors in the U.S. definition) versus other academic staff – and (b) type of higher education institutions – universities with a more or less balanced research and teaching function vs. other higher education institutions with a dominance of teaching.

The scholars of the individual countries were suggested to draw a sample sufficiently large to guarantee an overall absolute number of at least 800 responses.

Actually, altogether more than 100,000 persons contacted, and responses were received from more than 25,000 persons – mostly in the years 2007, some in 2008 and a few even later. The response rate varied substantially from even more than 50% to only 4%; it was low notably on countries where the academics were only contacted by email and had only the option to respond on-line, while it was highest in countries when academics had the alternative of responding online or on a paper questionnaire.

The process of data analysis and interpretation of findings turned out to be long-lasting. This is part is the consequence of in-depth analysis. From 2008 to 2013, 14 meetings were held in 11 countries – in the majority workshops or conferences focusing on the CAP projects – to prepare joint analyses and to reflect interim reports. In part, complications emerged in consolidating the data set or in stretching the available funds over the required period. Eventually, the CAP team published the comparative analysis of major findings in six volumes (Bentley, Coates, Dobson et al., 2013; Galaz-Fontes, Arimoto, Brennan & Teichler, 2014; Huang, Finkelstein & Rostan, 2013; Locke, Cummings & Fisher, 2011; Shin, Arimoto, Cummings & Teichler, 2013; Teichler, Arimoto & Cummings, 2013). Further about 200 publications reported the results: Journal articles, books comprising country reports, proceedings of international conferences, etc.

### **3. Links to a Predecessor Study**

A first comparative study of the academic profession was undertaken in the early 1990s. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Princeton, NJ, U.S.) initiated it and provided funds for the coordination, surveys in select countries and the comparative analysis. Prior national studies in the U.S. had revealed a paradox, namely a notion among academics to come increasingly under pressure, through a growing relevance of higher education for society was generally assumed, and the new study aimed at examining whether this was a worldwide phenomenon. Beyond that, a broad range of themes was addressed: The socio-biographic profile of the academic profession, working conditions, professional activities as such teaching, research and service, governance, the international dimension of academic life, and attitudes towards higher education and society.

The final report of the Carnegie study (Altbach, 1996; see also Maassen & van Vught, 1996) provided information on 14 countries, among them about half eventually participating in the CAP study as well: Australia, Brazil, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the U.S; thus a change over time could be examined for a considerable number of countries. Five countries participated only in the Carnegie Study: Chile, Egypt, Israel, Russia

and Sweden. The aim of the study was to obtain about 1,000 responses by country. Actually, almost 20,000 academics responded in 1992 or shortly thereafter. The response rates – mostly in the range between one third and a half – altogether were higher than in the subsequent surveys, which suffered a setback in the general increase of survey fatigue over the years.

The potentials of a time-series analysis might be illustrated by some findings from selected economically advanced countries. First, the proportion of women among professors at research and teaching oriented universities increased substantially, but one can hardly note any convergence across countries. We note the highest proportion of women in Australia with an increase from 10% to 39% and the lowest in Japan with an increase from 1% to 16%. Among junior staff at universities, we note a growth from 39% to 63% in Australia and from 7% to 21% in Japan.

Second, it is widely assumed that job security of academics decreased over time as part of stronger incentive and sanction-based managerial policies. However, permanent employment of professors continued to prevail in most countries. Short-term employment of junior academic staff, indeed, increased in some countries, e.g. Australia (from 36% to 49%) and Japan (from 4% to 27%). In others, however, it remained about constant, for example in the UK (almost 30% each) and notably in countries where short-term employment has been frequent already for a while, i.e. in Germany (about 80% each) and the U.S. (about 60% each).

Third, the commitment of university professors to their own university was exceptionally low in Germany in 1992 (2.6 on average on a scale from 1 = Very important to 5 = Not at all important), and it remained constant up to 2007. This reflects the tradition in Germany of mobility between universities being seen as an indication of quality and reputation. In contrast, this substantially higher the United Kingdom (2.1), but fell to 2.7 – a finding certainly due to a growing dissatisfaction with the managerial policies at British universities.

Fourth, the overall job satisfaction did not change substantially on average. Average scores were around 2.4 at both points in time on a scale from 1 = Very satisfied to 5 = Very dissatisfied, i.e. more positive than negative, but certainly by no means enthusiastically positive. The average score, for example, was 2.3 each in the United States as well as only 2.5 and 2.6 in the United Kingdom.

