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## THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE <sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The importance of private higher education (PHE) is clear globally. But how much does Europe fit the global generalisation? We assess this question with reference to two major considerations: the size of PHE and the degree of private-public difference. The growth of PHE in Europe has been delayed and limited compared to that in most of the world, though still significant. For the 27-member European Union, the PHE share is best put at 15.6% or 12.0%. Our own dataset for Europe defined more broadly, as over 40 countries, produces similar figures. (Our latest dataset for Europe puts the share at 14.6%.) These figures portray a region whose private enrolment share is less than half that of the global private share. Within the region the share is higher in Eastern than in Western Europe. In terms of distinctiveness, European PHE differs from public higher education in important respects that reflect world patterns. Inter-sectoral differences are decisive in finance. Though less quantifiable, they appear fundamental albeit blurred in some but not all aspects of governance and activities. Blurring in activities, governance, and even finance occurs through changes within both sectors, especially through partial privatisation within the public sector. Still, Europe's private sector is far from simply isomorphic to the public sector. Considering together size and distinctiveness, a reasonable assessment is that PHE has moderate and increased importance in Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> This working paper is a revision of "How Important is Private Higher Education in Europe? A Regional Analysis in Global Context," *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 47, No.2, 2012 : 178-97, with expressed permission from John Wiley & Sons Ltd. Although the more conventional trajectory is that working paper precedes published journal article, the present reverse conversion has its purposes. The main one concerns readership. An article published in a European education journal has a mostly regional readership interested in various education issues. Scholars and others with large interest in private higher education (PHE) are much more likely to see this working paper here on the PROPHE website than as the journal article. We tweak the original accordingly. We also insert updated data but we leave the original data and calculation intact. One reason is that the data have not changed fundamentally and thus do not change our substantive conclusions. The author thanks Marek Kwiek, Marie Pachuashvili, and Snejana Slantcheva for their comments on earlier drafts as well as Ruirui Sun and Lan Hoang for assistance with the data analysis and technical preparation of the paper.

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The Program for Research On Private Higher Education (PROPHE) seeks to build knowledge about private higher education around the world. PROPHE focuses on discovery, analysis, and dissemination. PROPHE neither represents nor promotes private higher education. Its main mission is scholarship, which, in turn, should inform public discussion and policymaking. PROPHE's Working Paper series is one vehicle to promote these goals.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the most striking global higher education developments of the last half century has been the growth of the private sector (PROPHE, 2011a; Kinser et al., 2010). The sector has undeniable size and importance globally. It is the subject of increased study and knowledge (Levy, forthcoming) as well as intensifying policy attention (Bjarnason et al., 2009). But how much these global generalisations apply to Europe needs exploration.

In the not so distant past, private higher education (PHE) could hardly have been imagined as a major topic for Europe. Indeed the powerful global tradition of publicness in higher education has had its historical roots and strongest presence in Europe. The broad emphasis on privatisation reflects a striking historical change for the region's higher education; and even the idea of privatisation would not always conjure up a separate private sector. Although decades of changing realities now make privatisation and even its PHE component a topic of definite relevance for European higher education, we still confront the fundamental question of practical and scholarly importance that forms the heart of this paper: *How important is PHE in Europe?*

We need to define terms and boundaries. The point is especially important in Europe, where there is much discussion of blurring the sectoral boundaries (Fried, Glass, & Baumgartl, 2007) and often the private-public question is regarded as merely marginal to questions like whether an institution is 'good' or serves a public purpose. As we will shortly see, different definitions produce different figures on PHE size. The methodology used by PROPHE (Program of Research on Private Higher Education) for both its global dataset and its European dataset is different from that used by European regional organisations. We will show the regional figures arrived at by each approach and the regional organisations' definitions will be discussed when we analyse the figures that stem from them.

PROPHE endeavours to identify and count PHE by nations' own legal designations (closely paralleling ownership). An institution that is juridically listed as private is private, one listed as public is public. Obviously, this identification of private and public skirts the complex issues of degrees of privateness and publicness. Or rather it postpones those issues. It counts enrolment by legal status and only then explores the complex issue of the degree of privateness and publicness within each sector. The task of identification and counting is fundamental to the first main part of this paper on size, whereas the task of exploring privateness and publicness falls to its second main part on private-public distinctiveness. Within the private sector, institutions may be legally for-profit or nonprofit, the latter being much more common and sometimes carrying a related designation such as non-state, non-public, or foundation.

