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A Comparative View On Policy Trends In Western European Higher Education

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This paper gives an overview of the most relevant policy developments (1999-2001) regarding higher education in a number of Western European countries. The focus is on Austria, Denmark, Finland, Flanders, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The following issues are addressed. Firstly, which issues are major issues in these countries in this three-year period? Secondly, can we explain why these issues are on the agenda? Thirdly, do the policy developments suggest increasing convergence in policies? We maintain that current policy issues reflect the existence or emergence of five global trends in and around higher education. The ubiquitousness of these trends explains why Western European governments are considering similar policy issues. However, this does not necessarily imply that governments in practice are offering similar policy solutions. It would be more accurate to state that the similar trends challenge governments to find policy solutions most suitable to reach specific national solutions in specific national contexts.

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