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**Abstract**

All Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries have experienced an unprecedented expansion in higher education during the second half of the twentieth century. This was only possible because higher education became part of national welfare policies. OECD countries differ, however, with respect to the significance of education, and more specifically, higher-education policies within their overall framework of welfare policies. We employ the concept of the 'welfare regime' and a 'trade-off' hypothesis to understand the different national approaches to higher-education participation, funding, tuition, and student financial aid. Through a comparative analysis of data from international databases, we examine how different countries accomplish the goal of enhancing participation as part of their welfare policies. Overall, our hypotheses are confirmed in that we demonstrate that there is a convincing relationship between higher-education policies and given welfare regimes. We conclude that when adopting policy strategies from other contexts, careful consideration of the underlying societal structures and traditions is required. (HRK / Abstract

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