Geographically also, this paper's treatment is dual, though mostly overlapping. It deals with both the 27-member European Union (EU) and with Europe more broadly defined. Either way, one sub-regional division is salient for our analysis: Western Europe (or the West) versus Central and Eastern Europe (or the East). (Of course even these sub-regional categories still show variation across countries.)

As indicated, our evaluation of the importance of PHE in Europe in two main respects sets the structure of the paper. First is sectoral size. The larger, the more important, all other things equal. Second is inter-sectoral distinctiveness. The more distinctive, generally the more important, showing PHE to be something other than just more of the same. Distinctiveness is assessed with an eye on the different institutional types that generally compose PHE sectors. Since its creation a typology has been widely invoked in the literature and further elaborated (Levy, 1986, 2008; Bjarnason et al., 2009). The three component types are religious and other 'identity', 'semi-élite,' and 'demand-absorbing' or non-élite.

Notwithstanding the paper's analytical delineations, its generalisations are inevitably broad. Its aim is to identify and understand major patterns that go beyond single countries. Inevitably too, some generalizations will reflect reality better in some countries than others.

## SECTORAL SIZE

### *Small Regional PHE*

To gauge sectoral size, we measure enrolment share. Measuring by number of institutions would yield much higher private shares both in Europe and globally as, on average, private institutions are considerably smaller than public ones.<sup>2</sup> As noted, we use two main datasets. For the EU's 27 countries we use EUROSTAT ([http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=educ\\_enr11at&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=educ_enr11at&lang=en)). For Europe more broadly defined we use PROPHE's (2011b) global dataset of 117 countries (though many without complete data), focusing on the 44 European countries (49 where we parenthetically note updated and more complete 2010 figures from the PROPHE dataset as of 2016). Unlike the EU list, PROPHE's Europe includes countries that while sometimes grouped under Europe are sometimes listed under other regions, as is the case for Israel, Georgia, and Turkey.<sup>3</sup>

Europe's PHE share is comparatively small when seen in global perspective. Extraordinary PHE growth, even amid powerful public growth, brought the global PHE share to roughly one-third

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<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, counting by full-time faculty would lead to a much lower figure for private share.

<sup>3</sup> As Marek Kwiek notes (email to author October 9, 2011) 'Europe in Europe generally means less than it does in the US'. Russia is the largest single omission when using the EU instead of PROPHE's Europe. Eurypedia's (2011) Europe includes 33 countries: the EU 27 plus Croatia, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey.

(31.3%) in the PROPHE (2011b) dataset. At 15.6% within that database, Europe has only half the PHE share that the world does.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, we proceed to see how the European PHE figure could well be placed modestly below that 15.6%. (In the 2016 PROPHE dataset the global PHE share is 32.7%, Europe's 14.4%, see <http://prophe.org/en/data-laws/international-databases/>).

Our other dataset includes only the 27-nation EU (EUROSTAT (2011), not wider Europe (or the world). But this dataset offers a few advantages. Compared to the PROPHE 2011 dataset, its data were more recent and, as one single source presented all the data, these data are slightly more reliable. Additionally, all the countries shown are without question European, whether or not they capture the totality of Europe. Table I shows the results we calculate from this EU dataset. The major result is that the EU private share can be legitimately put at either 15.6% (coincidentally the same as the PROPHE figure for wider Europe) or 12.0%.<sup>5</sup>

The difference between an EU figure of 15.6% or 12.0% lies in whether to count all private institutions or only "independent" private ones. EUROSTAT, along with its European and global partners (OECD and UNESCO), includes 'government-dependent' privates.<sup>6</sup> These private institutions receive half or more of their funding for 'core' funding from government and come under some greater government control than do independent privates (UOE, 2004). That approach is problematic. Rather than using a simpler criterion of legal status or ownership, these partner agencies classify private and public by a variety of control and management factors that in reality do not always point in the same direction as one another and are often difficult and sometimes subjective to gauge.<sup>7</sup> While ultimately we also opt for inclusivity, we emphasize that government-dependent privates occupy ambiguous terrain (and are often perceived as public) and, where possible it makes sense to show figures for both PHE inclusively and independent private only.

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<sup>4</sup> PROPHE's 2011 15.6% (4,087,876/26,163,578).enrolment figure is calculated only from the 35 European countries for which PROPHE (2011b) had both private and total enrolment (even though it had the private percentage for 41 countries).