#### **4. New Themes Reflecting Changes of Context and Activities**

As already pointed out, the Carnegie Survey underscored that the academic profession is exposed to a growing pressure as a consequence of the expansion of higher education, tighter financial conditions, an increasing uncertainty of employment

conditions, a growing power of the university management and the loss of social exclusiveness. This was summarized in the above named publication by Kogan and Teichler (2007), actually in the introduction by the two editors (pp. 9–10), as follows:

*“A glance on the only major institutional comparative survey on academics, hitherto, the Carnegie Study on the Academic Profession ... suggests that the ideal of academic freedom and predominantly collegial coordination was upheld, but that the academic profession has come under enormous pressures potentially endangering the survival of the core identity of academics and universities. Expansion of student enrolment was identified as the major driver of change moving intellectual discourse of the teachers and learners to organized curricula and instruction techniques, leading to a separation of the teaching and research function for many academics, undermining a social exclusiveness of the professoriate, increasing pressures for efficiency and thus elevating the status of university management and possible government as forces of establishing a compromise between the traditional ideals and the new pressures of efficiency and coordination. But management did not show up the 1992 Carnegie study as the single major force of shaping the institutional character, and there it did not seem to be any convergent trend of university management, but rather a multitude of models.”*

The scholars involved in the CAP survey concluded that the theme “the academic profession under pressure” has by no means become obsolete in the mean time and that it would be worth to examine changes over time in this respect. But they concluded that three major contextual changes should be paid attention to as well which might affect the academics strongly: (a) the growing pressure on higher education to be visibly relevant; (b) the growing internationality both of higher education and its environment, and (c) the further increase of the power of university management. Kogan and Teichler (2007, pp. 10–11) summarize the three approaches developed by the CAP team as follows:

*“According to the scholars preparing the new comparative survey, three new emphases have become particularly persuasive: relevance, internationalisation and management. Thereby, convergent forces seem to be underway in economically advanced societies, and newly emerging economies and developing countries intend to speed up a process of modernization by putting an even stronger emphasis on these directions of development. (...)*

*Relevance: Whereas the highest goal of the traditional academy was to create fundamental knowledge, what has been described as the ‘scholarship of discovery’, the new emphasis of the knowledge society is on useful knowledge or the ‘scholarship of application’. This scholarship often involves the pooling and melding of insights from several disciplines and tends to focus on outcomes that have a direct impact on everyday life. One consequence is that many future scholars, though trained in the disciplines, will work in applied fields and may have options of employment in these fields outside of the academy. This provides new opportunities for more boundaryless forms of academic career and knowledge transfer while it may also create recruitment dif-*

*faculties in some places, and especially in fields such as science, technology and engineering.*

*There are strong interdependencies between the goals of higher education, the rules for distributing resources, and the nature of academic work. The changes associated with movement from the 'traditional academy' with its stress on basic research and disciplinary teaching to the 'relevant academy' are largely uncharted and are likely to have unanticipated consequences. ...*

*Internationalisation: National traditions and socio-economic circumstances continue to play an important role in shaping academic life and have a major impact on the attractiveness of jobs in the profession. Yet today's global trends, with their emphasis on knowledge production and information flow, play an increasingly important role in the push towards the internationalisation of higher education. The international mobility of students and staff has grown, new technologies connect scholarly communities around the world, and English has become the new lingua franca of the international community.*

*The economic and political power of a country, its size and geographic location, its dominant culture, the quality of its higher education system and the language it uses for academic discourse and publications are factors that bring with them different approaches to internationalisation. ...*

*Management: In academic teaching and research, where professional values are traditionally firmly woven into the very fabric of knowledge production and dissemination, attempts to introduce change are sometimes received with scepticism and opposition. At the same time, a greater professionalisation of higher education management is regarded as necessary to enable higher education to respond effectively to a rapidly changing external environment. The control and management of academic work will help to define the nature of academic roles – including the division of labour in the academy, with a growth of newly professionalised 'support' roles and a possible breakdown of the traditional teaching/research nexus. New systemic and institutional processes such as quality assurance have been introduced which also change traditional distributions of power and values within academe and may be a force for change in academic practice. ...*

*A number of views can be discerned about recent attempts at the management of change in higher education and the responses of academics to such changes. One view would see a victory of managerial values over professional ones with academics losing control over both the overall goals of their work practices and their technical tasks. Another view would see the survival of traditional academic values against the managerial approach. This does not imply that academic roles fail to change, but that change does not automatically mean that interests and values are weakened. A third view would see a 'marriage' between professionalism and managerialism with academics losing some control over the goals and social purposes of their work but retaining considerable autonomy over their practical and technical tasks. The desirability of these three different positions is also subject to a range of different views".*

