

«European Higher Education Systems under austerity,  
addressing the pressures of equity promotion and  
capacity for high-skill formation policies: the cases of  
Portugal and the Netherlands (2008-2017)»

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Have European Higher Education systems been able:

→ to live up to their **equity standards**,

→ to address the challenge of **capacity creation for high skill formation**, given the restriction constituted by the **opposing**

**austerity force?**

Why?

# Outline:

**I. PUZZLING PERFORMANCE OF TWO MOST DIFFERENT CASES:  
PORTUGAL & THE NETHERLANDS**

**II. TWO EXPLANATORY HYPOTHESES**

# PART 1

PUZZLING PERFORMANCE OF TWO MOST  
DIFFERENT CASES: PT & NL

# Mill's Method of Agreement (1843) from "A system of Logic"

= "Most different case design" (MDCD)\*

**Table 3.2** Method of agreement

	Case A	Case B
Explanation 1	Absent	Present
Explanation 2	Low	High
Explanation 3	Present	Absent
Explanation 4	High	Low
Explanation 5	Present	Absent
Explanation N ('IV')	Present (high)	Present (high)
Outcome ('DV')	<i>Present</i>	<i>Present</i>

"**everything** between the two cases is **different, except for the explanation and the outcome**"

"Since all other potentially relevant dimensions vary, but your outcomes are the same, **only the similarities** between cases on the explanation can cause the **agreement between the cases** in terms of outcomes"

from Hanckè, B. (2009: 75)

\*Method Limitations: see sl. 24

# 1<sup>st</sup> Policy aim: equity promotion policies

## >>student financial support systems

### Lisbon Strategy Aim (March 2000)

"the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion"

“85% of 20 to 24 year-olds should have an upper secondary education by 2010” (Anderson, 2015)

# shared outcomes: equity promotion policies

Table 1 Evolution in public funding between 2008 and 2015 in 30 higher education systems

Evolution in public funding 2008-2015	Country/system	
	Change adjusted for inflation	Nominal change (not adjusted for inflation)
Between 20% and 40% increase	Germany, Denmark, Luxembourg (*), Norway, Sweden, Turkey	Austria, Belgium (fr and fl), Germany, Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg (*), Norway, Poland, Sweden, Turkey
Between 10% and 20% increase	Austria, Belgium (fr and fl), Poland	France, Portugal, Netherlands, Serbia,
Between 5% and 10% increase	Switzerland (**)	Switzerland (**)
Between 5% increase and -5% decrease	France, Finland (***) <u>Netherlands,</u> <u>Portugal</u>	Croatia, Finland (***) Slovakia, Slovenia
Between 5% and 10% decrease	Croatia, Iceland, Slovakia, Slovenia	Italy, Spain
Between 10% and 20% decrease	Czech Republic, Spain, Italy,	Czech Republic, Estonia (****), Hungary, United Kingdom
Between 20% and 40% decrease	Estonia (****), Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Serbia, United Kingdom	Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania
Decrease superior to 40%	Greece, Latvia	Greece

NB: (\*) For the period of 2009-2014; (\*\*) for the period of 2009-2013; (\*\*\*) for the period of 2010-2014; (\*\*\*\*) for the period of 2008-2014, see methodological notes for more details.

From: EUA,  
Public funding  
Observatory (p.  
14, 2016)