<sup>5</sup> EU's independent private/total would be 12.4% instead of 12.0% if we simply left the government-dependent enrolment out of the total enrolment (rather than including it as public). Both these calculations treat the UK as public.

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<sup>7</sup> UOE (2004) explicitly declares that legal status and ownership (as well as finance) do not determine its private vs. public designation and instead have impact only insofar as they affect control, which is a criterion. As to type of private, though its designation 'government-dependent' couples the 50% financial source criterion with 'or' having the teachers paid by government, its designation for 'independent' private refers to the government funding share 'and' having teachers not paid by government. Thus, UOE is not providing clearly defined, mutually exclusive categories to work with.

Table I. Private and Public Enrolment in EU Higher Education (2009)

Countries	Total	Public	Private	Government- Dependent Private	Independent Private	Private/ Total (%)	Independent Private/Total (%)
<b>European Union</b> (27 countries)	19,186,568 <sup>1</sup>	16,202,024	2,984,544	684,343	2,300,201	15.6	12.0
<b>Austria</b>	308,150	256,721	51,429	51,429	0	16.7	0.0
<b>Belgium</b>	425,219	182,682	242,537	242,537	0	57.0	0.0
<b>Bulgaria</b>	274,247	215,867	58,380	0	58,380	21.3	21.3
<b>Cyprus</b>	30,986	8,776	22,210	0	22,210	71.7	71.7
<b>Czech Republic</b>	416,847	356,681	60,166	9,883	50,283	14.4	12.1
<b>Denmark</b>	234,574	230,498	4,076	3,856	220	1.7	0.1
<b>Estonia</b>	68,399	10,795	57,604	45,289	12,315	84.2	18.0
<b>Finland</b>	296,691	248,298	48,393	48,393	0	16.3	0.0
<b>France</b>	2,172,855	1,763,806	409,049	60,074	348,975	18.8	16.1
<b>Germany</b> <sup>2</sup>	2,119,500	2,023,400	96,100	0	96,100	4.5	4.5
<b>Greece</b>	672,284	672,284	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
<b>Hungary</b>	397,679	333,042	64,637	64,637	0	16.3	0.0
<b>Ireland</b>	182,609	176,894	5,715	0	5,715	3.1	3.1
<b>Italy</b>	2,011,713	1,857,961	153,752	0	153,752	7.6	7.6
<b>Latvia</b>	125,360	6,783	118,577	77,719	40,858	94.6	32.6
<b>Lithuania</b>	211,389 <sup>1</sup>	185,861	25,528	0	25,528	12.1	12.1
<b>Luxembourg</b> <sup>3</sup>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
<b>Malta</b>	10,352	10,352	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
<b>Netherlands</b>	618,502	618,502	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
<b>Poland</b>	2,149,998	1,432,711	717,287	0	717,287	33.4	33.4
<b>Portugal</b>	373,002	282,438	90,564	0	90,564	24.3	24.3
<b>Romania</b>	1,098,188	633,425	464,763	0	464,763	42.3	42.3
<b>Slovakia</b>	234,997	203,613	31,384	374	31,010	13.4	13.2
<b>Slovenia</b>	114,391	100,673	13,718	5,476	8,242	12.0	7.2
<b>Spain</b>	1,800,834	1,590,025	210,809	36,810	173,999	11.7	9.7
<b>Sweden</b>	422,580	384,714	37,866	37,866	0	9.0	0.0
<b>United Kingdom</b> <sup>4</sup>	2,415,222	2,415,222	0	0	0	0.0	0.0

*Sources:* Author calculations from EUROSTAT's raw enrolment data ([http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=educ\\_enr1at&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=educ_enr1at&lang=en)) with OECD data added, in italics, as needed for inclusiveness, accuracy, or clarity. Author manual adjustments wherever the provided data in one column enables us to know that the entry should be 0 or a certain number where the dataset had listed as "not available" or left blank in another column of the same country. The countries in question are Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Lithuania, Malta, and Romania.

Notes:

1. The totals shown in the table for Lithuania and thus for the EU total come from adding the given private and public, whereas EUROSTAT put 210,744 for Lithuania's total and 19,505,023 for EU's total.
2. EUROSTAT shows 295,301/2,438,600 for private/total enrolment, but Germany's Federal Statistical Office ([http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/EN/press/pr/2010/03/PE10\\_\\_102\\_\\_213.psm1](http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/EN/press/pr/2010/03/PE10__102__213.psm1)) shows 96,100/ 2,119,500.
3. No figures provided in the dataset.
4. For reasons explained in the text, this table converts EUROSTAT's UK enrolment from government-dependent private to public.

