

28.4.2026

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**Title**

Globalization and higher education

**Publication year**

2001

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education in Europe. - 26 (2001) 1, S. 27 - 38

**Inventory number**

13356

**Keywords**

Globalisierung ; Hochschule : gegenwärtige Situation ; Hochschulreform : allgemein

**Abstract**

The question of the role of higher education in society and culture today is linked, in this article with two parallel processes: the questioning of the nation-state in the global age and the gradual decomposition of the welfare state in the majority of the OECD countries. What is currently happening is, first, a major redefinition of the general responsibilities of the state vis-à-vis the familiar type of society characterized by the welfare state and, second a major revision in thinking about the role of the state in contemporary politics and economics brought about by globalization processes (and hence the possible demise of the nation-state). The modern German-inspired university in the form in which it exists in Europe is certainly affected by the new processes. The aim of this article is to discuss higher education in this particular context. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Kwiek, Marek, E-Mail: kwiekm@main.amu.edu.pl