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When and how does Europe matter? : higher education policy change in Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia

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Abstract

The study underlying this article investigates the factors under which European policy initiatives with respect to higher education (HE), such as the Bologna Process, lead to policy change at the national level. In theoretical terms, it uses institutionalist approaches to the Europeanization of public policy developed in the fields of comparative politics and international relations. The empirical focus is on HE policy changes in three countries of former Yugoslavia from 1990 onwards. More specifically, the focus is on changes of policy goals, normative basis and instruments with regard to quality assurance. A process-tracing approach based on document analysis and interviews with policy actors is used to safeguard against overestimating the influence of European initiatives on national policy change. What matters for European influences on national policy changes are clarity of European initiatives and consequences of non-compliance, as well as density of veto players in the domestic policy context. While legitimacy of European initiatives, the strength of domestic institutional legacies and

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the participation of domestic actors in the European epistemic communities may also be conducive to European influence on national policy change, the study identifies points where better operationalization and further research in relation to these factors are necessary. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)