What is unacceptable is EUROSTAT's inclusion of one particular country – the UK – in the government-dependent category, as opposed to the public category. Classifying that way would yield an outlandish PHE share of 28.7% for the EU as the UK alone accounts for 12.6% of the EU's total enrolment and for 77.9% of the government-dependent enrolment in the EUROSTAT raw dataset. The distortion is particularly grave since the mis-labeling applies to the *entirety* of UK enrolment, unlike the picture for government-dependent in all other EU countries. The classification of U.K. enrolment as private runs starkly against scholarly treatments. These routinely count all higher education enrolment as public, often noting the exception of one small private university, the University of Buckingham (Geiger, 1986). Only in 2011 did the UK open higher education to additional private providers (including for-profit ones) (Middlehurst & Fielden, 2011). To call UK enrolment 100% private, because of charters or governing board and other institutional autonomy or other governance criteria the UOE incorporates would require that we take all of Canada's reported enrolment as private and even count U.S. state university enrolment as private. Thus, only a bad case can be made for using 28.7% as the EU's PHE share. Counting the UK properly and even allowing all the rest of government-dependent enrolment to be counted as private yields only a 15.6 private share for the EU. We show that figure alongside the 12.0% independent private figure in Tables I, II, and III).<sup>8</sup>

Even if we use the inclusive private figures for the EU countries and Europe more broadly, the figures substantially trail those of Latin America (48.6%) and Asia (36.4%) as well as the US (29.4%).<sup>9</sup> With rapid recent growth both Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab region have private shares similar to the European. Indeed the only "region" with a lower private share is the Developed British Commonwealth (mostly Australia, Canada, and New Zealand) at around 10 percent.

Europe's regional average subsumes, as do averages for each region, considerable variation by country. Some European countries are under 5% private, others over 50%. But compared with all other regions, what is striking about Europe is the *comparative limitation of the range*. Whereas in Latin America and Asia we often see private majority, in PROPHE's data on the 41 European countries for which it can show percentages only 2 (Cyprus and Kosovo) have over 35% of enrolment in the independent private sector; if we add government-dependent PHE, still only 4 countries are over 35% private. In our separate EU count (2009), only 2 countries (Cyprus and

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<sup>8</sup> We had to make a much more modest revision for another country, Germany. EUROSTAT put a private enrolment that calculated to 12.1% private for Germany. This far exceeds the 4.5% share reported by Germany's Federal Institute of Statistics (see Table I) and widely accepted among experts. We therefore substitute the proper German figures.

<sup>9</sup> PROPHE (2011c) for the 2009 US data, compared to the PROPHE 2011b global database's earlier figure of 26.1%. Depending on which figure we choose for Europe, the new US private share is either a little more or a little less than double Europe's. (The most recent PROPHE data show Europe at 14.6%, the US at 27.5%).

Romania) are over 35% independent private, only 4 over 25%. The range of private size is comparatively small in Europe because of one fact: major limitations on its upper end.

### *Sub-Regional Analysis*

We get a keener view of Europe's variation if we look at sub-regions, at least East versus West. The PHE rise in the East is at least as dramatic as anywhere in the world<sup>10</sup> (Slantcheva & Levy, 2007). It came against the backdrop of virtual public monopoly owing to the Soviet empire. It came nearly all at once, as the empire crumbled in 1989, and it came in every country. Growth was rapid in the next half decade or so. Moreover, the private sector gained its share even as the sub-region's public enrolment soared, having been suppressed under Communism.

But equally important is to note the limitations on this PHE growth. It never became more than small in some countries, such as the Czech Republic, and never much surpassed a third of enrolment in any country, though it approximated that share in several. Moreover, the sub-region's proportional private gains ceased almost as suddenly as they began and in a very short time—by the mid-1990s. The share would thereafter increase importantly in a few countries but would decrease in others. We should realise also that the pre-Communist era had only minimal PHE; even today's modest private share marks an historic high. A notable exception to the generalisation of PHE stagnation in the East is that the Balkan component to the South has seen its rise mostly since 2000 (Bozo, 2009; Levy, 2014). This probably has to do with the Balkans being a sub-region more like the developing world — where PHE growth continues strong.<sup>11</sup> By way of broad comparison, the West had been more private than the East until 1990 and then has been less private ever since.<sup>12</sup> Of course, these comparisons are based on share of enrolment only, not degrees of privateness.

