Responses to European policies:
The impact of the Erasmus programme on national policy-making

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Introduction

Much has been written on internationalisation, and particularly in recent years the strengthened international dimension of higher education has spurred scholars to analyse current developments (Teichler 1999). The main focus of the academic contributions is on describing internationalisation activities, ranging from issues like student and staff mobility (e.g. Teichler 1996, Maiworm & Teichler 1996), joint and international curricula and curriculum change (e.g. Van der Wende 1996), exporting and marketing higher education (e.g. Mazzarol & Soutar 2001), and national policies regarding internationalisation (e.g. Kälvemark & van der Wende 1996). Regarding the research approaches in the body of publications on internationalisation, Kehm (2003) distinguishes six basic approaches; particularly analyses, systematic overviews and critical assessments dominate. Despite the overwhelming attention to the issue of internationalisation, theory-based (or –inspired) analyses are rare. This chapter attempts to contribute to bridging the gap between research on internationalisation in higher education and the discipline of public administration and public policy.

The focus will be on the impact of the European Commission's Erasmus programme (1987 – now) on national policy-making in higher education in the fifteen member states (and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) [1]. We are both interested in the impact itself and the process – including its dynamics – along which the impact has developed. The two guiding research questions are: to what extent has Erasmus affected national higher education policies and how we can explain different impacts on national higher education systems?

The conceptual model

The Erasmus programme is a European-level policy initiative with accompanying instruments. Whereas the programme intended to have an impact on students and staff and on higher education institutions, we suggest that this policy has (had) also an impact (either direct or indirect) on national higher education systems and on national policy-making in those systems as well. At the same time we are aware that not only European-level policies such as the Erasmus programme affect national policies. Also *nationally mediated* types of change (i.e. changes dependent on priorities and directions set by national governments, such as massification, increased stakeholder involvement, marketisation, but also financial contingencies) and *global warming* types of changes (i.e. changes that take place because of developments in the environment on which national governments have no direct control, such as the transition to knowledge-based economy, and economic globalisation) have an impact on policies of higher education. Figure 1 explains the (possible) impacts of the Erasmus programme.

[1] The empirical data of this contribution stem from a EC commissioned project on the evaluation of Erasmus ("Evaluation of Erasmus institutional and national impact", DGEAC/24/02). The project was carried out by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the Netherlands, and the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente (see Van Brakel et al. 2004).

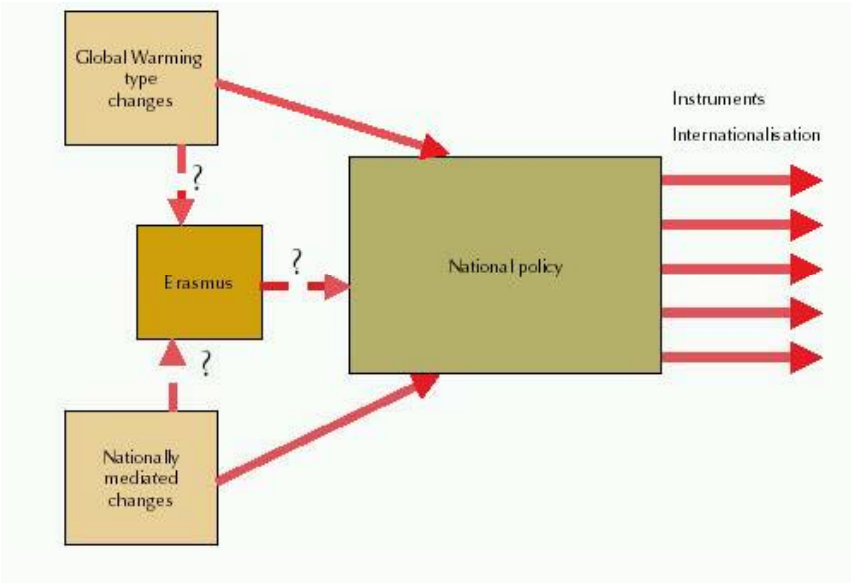

Figure 1: Policy development at the national level (Van Brakel et al., 2004, p. 25)

The way we view the impact of the Erasmus programme coincides with one of the five uses of the concept of "Europeanisation" distinguished by Olsen (2002, p. 923-924). Europeanisation as the "central penetration of national systems of governance" closely fits our concern. It deals with the changes "in core domestic institutions of governance and politics, understood as a consequence of the development of European-level institutions, identities and policies" (Olsen 2002, p. 932). With this observation, we more or less immediately enter two – interrelated – debates: first, *to what extent* change takes place and second, *why* and *how* change takes place.

