

The effectiveness of national research funding systems: introductory comments

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Importance of the issue

- Huge differences between EU Member States in funding of HEI. At first sight huge potential for efficiency gains in HE. A somewhat similar debate to the one on MOOCs.
- Part of international diffusion of Anglo-Saxon vision on competitiveness in research and mobility of researchers: convergence in best practice research performance (as illustrated in university renakings, etc.). US system and in Europe UK system spreading to the rest of the world (China, Commonwealth), the rest of Europe.
- Again interesting similarity with higher education such as the tuition fee debate: US lead, UK followed but continental Europe remains characterized by major differences.

A study on 8 EU reference countries

- Study particularly welcome. There are lots of studies for the US comparing e.g. individual US states. Little is known for Europe as a whole.
- In Europe importance of:
 - Small nations (more competitive intrinsically)
 - Role of research beyond smart specialisation but as absorptive capacity
 - Nature of research carried out in HEI
 - Role of academic hospitals,
 - Etc.

EU Challenges

- EU Challenges:
 - Block funding (GUF) only at national/regional level or also at EU level?
 - Program funding at national, regional, European level. But quid about the overlap?
 - In many areas a European “mobile circus” of scientists appears to be travelling accross Europe as post-doc researcher in search for a “tenured” landing somewhere (see my Dies lecture on why “young researchers just like members of drug gangs still live with their mom”)
 - The inside-outsider problem of researchers in Europe with rising and high unemployment amongst young scientists in innovation laggard countries. Can ERA help or is it rather reinforcing those effects?