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**Abstract**

This paper focuses on policy implementation in Higher Education (HE) analysed through the evolution and transformation of policy instruments related to government funding and evaluation. We investigate how steering and governance tools have been put into action, in order to analyse how original policy rationales and justifications have evolved and are affected by context and instrument characteristics. The research questions are: what do policy instruments reveal about the evolution of policy rationales and justifications? To what extent and why do they evolve in unpredictable ways? We look at two types of instruments, funding and evaluation that are tools widely diffused in European HE systems. We adopt a diachronic perspective spanning the last 15 years, and a comparative approach across eight European countries. Our findings show that the form and evolution of instruments are related to factors such as the existing mix of instruments and policy paradigm, of the features of the policy process and of the instruments themselves. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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