Domestic change

Regarding the question *to what extent* change takes place, quite some literature emerged, although much of the work is of recent date and some maintain that "actual consequences of Euro-level action have not been a matter of empirical investigation" (Kassim & Menon 1996, p. 1). Particularly political scientists and public administration researchers focused on the impact of European developments on national policy-making following a period with considerable attention to (the emergence of) institutions at the supra-national level. Authors distinguish the extent of change often on a scale, ranging from low levels of adjustment (from the perspective of the imposition of supranational policies) to high levels of adjustment. Radaelli (2000), for instance, discerns inertia, absorption, transformation, and retrenchment as different types of adjustment (see also Héritier et al 2001).

In a recent overview, Olsen (2002, p. 935-937) maintains that there is considerable empirical evidence to assume that national patterns are resistant to but also flexible enough to cope with changes at the European level. National governments have differentially adapted to European pressures. Adaptation reflects institutional resources and traditions, the pre-existing balance of domestic institutional structures and the values defining the appropriate national political forms. European-level developments do not dictate specific forms of adaptation but leave considerable discretion to domestic actors and institutions. In addition, European-level changes are just one among several drivers of domestic change (Olsen 2002, p. 935-936). Olsen concludes that domestic institutional structures, and the values, norms, interest and power distributions in which they are embedded, are monuments of historical battles, joint problem-solving and peaceful conflict resolution. Institutions should not be expected to change easily and quickly except under extraordinary conditions (Olsen 2002, p. 944; see also

e.g. Menon & Hayward 1996, Hanf & Soetendorp 1998a, Mény et al 1996, see Peterson 1996 on European research and development policy)[2].

Regarding the *how* (mechanisms, processes) and *why* (explanatory factors) of domestic change, analysts seem to disagree more. Börzel & Risse (2000) distinguish two theoretical approaches that more or less indicate opposing views on domestic change. In their view, rational institutionalism – following the logic of consequentialism (March and Olsen 1989) – assumes that in case of a misfit between European and domestic policies and institutions, societal and political actors are provided with opportunities leading to a domestic redistribution of power. This redistribution is dependent on the capacities of actors to seize opportunities and to avoid constraints. Such capacities are affected by the existence of multiple veto points in the domestic institutional structure and the existence of formal institutions. In contrast, sociological institutionalism posits – following the logic of appropriateness – that misfits between European and domestic norms and collective understandings exert pressure on domestic institutions. Whether the misfit leads to adjustment of the domestic institutions is dependent on norm entrepreneurs (that mobilise, persuade and redefine interests) and political culture (conducive to consensus-building and cost-sharing).

Yet, the two views are not mutually exclusive. As the founding fathers of the two logics (March & Olsen 1998, p. 12) maintain "… political action is generally explicable neither as based exclusively on a logic of consequences nor as based exclusively on a logic of appropriateness". There may be different relations between the two logics. The authors distinguish four approaches, based on: the combination of a clear and unclear logic; a major logic setting the constraints with a minor logic refining it; a developmental approach of alternating logics; and an approach viewing one logic being a special case of the other logic.

Not surprisingly, given the opposing views on the explanation of domestic change and the debates on whether these views might be compatible, those studying the impact of Europeanisation have developed different perspectives on the mechanisms and process of changes. Knill & Lehmkuhl (1999) – studying the cases of environmental policy, road haulage and European railway policies – distinguish three mechanisms: the prescription of an institutional model to which domestic arrangements have to be adjusted; altering domestic opportunity structures (and thus the distribution of power and resources of domestic actors); and altering the beliefs and expectations of domestic actors. In a similar vein, Schmidt (2002) distinguishes between coercion at a high level (where member states have to follow a highly specified set of rules); coercion at a less high level (where the rules are less highly specified, leaving leeway for the domestic actors); mimesis (where the supranational actor only suggests rules); and regulatory competition (where rules are not specified). To explain different domestic responses to similar European challenges, Schmidt (2002) – analysing EU policies characterised by different levels of adjustment pressures – points at the role of economic vulnerability (the presence or absence of economic crisis; competitiveness in capital and product markets), political institutional capacity (policy actors' ability to impose or negotiate change, depending upon political interactions and institutional arrangements), policy legacies ('fit' with long-standing policies and policy-making institutions), policy preferences ('fit' with the old preferences and/or openness to new) and discourse (ability to change preferences by altering perceptions of economic vulnerabilities and policy legacies and thereby enhance political institutional capacity to impose or negotiate change). Menon & Hayward (1996), reflecting on the impact of European industrial policies and trying to explain the varying impacts at national levels, refer to ambiguities in the supra-national regulations, the absence of supportive European resources, the power of the nation-states and the preferences of those involved in national policy-making. At the same time they point at other factors of influence –

[2] We have to bear in mind that many of the analyses discussed here have focused on areas where Europe "hits home", i.e. where some impact could be expected (on the basis of e.g. explicit European legislation or requirements). In the section on "the nature and objectives of European policy" we will deal with the specific nature of the EU's authority in higher education matters.

beyond European policies – that impact national policies (e.g. globalisation, technological developments, and finance, see e.g. Ohmae 1990).