## 5. The Successor Project in Europe

In autumn 2009, a successor project of the CAP project started. In 2008, the European Science Foundation (ESF) had decided in collaboration with various national research promotion agencies to provide support for several European research consortia (called Collaborative Research Projects, CRP) in the thematic area of “Higher Education and Social Change in Europe” (EuroHESC), among them a study on “The Academic Profession in Europe: Responses to Societal Challenges (EUROAC)”. In the framework of this project, a questionnaire survey was undertaken in six additional countries that was identical in major parts to that employed in the CAP survey. Through merging the data of CAP and EUROAC, a European 12 country-data set on the academic profession could be established whereby, however, the dates of inquiry ranged from 2007 to 2010: Austria, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Altogether, the CAP/EUROAC data set of 12 European countries comprised information provided by more than 16,000 responses. The response rates ranged from above 30% in three countries to between 20 and 30%, to between 10 and 20% and finally to below 10% each in three countries. Similarly as in the CAP project, various workshops were held or other conferences (altogether 12 meetings in 10 countries) were taken as an opportunity to meet and discuss the results in order to enhance the quality of analysis.

In some respects, the EUROAC project had a broader scope than the CAP project. A thorough analysis was undertaken of the available literature in order to broaden the background for the analysis and interpretation of data. Moreover, some major themes were added that did not play any significant role in the previous studies. Finally, up to 100 interviews were undertaken in eight European countries each to do an in-depth analysis in some thematic areas where questionnaire surveys may have limitations.

Among the themes added and notably treated in the interviews was that of the “third mission” of higher education. In the history the university often has been regarded as having responsibilities beyond the two core functions of teaching and research, but any concepts of a possible “third mission” or “service function” for the society remained fuzzier and more controversial. Recent discourses suggest that a substantial number of academics spend considerable time for activities other than teaching, research, administration as well as for internal services within the university or within the academic profession. Issues frequently named in this context are transfer of knowledge to industry, a “civic” function of the university as well as various contributions of the university to “sustainable development”.

Another issue of growing importance had been hardly addressed in the questionnaires, i.e. how the role of academics is shaped by the fact that higher education professionals have become a sizeable and important group of actors in some countries. Their tasks can be called management-support and services, whereby both an in-depth understanding of the system of teaching and research and of the logic of the higher education institutions and its management is essential in order to work as advisors and as day-to-day moderators of institutional change. In the framework of a study on the academic profession, it is interesting to note how much academics felt being affected by the growth of this profession and to what extent this is seen as a threat to a broad influential role of the academics themselves or as alleviating their core functions. Again, these issues were primarily addressed in interviews and notably in those countries where the participating scholars perceived these issues as salient.

## **6. Similarities or Variations across Europe**

Universities are shaped by universal principles and collaboration across countries, but one continues to talk about “higher education systems”, whereby national entities are addressed. Traditionally, various national conditions shaped the academic profession strongly, i.e. formal qualifications, career patterns, remuneration and official work assignments. Thus, substantial differences between national academic professions were viewed as a matter of procedure. The studies referred to here remained ambivalent at the outset as regards the question whether similarity across countries has become dominant. On the one hand, it is widely assumed that a trend towards internationalization and globalization creates convergent pressures. Similarly, the growing collaboration within Europe in the reform of study programmes and the enhancement of research is based on the aim to create similarities across Europe in many respects. On the other hand, there is a persistence of many national traditions, and the search for the internationally best solution often does not lead to the conclusion that a single model is superior in every respect.

In comparing 12 European countries, we note quite a variety as far as academic careers are concerned. Some examples might be named, whereby primarily reference is made to professors at universities, i.e. institutions in charge of both, teaching and research: (1) among university professors more than 90% are doctoral-degree holders in six countries, three quarters and more in four countries, but only two-thirds in Ireland and one third in Italy; (2) the average age of the award of the doctoral degree ranges from about 30 years among university professors in Austria, Germany and Switzerland to about 40 years in Ireland and Poland; (3) mobility between institutions in the course of the career is more or less a “must” in Germany

and turns out to be very frequent in Italy and Poland. In contrast, university professors in Netherlands and Croatia change their institutions less often than once on average; (4) short-term employment contracts of junior academic staff are true for three quarters or more in Germany, Switzerland and Norway, but only for about a quarter in Ireland and the United Kingdom; (5) the proportion of academics being either migrants or having spent a period in another country is almost two-thirds in Ireland and Switzerland as well as more than half in Norway. It ranges from 11% to 36% in the majority of countries surveys, but is only 4% in Poland.