# ...specifically: fees, grants, loans, tax benefits

## PORTUGAL, 2012-13

Fees Increase

2012: 630,50 – 999,71 €

2013: 630,50 – 1067,72 €

## NETHERLANDS, 2015

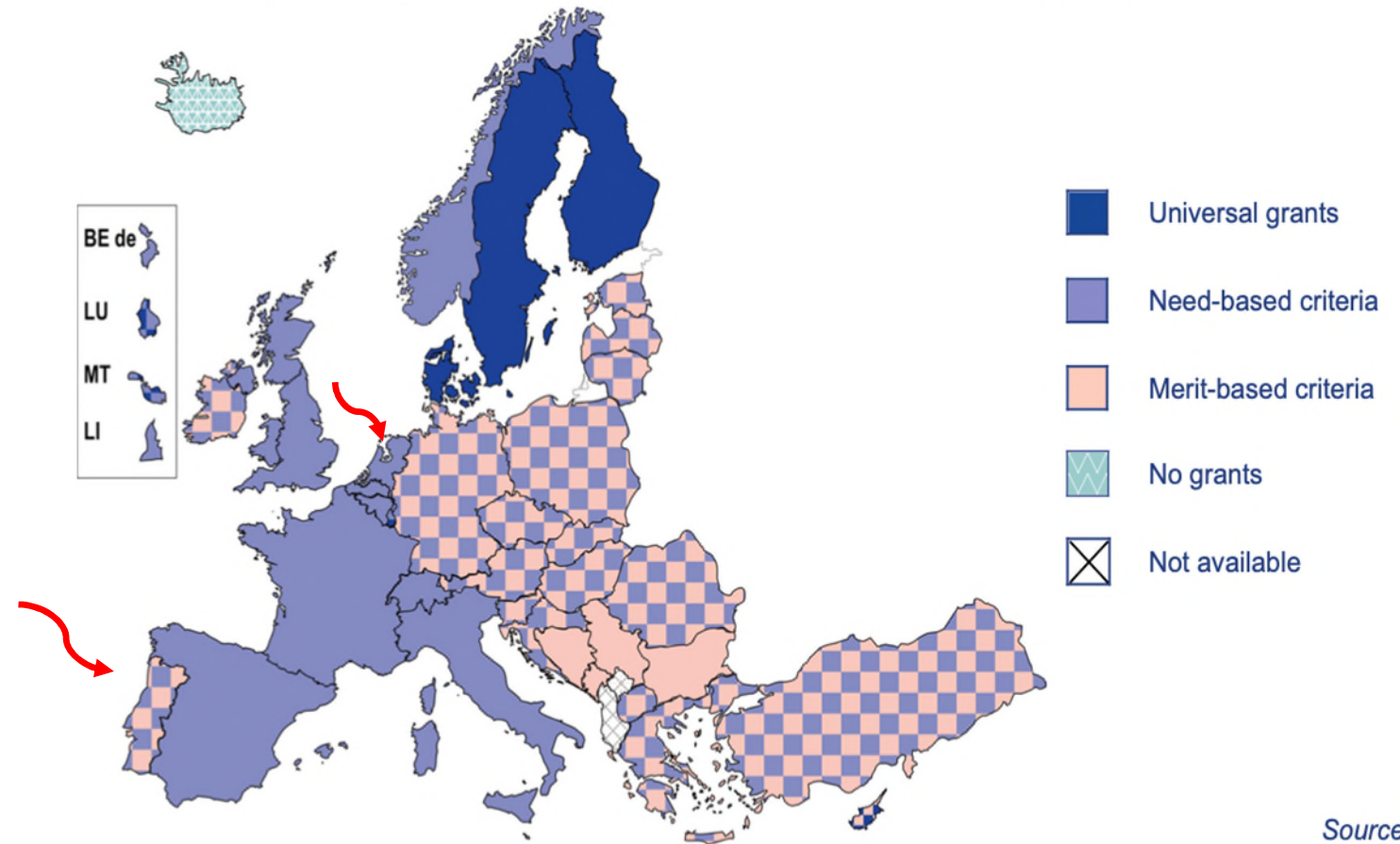
General grant abolished

280 € university based

100 € home based

→ Releasing 1bn/year for HE

Figure 4: Main criteria for allocating grants to full-time students, first cycle, 2015/16



Source: Eurydice.

From: "Student Financial Support System Report 2015-16"  
(Eurydice, 2016)



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Policy aim: capacity creation for high skill formation

EU) Lisbon Strategy Aim (March 2000) "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion"

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Policy aim: capacity creation for high skill formation

D1: Emergence of a “knowledge integrated community” (Heitor & Bravo, 2010: 220)

→ national research community

«Performance in competitive knowledge environments depends basically on the quality of human resources (namely their specializations, skills, educational level, and learning capacity) and on activities and incentives which are oriented towards knowledge creation and diffusion (...)»

→ **Indicator: PhD students numbers**

→ **Indicator: R&D Expenditures**

D2: High-end skill formation (Durazzi, 2018: 2)

«the institutional set-up of a higher education system and its connection to the labour market, in particular to those segments of the labour market that are reliant on high skills (such as advanced manufacturing and dynamic services)»