Reframing the impacts of European policies

An interesting question is to what extent the literature on the domestic impact of Europe is (or should be!) fundamentally differing from 'traditional' policy analysis. In other words, do we need a specific theory of domestic change, taking into account the peculiarities of Europeanisation or would it be as (or more) profitable to rely on the abundant existing literature on policy development and implementation? At first sight, the mechanisms and explanations formulated above resemble the factors of influence discerned in the policy sciences literature. What follows below is not so much a plea to go back to the roots of policy analysis, but to reframe the factors of influence mentioned by the authors in the previous section.

In general, the literature on policy development and policy implementation distinguishes the following factors that impact the effects of policies: the nature of the (objectives and instruments) of the policy to be implemented; the capacities of the actors assumed to carry out the policy as well as the dispersion of power across the actors involved; the objectives (including the norms and values) of those actors; and the institutional structure of the field in which the policy should be implemented (see e.g. Hill 1993, Howlett & Ramesh 1995, Sabatier 1999). Of course, analysts differ in their views regarding the importance of different factors. Some stress the role of institutional rules (e.g. Ostrom et al 1994) or emphasise the formation of coalitions of actors in the policy process (Sabatier 1999, Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993), others stress the preferences and cognitions of actors involved in the policy process (Scharpf 1997).

If we reorganise the factors of relevance, mentioned by researchers on Europeanisation and put them under the headings of the 'traditional' policy analysis literature, the following overview can be presented.

Table 1: Factors impacting policy effects/domestic change

Policy analysis literature	Research on Europeanisation
The nature of objectives and instruments of the policy	The extent of adjustment pressure (Schmidt 2002), ambiguity of Europeanisation (Sverdrup 2000), the cognitive impact of Europeanisation (Radaelli 1997), nature of European requirements (Knill & Lehmkuhl 1999), joint decision trap: separation of decision-making and policy implementation (Scharpf 1988)
Institutional structure	Policy legacies; economic vulnerability (Schmidt 2002), path-dependency of European-level developments (Sverdrup, 2000), multiple veto points and formal institutions (Börzel & Risse 2000), histories, traditions, cultures, constitutional arrangements and administrative systems (Menon & Hayward 1996), stage of integration into EU (Hanf & Soetendorp 1998)
Objectives (including norms and values) of actors	Policy preferences and discourse (Schmidt 2002), institutional misfit between European and domestic policies and processes (Börzel & Risse 2000), political culture and other informal institutions (Börzel & Risse 2000; Mouritzen et al 1996)
Capacities and powers of actors	political institutional capacity (Schmidt 2002), norm entrepreneurs (Börzel & Risse 2000), interest intermediation (Kassim & Menon 1996)

Admitted, some of the factors mentioned by analysts of Europeanisation might fit other factors of relevance from the 'traditional' policy analysis literature (as well). The point is that the – however short – journey into the Europeanisation literature shows that many factors fit the factors derived from the general policy analysis literature. At the same time, most of the European analyses do not cover all potentially relevant factors from that literature. An explanation would be that the analysts have focused on a specific area of interest, in which certain factors are obviously more important, but thereby neglecting other theoretically

important factors. This explanation does not disqualify the analyses, but simply indicates that the generalisability of their findings (in addition to the problem of different conceptualisations of important factors) is low. Therefore we will use the factors from the policy analysis literature and apply these in the context of our research question.

The nature of objectives and instruments of the European policy

Before describing the actual objectives and instruments of Erasmus, we pay attention to the context of the EU's authority in education. Education – in contrast to many other policy areas – is by and large outside the formal realm of supranational authority. Through the history of European integration, national governments have been very hesitant to transfer national responsibilities in education (but also culture) to the European level (see e.g. Brouwer, 1996; Neave 2003). Education was considered a principal responsibility of the nation state. Consequently the competencies are very limited and based on the subsidiarity principle (the Commission's power to take initiatives is limited to those instances where member states cannot achieve an objective of their own; a compromise between proponents and opponents of an active communitarian education policy), positioning the EU in a supplementary and supportive role, fully respecting the responsibilities of national governments regarding the contents of education, the structure of the educational systems, and the nations' linguistic and cultural diversity[3]. This does neither imply that the nation states were against co-operation, nor does it imply that there are no competencies at all at the European level. The EU has, for instance, an important role in the recognition of professional qualifications. Also, through time, it has become clear that it is hardly possible to clearly distinguish between areas where the EU has competencies and those where the EU has no competencies, particularly given the presumed importance of the role of education in the European economy (mobility of labour). The Maastricht Treaty (1992) more or less codified the existing practice of supranational (financial) support for co-operation (Verbruggen 2002) and formalised the extension of EU activity from vocational training into higher education. The New European Treaty (Convention) that was agreed upon in 2004 left the legal framework for Community action in the field of education unchanged. However, the European Commission's role in promoting coordination (e.g. by introducing guidelines, indicators, promoting best practices, etc.) is growing through the so-called "open method of coordination", especially in the context of the Lisbon process (Huisman & Van der Wende 2004). The limited competences of the EU in the area of education policy obviously restricts the choice of policy instruments. The support of student mobility and institutional cooperation were in first instance the only legitimate instruments, which constitute the basic elements of the Erasmus programme.

