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TRANSFORMATIONS OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

The university is one of Europe's most enduring social institutions. It has existed for over 900 years in forms that are still recognisable today, with essentially the same functions. As a result, the university has demonstrated remarkable institutional change dynamics, allowing it to maintain a flexible and rather effective balance of internal continuity and external responsiveness [5].

This balance was effective not only when the university's environment was relatively stable with incremental change demands, but also when the university's societal functions and underlying ideas were debated in more fundamental ways [8].

Our research demonstrates that the first 20 years after the Second World War represent a rather stable period in the relationship between the European university and society. These functions were relatively uncontested in the period of rapid economic growth in the 1950s and early 1960s. But from 70s the period of shifting to massification of university education has started [2]. This somehow resulted in a diversity of belief systems associated with the university, as well as an impact on the university's role in selecting socioeconomic and political elites. More importantly, massification had an impact on the university's education and research functions.

So higher university education is transforming from a social institution to an industry. But still it is not difficult to find examples of reforms that aim to leverage the university's economic potential as a knowledge generator and knowledge innovator [2]. Knowledge, technology, and innovation are now viewed as more central policy issues associated with the university than traditional issues associated with the concept of a university as a social institution [4].

Over the last 20 years, new governance, organizational, and management approaches have provided European universities with new tools for internal resource distribution, quality evaluation and improvement, the implementation of standards for the services provided, and the professionalization of their administrative practices and procedures [3].

Nonetheless, when considering recently published policy documents and reform proposals, particularly at the European level, the results of 20 years of national university reforms appear to be interpreted as disappointing, leading to claims for the need for additional modernization and reform [1]. In short, European universities are regarded as core knowledge institutions by policymakers, but they are said to require drastic reforms if they are to live up to their full potential. [5].

Especially, university sector needs to be reformed due to the recent severe situation with COVID-19. In order to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions around the world closed in 2020, affecting over 3.9 million international and foreign students studying in OECD countries [6]. The imposed lockdown had an effect on the continuity of learning and the delivery of course content, as well as students' perceptions of the value of their degree and every nation's ability to ensure their safety and well-being. These events may have a negative impact on university reforms in the future years.

At the same time, in such difficult situation with COVID-19, governments seek to encourage the internationalization of higher university education. They consider that student exchange may also be a means of strengthening links between countries, advancing regional identity and mutual understating, maintaining, or improving their economic development [7]. So, university education is approaching to sustainable development In such a way European cooperation illustrates that even in difficult pandemic situation government can stimulate University higher education, as it is a significant factor and a driving force for cultural, economic and technological prosperity of every welfare state.

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