→ **Indicator: Changes to curriculum (Durazzi, 2018)**

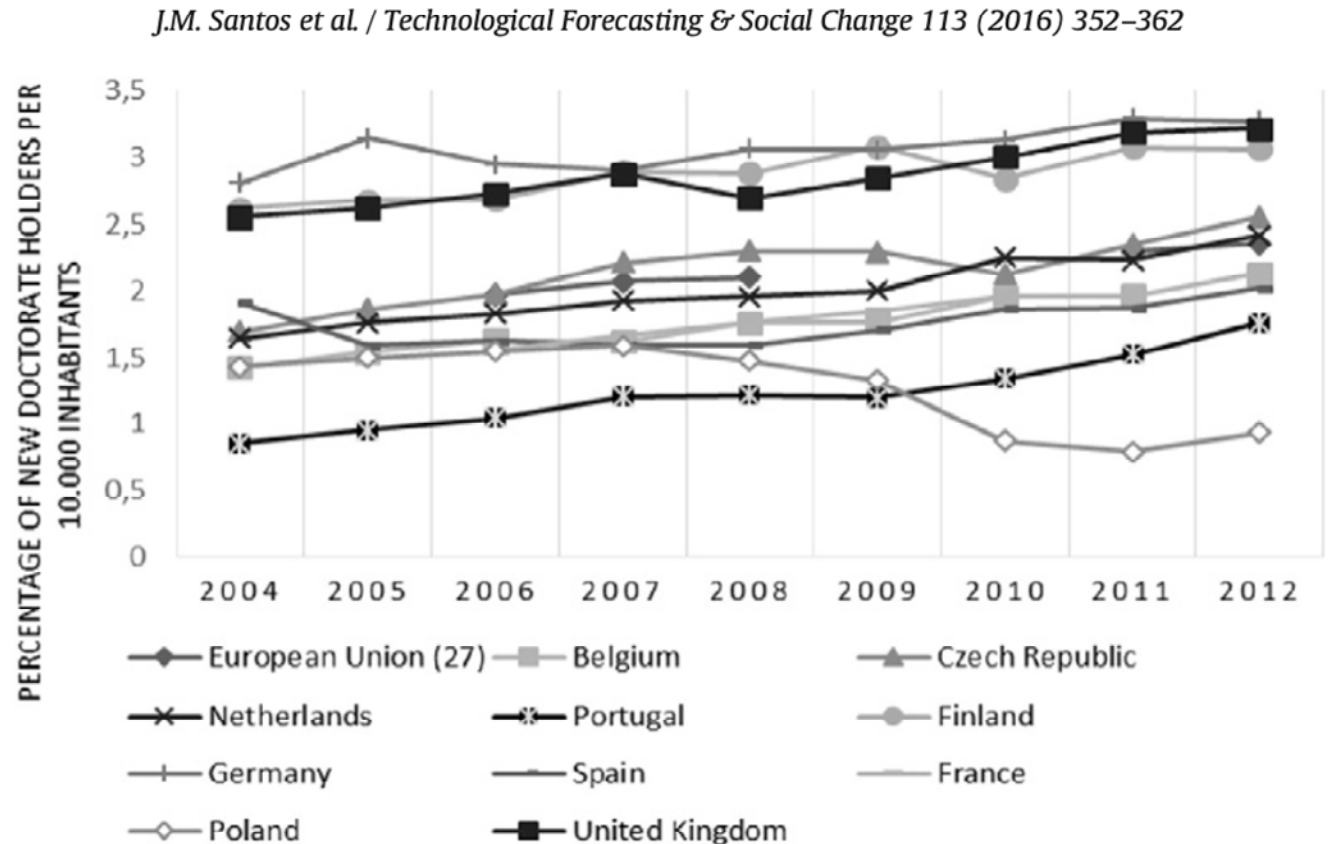
→ **Indicator: Inter-university degrees on specific subjects (Heitor & Bravo, 2010)**

# D1: Emergence of national research system

	2013	2014	2015
PT	+ 3,3%	+ 3,7%	+ 2,3%
NL	+ 1,2%	+ 1,4%	+ 1,5%

*Sum of age-specific entry rates, by demographic group*

*From: Table C3.1 in OECD, Education at a Glance (2015, 2016, 2018)*



**Fig. 1.** Flow of new PhDs, as measured by the number of new PhDs per 10,000 inhabitants, 2004–2012. Source: Educational attainment and education outcomes (EDAT), Eurostat.

# D2: High skill formation: indicator *changes to curriculum*



**PORTUGAL**

→ “Strategic Guidelines for HE” (2014)

Rationalisation of courses aim

2013-14: +33 degree courses in technology sector



→ “National Initiative for Digital competences”

Specialisation: “offer of computing and ICT skills in

HE at all levels from short cycle degrees/diplomas

(TeSP) to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Bologna cycles” (FCT, 2019)

