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**Abstract**

The number of private higher education institutions in post-communist Eastern Europe has risen spectacularly since 1989. In some countries, private-sector enrollments have neared one-third of total enrollment. This article traces the development of these private higher education institutions. The argument is that while their quality is currently varied, they are structurally much better suited to serve the post-communist world than are the rigid, cash-strapped public universities. However, they must first overcome certain challenges, such as a lack of prestige, that arise from their very identity as private-sector institutions. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)