The first version of the Erasmus programme was decided upon by the European Council in 1986. It would run for four years, but in 1989 the programme was extended for five years. The main objective of Erasmus was the increase of the number of higher education students spending an integrated period of study in another member state, meant as a step towards the creation of manpower with experience of economic and social conditions in other member states (De Wit & Verhoeven 2001, p. 189). A target of 10% of the EC students was mentioned. The instruments at hand were:

- Student grants (the European budget to be distributed proportionally across the member states; national agencies being in charge of the administration of the programme) covering mobility costs for those students being mobile in the framework of networks of departments of the Inter-university Cooperation Programmes (ICPs). The departments were required to recognise the mobile students' achievements abroad and had to accept that student do not pay fees to the foreign host

[3] In Scharpf's (2001) terminology, the multi-level interactions between the European level and the national governments most aptly are captured by 'mutual adjustment' and 'intergovernmental negotiations' (instead of 'hierarchical direction' and/or 'joint decision').

institution (Teichler 1996, p. 154). The participating higher education institutions would also receive moderate budgets for institutional support of mobility.

- Financial support for projects enhancing mobility, such as projects on academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study, projects on developing information networks (e.g. the Network of Academic Recognition Information Centres, NARICs), projects relating to the development of a European Community Course Credits Transfer System (ECTS), projects relating to the development of joint curricula, and small research projects.

In 1995 the instruments and procedures changed somewhat, when the Erasmus programme was integrated in the 1995-1999 Socrates programme (an EU umbrella programme for general and higher education). The aim of Socrates was to contribute to the development of quality education and training and the creation of an open European area for co-operation in education. An important development shortly before the launch of the new programme was the fact that education has been taken up in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty (see above). Education was considered important in the development towards the economic and monetary union, and therefore taken up as one of the competencies of the European Commission. However the principle of subsidiarity was maintained: what the member states could achieve themselves independently, should be arranged by the member states. The overall objective of Erasmus did not change that much, although the objective of creating a European dimension in higher education was more explicitly formulated. The instruments also changed somewhat: a greater stress on benefits for a larger group of students (including non-mobile students), notably through curricular innovation and teaching staff mobility as well as improving administrative support for mobile students. As a consequence a larger share of the resources were reserved for Curricular Development and Intensive Programmes, and the promotion of ECTS. Also the concept of Thematic Networks (stimulating innovative concepts of educational change in networks of experts and key actors, focusing on individual fields of study or special issues) was introduced.

Also managerial aspects changed (Lanzendorf & Teichler 2002):

- Each higher education institution has to submit an application containing all exchange and co-operation activities. The application would form the basis for an Institutional Contract (IC) with the European Commission. Part of the IC would be a European Policy Statement (EPS) detailing the institution's European policy and the role of Socrates herein.
- Participating higher education institutions were supposed to keep and provide on request written traces of established co-operation activities between them and other higher education institutions (by bilateral co-operation agreements).

The managerial change of replacing ICPs by ICs (containing EPSs) seems trifling, but it is important to note that implicitly the new procedures put greater emphasis on the coherence of institutional goals, the role of the central level of the institutions, and strategic thinking in terms of setting clear targets (Kehm 1998, p. 9-10). However, the shift to institutional-decision making and targeted strategies turned out to succeed best in institutions that wanted to move into that direction anyway, which was the case only for a small minority. The step towards cooperation at the institutional level also proved to be a difficult one. Institutionalisation of new curricula and especially new type of degrees was hindered by great barriers related to national system characteristics. Consequently, Socrates did not have the snowball effect which would lead to a new stage of cooperation in higher education in Europe. However, it did enhance the awareness of national system barriers to further European cooperation (Barblan et al. 2000; Huisman & Van der Wende 2004).

