

28.5.2026

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**Title**

Mediating the economic pulses : the international connection in Portugese higher education / Pedro Teixeira, Alberto Amaral and Maria Joao Rosa

**Publication year**

2003

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education quarterly. - 57 (2003) 2, S. 181 - 203

**Inventory number**

17105

**Keywords**

Ausland : Portugal : Hochschulwesen allgemein ; Hochschule und Wirtschaft ; Hochschule und Gesellschaft

**Abstract**

AbstractPortugal, as a small and increasingly integrated European economy, has been influenced by some of the major trends that defined the agenda of higher education policy in recent decades. Its backwardness ? notably in terms of skills, education, and training ? has frequently prompted a focus of attention on its international counterparts, particularly those in Europe, in search of affinities, solutions and errors to avoid. The search for guidance has also created an opportunity for the intervention of international organisations. Until Portugal joined the European Union (EU) in 1986, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank were the main agencies playing this role. Henceforth, those institutions lost some influence, and the European dimension gained increasing prominence. This article discusses the role of those international organisations in the definition of priorities for Portuguese higher education policy in recent decades, and provides a general overview of the outside perceptions of the Portuguese situation as understood

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by these international organisations. In particular, the article focuses on those interventions that promoted the influence of market mechanisms in the Portuguese higher education system by emphasising the need for higher education institutions (HEIs) to strive for increased economic responsiveness. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)