Academic work is standardized to a certain extent, thus not providing room for an extreme variation. Yet, some variation seems to exist as well, as select findings show: (1) university professors in Germany and Switzerland report that they work 52 hours weekly on average over the whole year, while the respective estimates are around 40 hours on the part of their colleagues in Norway and Portugal (see Table 1); (2) the average weekly time spent on teaching across the whole year ranges from 14 to 20 hours and the time spent on research from 13 to 18 hours. Yet, hours on research clearly dominate those on teaching in four countries, among them notably in Austria and in Switzerland, while hardly surpass those on teaching in half of the countries surveyed.

**Table 1.** Annual weekly work hours spent by academics at universities in selected European countries on various academic functions (only full-time academics)

	2010						2007/08					
	AT	CH	HR*	IE	PL	NL	DE	FI	IT	NO	PT	UK
<i>Seniors</i>												
Teaching	11	12	15	12	15	14	14	15	14	13	13	15
Research	19	21	18	19	17	19	20	17	21	15	16	17
Service	5	5	3	3	4	3	7	3	4	2	2	2
Administration	9	9	7	11	5	9	7	8	5	7	6	11
Other activities	4	5	4	5	3	3	5	4	2	3	3	4
Total hours	48	52	47	50	43	48	52	47	46	39	41	48
<i>Juniors</i>												
Teaching	9	5	14	14	15	15	9	11	14	5	16	11
Research	21	28	18	18	18	20	21	23	21	19	18	19
Service	5	4	2	2	3	2	7	2	4	1	1	1
Administration	6	4	5	9	4	4	3	3	3	2	4	10
Other activities	3	3	3	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	4
Total hours	44	45	42	47	43	44	42	41	44	28	41	45

Question B1: Considering all your professional work, how many hours do you spend in a typical week on each of the following activities? (Calculated for the whole years on the basis for responses for periods when classes are in session and are not in session)

AT=Austria, CH=Switzerland, HR=Croatia, IE=Ireland, PL=Poland, NL=The Netherlands, DE=Germany, FI=Finland, IT=Italy, NO=Norway, PT=Portugal, UK=United Kingdom

\*Croatia: data for all respondents (including part-time staff not reported separately)

Source: EUROAC data set (June 2011)

Academics consider themselves very much as individuals shaping their teaching and research activities according to their own convictions. The surveys, however, indicate that certain modes clearly prevail in the various countries: (1) most university professors state that they favor a linkage of teaching and research. The proportion of those stating a clear preference for research varies by countries from 3% in Croatia to 24% in Austria (see Table 2); (2) About three quarters of university professors of four countries underscore a practice-oriented approach in teaching, but clearly less than half in the Netherlands and Finland; (3) Individualized instruction of students is quite common in four European countries, but is reported by less than half in Poland, Germany and Portugal; (4) understanding scholarship as being involved in original research is typical for most university professors, yet the proportion of respective responses varies by country from 92% to 68%; (5) the number of university professors' publications – aggregated to an index – is in Germany and Switzerland four times as high as in Poland.

**Table 2.** Preferences of academics at universities in selected European countries for teaching or research (percentage)

	2010						2007/08					
	AT	CH	HR	IE	PL	NL	DE	FI	IT	NO	PT	UK
<i>Seniors</i>												
Primarily in teaching	1	1	2	3	13	5	5	2	2	2	3	8
Both, leaning towards teaching	17	20	33	19	34	17	20	19	22	18	36	23
Both, leaning towards research	58	59	62	65	45	55	63	61	67	60	48	48
Primarily in research	24	20	3	13	8	23	12	18	10	20	14	22
<i>Juniors</i>												
Primarily in teaching	5	3	4	7	3	5	7	8	3	2	6	9
Both, leaning towards teaching	21	17	38	33	29	17	22	12	22	14	41	24
Both, leaning towards research	42	47	50	51	54	49	38	39	60	44	47	37
Primarily in research	33	32	8	8	14	30	33	42	15	40	6	30

Question B2: Regarding your own preferences, do your interests lie primarily in teaching or in research?

Country abbreviations and source: See Table 1.