The current Erasmus programme (again part of Socrates, 2000-2006) maintains the same objectives and instruments as the previous programme. The same activities are listed: student

mobility grants (action 2), support to organise student mobility, teaching staff mobility, intensive programmes, preparatory visits, ECTS, joint curriculum development, and thematic networks (action 1). From 2003-2004 on, for technical and efficiency reasons, the ICs are to be replaced by Erasmus University Charters (EUCs), fulfilling similar functions (www.europe.int.eu).

Institutional structure

Regarding the possible inhibiting or stimulating elements of institutional structures, our attention goes particularly to the structure (and underlying norms and values as well as the history) of the higher education systems. One of the concomitants of the Erasmus programme (or better: internationalisation activities in general) is that national systems of higher education – formerly mostly under the control of national governments – are becoming more open to the international scene. Of course, higher education systems have been permeated internationally for ages, but the scope has increased considerably. This openness makes higher education systems potentially vulnerable to external scrutiny, both of a positive and negative nature. Particularly negative scrutiny (e.g. mismatch between study structures, lack of quality or quality control, lack of credit-point systems and recognition, imbalance of in- and outflow of students and teachers) may challenge national governments to change their national strategies and policies (see also Rakic 2001 on calculative and non-calculative imitation). Or as Neave (2003, p. 151) formulates it: "Institutional characteristics that once expressed national identity, genius, and preservation were now recast as obstacles to student mobility …. differences in such matters as student fees, residentiality, variations in curricular content, and methods of student evaluation …. were now viewed less as monuments to diversity than as examples of opacity, absence of transparency, and general agents of hindrance and obscurantism". It is of importance to highlight those institutional characteristics that debase national governments in the sense that they can be held responsible for the stimulation or blocking of mobility. The country's climate may impact the attractiveness to foreign students, but not much that can be done about it. Considering the features possibly of influence (e.g. based on students' motivations for studying abroad and main problems encountered while staying abroad, see e.g. Maiworm and Teichler 2002), we estimate that governments are most concerned about the (perceived) quality of the higher education system. Quality should be understood in a broad sense in this context; it includes the academic level of education, the smooth organisation of credit transfer, good academic and non-academic guidance, language courses, access to infrastructure, etc.
In addition, it is important to look beyond the institutional structure of higher education and to take into account general national institutional facts, such as the regulatory conditions (e.g. visa or administrative matters in general) and mobility-related issues not directly related to higher education as such: e.g. finding accommodation and the cost of living in the host country. A final institutional fact we think is of influence, is the country's position in the EU. We think that the national government's perspective on EC programmes and policies will be coloured, dependent on whether the country is a long-standing member of the EU, a new member state or an accessing country.

Objectives of actors

The Europeanisation and public policy literature suggests that a clear mismatch between European objectives and domestic policy objectives, decreases the chances for easy acceptance and implementation. This set of factors relating to mismatches between objectives coincides to some extent with the factors relating to the nature of European objectives and instruments as such, but under this heading the focus is on the distance between European and domestic objectives or possible side-effects of European policies that run counter to domestic objectives. We expect that in general national governments will endorse the

internationalisation activities, for – as has been mentioned above – they are part and parcel of higher education (and research) and in line with academic values and ideas regarding the quality of education and research. Therefore, when a country has a predominantly academic rationale for internationalisation (considering it mainly as a means to improve the quality of education and research), European objectives (such as those of the Erasmus programme) and national objectives can match very well. However, when countries have a more economic rationale for internationalisation (seeing it mainly as a source of institutional income and/or as a way to enhance economic competitiveness), European objectives focusing on cooperation may be seen as less supportive to the countries' objectives. In Europe, a trend towards more economic rationales for internationalisation is observed (Van der Wende 2001; Huisman & Van der Wende 2004).
Furthermore, there are some limits to unconcerned support for mobility. Mobility may be a catalyst for brain-drain (temporary mobility leading to long-term mobility, leading to domestic shortages in manpower). Another element worth considering is the objective of national governments to preserve the domestic culture including the language. Internationalisation can of course be seen as a means to promote the national language, but particularly for countries with "small languages", increasing mobility may put a pressure on the higher education system to use a much-spoken language as the language of instruction. A final barrier to be mentioned – particular in the context of Erasmus is the fact that national governments – in terms of student and staff mobility and international cooperation – may want to focus on other geographical areas than Europe; the US and former colonies being the most obvious examples. The latter barrier should not be seen as the most important barrier, for a focus on Europe in the Erasmus programme does not block mobility to other continents completely. In the worst case (from the domestic perspective) the mobility flows may change towards mobility within Europe. In the best case, mobility increases: the Erasmus programme attracts students that otherwise would not have thought about spending a study period in another country.