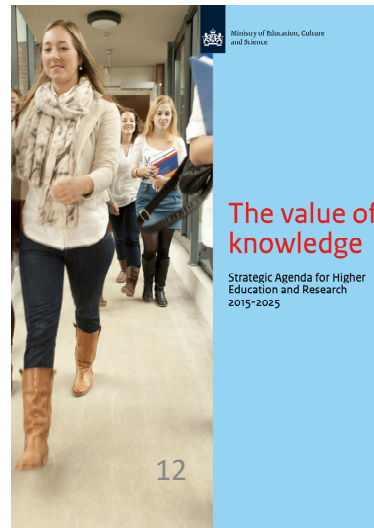


Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en  
Wetenschap

**NETHERLANDS**

→ “Agenda for HE and research 2015-2025” (2014)

- Need of profiling degrees in order to render students’ skills more recognisable to employees
- 4 degree courses “distinctive feature of entrepreneurship” (MECS, 2015:72)



*... multiply x2 the search of independent variables (I.V.)  
explaining the agreement on the two outcomes of the two  
dependent variables (D.V.)*

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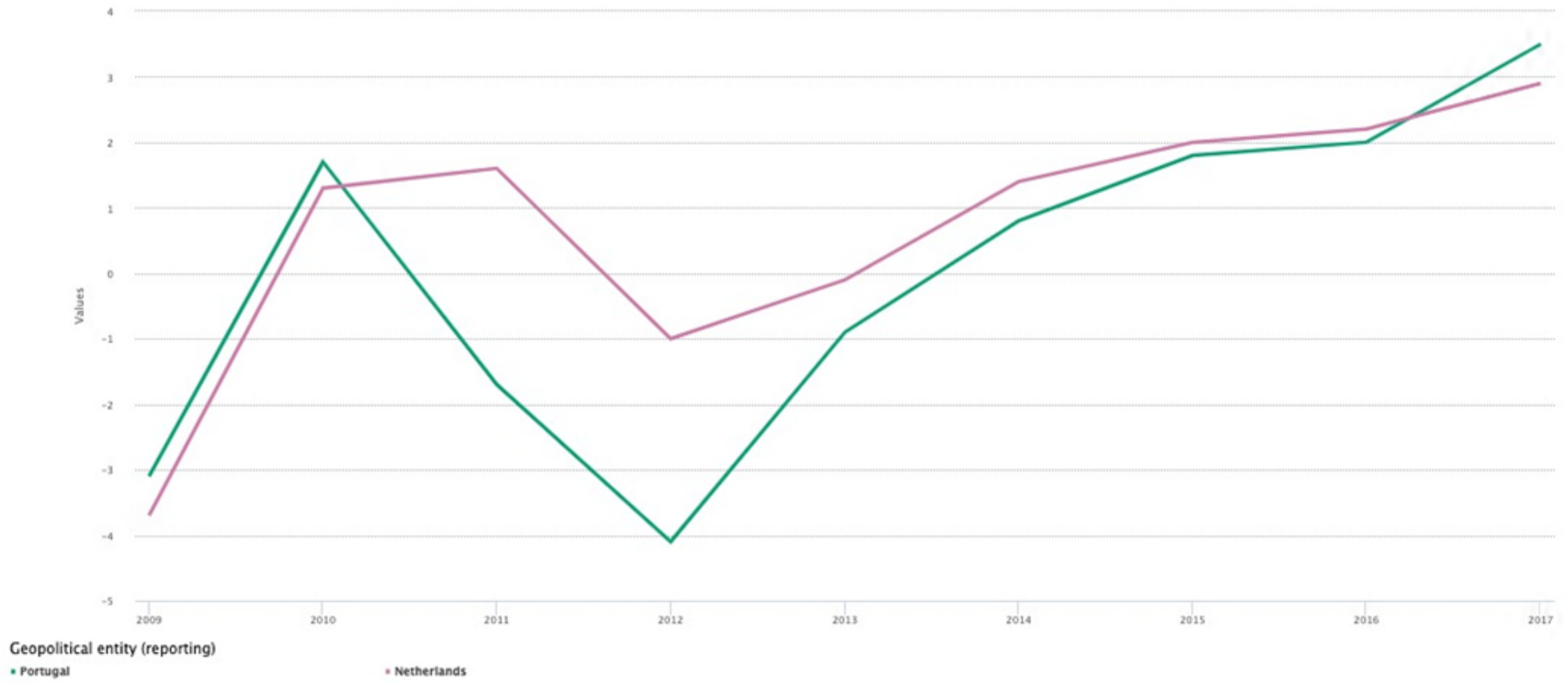
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# Real GDP growth rate - volume

Time / Geopolitical entity (reporting) Time frequency:Annual Unit of measure:Chain linked volumes, percentage change on previous period National accounts indicator (ESA 2010):Gross domestic product at market prices