Similar transformations of governance seem to have spread across Europe in recent years whereby, among others, the power of the university leadership has grown and various modes of evaluation have become more important as tools of steering. Yet, some variation has remained: (1) 37% of university professors in the Netherlands state that teaching quality is taken into consideration in personnel decisions, while the respective proportion is only 13% in Italy and 17% in Portugal; (2) asked whether they consider themselves influential in shaping key academic policies on university level, 26% of university professors in Germany and 22% in Portugal respond affirmatively in contrast to only 4% in Ireland (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** High personal influence of academics at universities in selected European countries on academic policies at their university (percentage)

	2010					2007/08						
	AT	CH	HR	IE	PL	NL	DE	FI	IT	NO	PT	UK
<i>Seniors</i>												
Level of the department	72	54	88	39	55	84	88	74	55	52	70	58
Level of faculty	28	19	69	11	25	49	63	36	32	21	39	29
Institutional level	9	12	17	4	8	11	26	18	10	16	22	12
<i>Juniors</i>												
Level of the department	26	11	63	12	36	68	48	25	23	21	38	25
Level of faculty	4	2	35	3	8	16	9	6	5	4	16	13
Institutional level	2	5	5	1	2	3	4	3	2	6	6	8

Question E2: How influential are you, personally, in helping to shape key academic policies? (At the level of the department or similar unit; At the level of faculty, school and similar unit; At the institutional level) (percentage of responses 1 or 2 on a scale from 1 = Very influential to 4 = Not at all influential)

Country abbreviations and source: See Table 1

The academic profession seems to be relatively homogenous across Europe as far as overall job satisfaction is concerned. On the five-point scale with 1 as the positive extreme, the average scores for university professors range from 1.9 in Switzerland to about 2.3 in most countries and 2.6 in the United Kingdom (2.6). Junior academics also are similar across countries in a somewhat lower level of satisfaction - 2.1 in Croatia and to 2.3 to 2.6 in other countries, while again their British colleagues are least satisfied (2.8).

Yet, views differ substantially if specific aspects are addressed which imply elements of job satisfaction. For example, the statement “this is a poor time for any young person to begin an academic career in my field” is agreed with by only 27% of university professors in Norway and 35% in the Netherlands, but by 78% in Austria and 73% in Italy.

## 7. Concluding Observations

The academic profession can be observed from various angles as an interesting phenomenon: as an enormously free expert profession, as the profession with the longest path of concurrent training and regular work – often combined with a high degree of selectivity, until a secure membership of the profession is eventually reached, as an overburdened profession seeking for the unknown – the truth, the innovation etc., as a profession ironically loosing reputation when its domain, i.e. systematic knowledge becomes more important in society, as a profession moderately remunerated in comparison to its selectivity and reputation, as a profession with a mixed public image ranging from absent-mindedness and little understanding of the real world towards being a “key profession” in providing the conceptual basis for other important professional areas.

Available information through recent surveys shows on the one hand that the academic profession undergoes substantial changes and adapts to rapidly changing conditions. For example, the share of women jumped in some countries from a marginal position within the professoriate to even the majority among junior staff in some countries. Teaching goes somehow on from serving less than one tenth of an age group to more than half. Research survives somehow between the claim to pursue knowledge for its own sake and the call to be the most important factor of growth and success in the knowledge society. Academics survive a rapid change of various models of relationships between the state and the university as well as of internal decision-making. On the other hand, academics show a substantial stability in their efforts to secure academic freedom, to ensure an influence within their institution, to do their best to realize “cross-fertilization” between teaching and research. Any extreme concept – that they become the desperate losers of the massification of higher education or the big winners of the knowledge society do not turn out to be true. Rather, academics remain relatively stable in their work style and relatively satisfied with their states of affairs. Moreover, the grand visions of a real globalized profession amidst the growing world-wide communications turn out to be exaggerated: Most academics consider themselves to live in an open space beyond national boundaries but consciously or unconsciously keep themselves embedded in national traditions to an extent that it is possible to claim that there is a – one – European academic profession.

In summing up the findings, we certainly note some examples of extreme differences by country. Altogether, if we believe in a strong convergence of higher education across Europe, we could describe the academics’ views and activities as substantially varied. But if we take into consideration traditional differences in the character of national higher education systems, we could consider this spread as moderate.

Finally, in addressing procedural and methodological issues, we note that questionnaire surveys reveal interesting information. The model of the CAP and EUROAC study has already elicited similar national or regional studies. Analyses have a better chance of getting in-depth information, however, if questionnaire surveys are supplemented by interviews. Finally, the surveys of the academic profession reinforce the view that comparative research comprising questionnaire surveys, as a rule, are as costly as well as time-consuming, and require enormous efforts of coordination and willingness to make compromises in order to succeed (see Teichler 2013). Those who are involved in such studies ask themselves whether the work involved is worth the effort, but at the end they say: We would do it again!

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