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**Abstract**

The chapter develops a conceptual framework for a comparative analysis of HE policies that enables us to investigate the explanatory power of structural characteristics of political-administrative systems. It compares HE political-administrative structures and university policies in eight countries. The chapter focuses on policy trends in the eight countries, and discusses how the literature on comparative political and administrative systems can help formulate assumptions about public policy-making and policy change. The ideas that are developed are then applied on public reform policies in general and in the area of higher education (HE) in particular. A test of the assumptions on data on reform outcomes indicates that the framework is a useful contribution to understanding cross-national variation in HE reform policies in Europe. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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