# Dep. Var. 1, Students' financial support policies

## Candidate Explanations (I.V.):

### Portugal

### Netherlands

Welfare State Type ? (Willemse & De Beer, 2012)

Mediterranean WS

Conservative WS

Politics / Ideology ?  
(Capucha et al., 2013)

2009, centre left  
government by P. M.  
Socrates

2014, labour +  
conservative coalition  
lead by P.M. Rutte

Student movements ?  
(Altbach, 1989)

\*PRESENT

\*PRESENT



# Dep. Var. 2, Capacity for High Skill formation

## Candidate Explanations (I.V.):

### Portugal

### Netherlands

Internationalisation strategy  
integrating high-end skills in  
curriculum (Graf, 2019)

Mixed Market Economy (MME)

Coordinated Market Economy (CME)

(Hall & Soskice, 2001)

Investment in R&D (Heitor &  
Bravo, 2009)

\*PRESENT

\*PRESENT

# PART 2

## Explanatory Hypotheses (IV1, IV2)

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# IV1: Explaining cuts to student social support systems

## Dismantling the institutional access point for students' voice

### **PORTUGAL**

Law 62/2007: student component of Senate  
-15% of the composition  
(Gonçalves, 2012)

### **NETHERLANDS**

Since 1997, students relegated to University Council, only advisory powers (Amaral et al., 2013)

Connecting hypothesis and outcome (George & Bennett, 2005: 258) :

Lack of institutional access point to channel **“opposition”** and **“initiative”** themes


Allan Päll, Chairperson of the European Students' Union, said: *“We strongly disagree with the political measures related to higher education and cuts in social support to students in Portugal. This especially endangers those that come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Investment into higher education should be seen as a way out of the crisis in the longer term.”* (ESU, 2012)

**University World News**   
THE GLOBAL WINDOW ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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NETHERLANDS

**Angry students protest against university reforms** 

Jan Petter Myklebust 05 March 2015

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Academics and students across the country called for a national day of action on March 4 as part of widespread protests against government plans for university reforms.

As previously reported in *University World News*, the Netherlands government last year introduced a bill that would convert student grants into loans from 1 January 2015, freeing up €1 billion (US\$1.1 billion) from the state higher education budget.

Under the plans, an estimated €200 million to €300 million a year would be allocated as grants to students whose families earned less than €46,000 a year. The remainder would be ploughed back into the higher education system to improve its quality.

“It is a manifestation of a broad discontent with the focus on *rendement* thinking in Dutch higher education and the lack of democracy since 1997 with the abolition of student participation on university boards, and with the boards and deans being appointed by external supervisors. In this it reflects the increasing discontent in Dutch society with politics and privatisation, which also explains the broad attention to the protests.”

(Professor Hans de Wit, in Myklebust, 2015)

# IV2: Explaining D1 Emergence of national research community

## 2014-15 Mission and Governance reforms of national research funding institutes: PhD research proposal requirements

**2013:** “scientific merit and innovative nature of the project from an international standpoint; scientific merit of the research team; feasibility of the work plan and reasonability of the budget; contribution to the body of knowledge in the field and improvement in the competence of the scientific community”

**2014:** “potential economic value of the technology”

**FCT**

Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia  
MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO E CIÊNCIA

**2015:** In order to award funding, the research proposals need to have “**pragmatic applications**” and “narrowly defined research questions”


**NWO**

Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research

# Connecting hypothesis and outcome (George & Bennett, 2005: 258) : creation of an incentive structure for researchers

## Employability theme (PT)

“involving companies in advanced training and recruitment of researchers” (FCT, 2015a: 12)



“Particularly, we offer deeper ties between the business sector and the public research institution by setting up a program to establish what we call cooperative laboratories, to fuel the creation of better employment, through knowledge and business.” (Manuel Heitor, Minister of Science, Open Access, 2015)

## Employability theme (NL)

“top sector policy”, initiated by the 2014/2015 “Knowledge and Innovation Contract” between the Dutch Industry, NWO and the Universities (NWO 2014).

- 2017 creation of industrial PhDs, to accelerate the collaboration between universities and industries (NWO, 2017)



# Concluding remarks

>> **Outcome:** Cut in student financial support system

→ **Hp)** dismantling of student access point for waiving opposition in university governance

>>**Outcome:** emergence of national research community

→ **Hp)** reform of PHD proposal requirements, incentive structure for prospective researchers

- *Limitations: 1. MDCD does not account for ^complex causation ^equifinality (Hanckè, 2009: 73)*  
2. *D2 to be further investigated*



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