Capacities and powers of actors

Regarding the capacities of actors we are almost immediately inclined to translate this into financial capacities. Indeed, when national governments lack the financial means to support internationalisation activities (in particular student and staff mobility), this will be a barrier. In the case of the Erasmus programme, however, the financial support is granted by the European Commission and national governments are free to offer additional support (either by supplementing grants or by establishing mobility grant systems). With respect to the powers of actors, there may be important actors that are able to block policy initiatives if such policies are detrimental to the objectives of those actors. Of particular relevance is the possible resistance of the academic oligarchy against intended change brought about by governmental policies. In the case of internationalisation in general and student and staff mobility in particular, we estimate that the resistance will be marginal given the fact that these aspects of internationalisation are part and parcel of higher education.

Expectations on the impact of Erasmus

Analysing the nature of the objectives and the instruments, we come to the following expectations. The objectives regarding mobility and co-operation are considered not to be at odds with domestic objectives: knowledge production and exchange are almost by definition an international activity, although the importance may differ from discipline to discipline and profession to profession. Objectives related to improving mobility and co-operation are therefore not seen as detriment to national objectives. The instruments are directed at (departments of) higher education institutions; they engage into a contract with the European Commission, which involves grants for student mobility and subsidies for activities relating to

improving the mobility in exchange for compliance with administrative efforts, e.g. annual reporting. In conceptual terms the instruments offer the participant – on a voluntary basis – extensions to their 'regular' activities, they do not restrict higher education institutions, nor force them to comply with the opportunities. The quantitative impact of the relatively soft instruments is considered relatively limited, for the total budget per higher education institution is only a fragment of the total budget of the institution and only a minority of students is involved in the programme (although it is fair to state that through time participation – both in terms of students and higher education institutions involved – and accompanying budgets increased). Furthermore, the Erasmus programme was not the only mobility programme around. In a number of countries, existing programmes already took care of mobility and exchange, also involving other than EU countries. In addition, in many countries 'spontaneous' mobility takes place at a considerable scale (Gordon and Jallade 1996). In some countries, only a minority of mobile students are supported through Erasmus. It is important to note that the objectives and instruments of Erasmus do not pertain directly to the national governments, apart from the fact that the Erasmus programme requires a national agency to administer the national execution and the fact that national representatives took seat in the EU Socrates Committee.

As such we hypothesise that the Erasmus programme – given the nature of the policy objectives and the specific instruments – hardly impact the national policies (this is not a disqualification, for it was not the intention of the programme to influence national policies!). Teichler (1996, p. 176) concludes that "Erasmus was extremely successful in contributing to a breakthrough in the public awareness of the value and relevance of temporary study in another country". Field (1998, p. 115) is more critical. He maintains that the EU's influence should not be exaggerated, pointing at low percentage of students involved (4% instead of the 10% aimed at[4]), the differences between the member states regarding import and export of students, and at the considerable role of non-EU mobility.
The expectation is supported by previous findings of studies on the impact of Erasmus. Van der Wende (2001, p. 435) concludes on the basis of a survey among persons involved in internationalisation policy-making: "It seemed that respondents had difficulties in indicating any concrete or direct impacts beyond the specific area of internationalisation. … it seems justified to state that the SOCRATES programme so far has not led to direct system level changes or other types of new orientations in the national higher education policies. Its clear impact seems to be limited to the level of institutions, curricula and the experience of individual students and academics". One could argue that Erasmus increased the awareness of national governments regarding the (growing) importance of internationalisation. However, here it should be noted that the increasing importance was also already visible in the increasing interaction on higher education policy between national governments in the context of the OECD, e.g. the establishment of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation in the 1970s (CERI) and the national education policy reviews; and UNESCO, e.g. the establishment of the International Institute for Education Planning in 1963 (see Van der Wende 2002).

The theoretical argument and the higher education literature suggest a very modest impact of the Erasmus programme. There may however be differences across countries, particularly relating to mismatches between:

- objectives of national governments and general internationalisation objectives of Erasmus (relating to the problem of brain-drain and preservation of the national culture and language).
- institutional structure (e.g. perception of the quality of the higher education system)
- capacities of actors involved (e.g. financial barriers).

[4] Although it has always been unclear, whether the "10%" refers to the total amount of students enrolled, to first-year students or to the number of graduates of higher education (Van der Wende 2002).

