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**Abstract**

The democratization of higher education through strategically driven science policies and higher education reforms is documented in this paper. These represent complementary policy actions oriented towards strengthening social, cultural and economic dimensions that allow higher education institutions (HEIs) to grow and to train graduates able to adapt to increasingly uncertain job markets. Drawing from the main achievements in Portugal during the period 2006?2010, our central argument focuses on the need to open higher education to all as a means to sustain a strong and specialized knowledge base. The results are related to the role of HEIs in fostering socially robust knowledge and supplying talented people and researchers to society in globalized socio-economic contexts.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)