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**Abstract**

This article presents a comparative analysis of the development of research in universities of applied sciences (UAS) in eight European countries and its implications for the configuration of the higher education system. The enhancement of research has mostly been seen as a case of academic drift where UAS attempt to become more similar to universities, thus pushing towards a unitary system. However, our analysis indicates that convergence is only one of the possible paths and that in countries like Finland and Switzerland, the specialisation of UAS towards a research profile focused on applied research and cooperation with regional actors is likely to maintain the binary divide. A specific rationale for these institutions oriented towards regional development, a coalition of interests with the economy, and a strong sense of collective action of UAS seem to be key factors to promote

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this development. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)