In addition, it can be argued that there are long-term indirect impacts of the Erasmus programme, specifically relating to the institutional structure. As has been stressed above, increasing mobility and consequentially increasing openness of domestic higher education systems, and thus may raise questions of comparability of degrees and quality. Such questions may prompt national governments to develop suitable policies addressing issues concerning degree recognition, credit transfer and the like. We expect however that these long-term indirect impacts will be modest, the most important reason being that internationalisation in many European countries is – despite the increasing mobility – still not a core element of the higher education system and policy-making. In other words, issues like degree recognition and credit transfer have been important and are through time becoming more important but still the issues pertain to a small percentage of the student body.
In sum: we expect a modest impact of Erasmus on national policy-making, and if there are impacts these will mainly be indirect and on the long-term. If there are differences across countries, these will mainly be due to differences in national objectives and institutional structures.

Methodology

To test our expectations, we designed the following methodology. We analysed for the fifteen EC countries and for Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland the policy developments regarding internationalisation since the mid-1980s and carried out individual and group interviews with those involved in policy-making in general and internationalisation policies specifically. The group of interviewees particularly consisted of civil servants of the relevant ministries, sometimes representatives of national organisations involved in carrying out elements of the internationalisation policies were interviewed as well. The desk research analysis of policy developments was used as the input for the interview, as well as a set of three statements regarding the possible impact of Erasmus on domestic policy-making (see Van Brakel et al. 2004 for details).

Results[5]

The analysis of internationalisation policies (and the role of Erasmus) in the respective countries revealed the following. In most of the countries internationalisation policies emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. Encompassing internationalisation policies are however of a more recent date (see also Kälvemark & Van der Wende 1996; Huisman & Van der Wende 2004). The Bologna process has reinforced the linkages between internationalisation and general higher education policies. The Erasmus programme, particularly in its first years of existence, has contributed to the integration of internationalisation into general higher education policies. The analysis make at the same time clear that Erasmus predominantly had an impact on the higher education institutions themselves (see also Barblan et al. 1998). Also, the growing internationalisation activities of both students and higher education institutions increased the awareness of national governments of the importance of internationalisation. It stimulated the governments to take action in areas closely linked to mobility, such as additional mobility programmes or additional grants for Erasmus students. In some countries, however, Erasmus did not have this impact for the fact that internationalisation policies were already high on the policy agenda of either the government or the higher education institutions. In addition it should be mentioned that a large amount of mobility takes place outside the Erasmus programme; policy effects should in this case be attributed to mobility in general and not Erasmus solely. In this context it is also relevant to mention that specific national contexts were to a considerable extent determining the pace and direction of

[5] Given time and space, we refrain from detailing the results per country (see Van Brakel et al. 2004, pp. 86-127).

internationalisation policies as well. The document analyses and interviews revealed that for instance growing international competitiveness, globalisation, marketisation and the increase role of the knowledge society (developments we captured under the heading of global warming type changes) have been important as well, impacting domestic policies regarding internationalisation.

Further evidence of Erasmus' limited impact is that interviewees confirmed the growing awareness of the importance of internationalisation in higher education policy, but interviewees were not able to explain clear-cut connections between the Erasmus programme and specific domestic policy initiatives (beyond complementary domestic mobility programmes and additional grants for Erasmus students). In more recent years, governments paid attention to policy issues other than those closely linked to mobility: the comparability of degrees, the convergence towards an undergraduate/graduate structure, quality assurance mechanisms, etc. Whereas there are certainly links between the Erasmus programme and these domestic policies, the Bologna process was considered to be of much more importance than Erasmus. A number of interviewees however stated that the Bologna process would have been different (particularly would have developed much slower) if Erasmus would not have been launched. Figure 2 graphically depicts the essence of the dynamics regarding the impact of Erasmus on national policy making: Erasmus particularly had a direct impact in terms of raising the awareness of national governments. Further direct impacts, more important than the impact on governments, were on the higher education institutions themselves and on the students. Indirectly, the increase of internationalisation activities put certain issues (credit transfer, quality assurance, portability of student loans) on the higher education agenda of national governments. At the same time certain developments in the supranational context of higher education (Bologna process, globalisation, marketisation) put pressure on national governments to pay attention to issues closely related to internationalisation. Through the document analysis and the interviews it became clear that the developments in the supranational contexts should be deemed more important as triggers for policy change than the specific Erasmus programme.

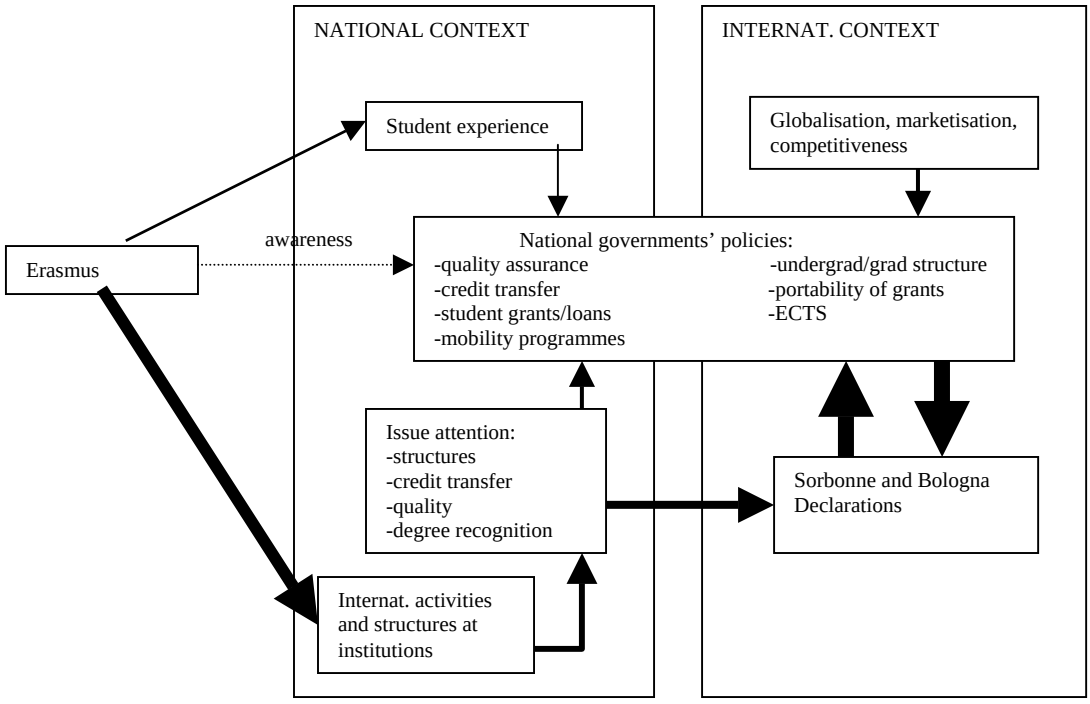

Figure 2: Impacts of Erasmus and other policies/factors on national governments' policies

Regarding the different impacts of Erasmus across the countries, it became clear that specific national characteristics (relating to the objectives of governments, the institutional structure, capacities of actors) played a role. Amongst the most important factors were:

(1) The size of the community (within and outside Europe) speaking the country's language (Greece and Sweden versus the UK and Spain).
(2) The (colonial) history of the country (Portugal and the UK versus Austria and Norway).
(3) The importance of internationalisation vis-à-vis other domestic issues (access issues in Ireland, long study duration in Germany and Italy, underemployment in Spain in the 1980s, lack of balance between incoming and outgoing students in the UK and Greece).
(4) The role and power of certain stakeholders vis-à-vis the government (the relative independence of higher education institutions in the UK and Sweden, the strength of the academic community and employee organizations in Greece).
(5) The length of the membership of the EU (Netherlands and Germany versus Sweden, Liechtenstein and Austria).

Most of these factors (1, 2 and 5) particularly belong to the category of institutional structure (table 1). The third and fourth factor can be categorized under the heading of the objectives of actors, although factor 4 may also be seen as an example of capacities and powers of actors.

Conclusions

Our theoretical expectation on the very modest direct impact of Erasmus was confirmed by the empirical data collected for the fifteen countries. The nature of the programme and its specific instruments neither intended to nor actually did encroach national responsibilities for higher education. However, also in line with the expectations, there were important indirect effects that both affected the general pattern across Europe as well as some of the differences between the countries.

Since Erasmus had a considerable impact on the higher education institutions, certain issues (credit transfer, differences between national structures, degree recognition) became more important elements on the higher education policy agendas of responsible national ministries. Even more important, these elements appeared on the supranational agenda in the context of the Bologna and (later) Lisbon process. The data show that, across Europe, national governments acted upon the elements on the policy agenda. In theoretical terms, the factors of influence on the indirect impact of Erasmus were mainly in the domain of the institutional structure (policy legacies, see Schmidt 2002) and the domain of the nature of objectives (adjustment pressure, Schmidt 2002). Differences between countries are mainly due to elements of the institutional structure (language, [colonial] history, and length of membership) and to some extent elements of the objectives of actors and/or their power positions. This leads us to the conclusion that particularly elements of the institutional structure determined the impact of Erasmus.

We realise that one of the "shortcomings" of the research (as is the case with much research focusing on institutional structure) has been the lack of clearness on which factors belong to which category of factors. The findings of this research allow us however – and this will be the next step – to go back to the policy literature for further clarification.

A lesson learned from this exercise is, but we would certainly appreciate a broader discussion on this matter, that research on the impact of Europe not necessarily requires a specific "European" framework. It seems that we can work with the "traditional" disciplinary (be it political sciences, public administration or policy studies) perspectives and frameworks available.

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