As Table II shows, the EU's 12.0 (independent) private breaks down very differently in the East and the West: 27.7% in the East versus just 6.3% in the West. The respective East versus West shares for private totals including government-dependent (but still without the UK) are 31.7% and 9.7%. When it comes to the EU, the East has slightly greater PHE enrolment than does the West, with a much greater private share of total enrolment, as it greatly trails the West in public enrolment.

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<sup>10</sup> Slantcheva & Levy (2007) provides an overview and case studies. For an updated and detailed account of PHE growth and size in Eastern and Central Europe, see Levy (2014).

<sup>11</sup> By similar reasoning, however, one might hypothesise that the Balkans would be rather high in PHE, but only Kosovo is clearly high, at 51%. Consistent with the global pattern, PHE institutional share is almost always higher than PHE enrolment share (Bozo, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> If we contemplated degree of privateness in the higher education system overall, the West was vastly more private than the East during the Cold War.

Table II. Private and Public Enrolment in West and East EU Higher Education (2009)

Regions	Total	Public	Private	Government- Dependent Private	Independent Private	Private/ Total (%)	Independent Private/Total (%)
<b>European Union</b> (27 countries)	19,186,568	16,202,024	2,984,544	684,343	2,300,201	15.6	12.0
<b>West<sup>1</sup> EU</b>	14,095,073	12,722,573	1,372,500	480,965	891,535	9.7	6.3
<b>East<sup>2</sup> EU</b>	5,091,495	3,479,451	1,612,044	203,378	1,408,666	31.7	27.7

Source: Author calculations based on the raw enrolment from Table I, with the West-East division following the classification of the UNESCO (2011) EFA Global Monitoring Report

[www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/regional-resources/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/regional-resources/)

Notes:

1. West: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

2. East: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

It is not just in the EU countries that the East-West split is large. In the PROPHE 2011 dataset, with Europe more liberally defined beyond the EU, we see similarly sharp sub-regional contrasts (using the same UNESCO East-West delineation of countries by sub-region). 17.6% in the East versus just 4.2% in the West is what aggregates to Europe's overall 11.9% (independent) private.<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding the different country composition and years in the PROPHE Europe versus EUROSTAT EU datasets, the basic pattern is the same: much higher PHE shares in the East than in the West. And the pattern remains much the same if we restrict the PROPHE dataset to only the EU countries in it; the figures would then be 10.5% EU, 25.7 East, and 3.0 West, figures mostly close to those calculated from the EUROSTAT's later dataset (with our adjustments on Germany and the UK).<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, PROPHE's most updated and complete dataset (for 2010) indicates a less dramatic contrast of sub-regions, though still a significant one: East 16.6% vs. West 11.9% for the regional average of 14.4%.

Several possible contradictions to the generalisation of Western Europe's small PHE can be minimised. True, there is historic private-public ambiguity in the UK, with charters and autonomy, but the latter diminished in the last half of the 20th century. There are ambiguous albeit important single institutions, such as the Stockholm School of Economics, with some

<sup>13</sup> PROPHE Europe's 15.6 total private share comprises the East's same 17.6%, with the West rising to 12.7% given its large government-dependent component.

<sup>14</sup> Why are the PHE shares higher from the EUROSTAT than the PROPHE dataset, especially in the West? One reason is that private growth is captured more in the more recent dataset, EUROSTAT's; that same dataset reflects the increased share of the French private enrolment that is designated as independent, and includes Spain. In the East, EUROSTAT's PHE shares are higher because they deal with the EU rather than total Europe, meaning the absence of Russia and other countries with only moderate PHE shares, making especially the large Polish case (with a high private share) weightier in the EU than in the fuller Europe dataset..



exiting the national system (Neave, 2007). Because of government-dependent institutions, the PROPHE dataset lists large PHE shares for Belgium and the Netherlands, but the independent private share is zero in the former and only 10% in the latter.<sup>15</sup> Greece shows that a country can be officially without PHE and yet have a foreign PHE presence offering degrees that are not recognised by the State. But it also shows a common historic tendency to the public side. The University of Piraeus is a public university that had been established as private in 1938. Cyprus is the West's unique case of majority PHE with over just 71.7%, but it is tiny in enrolment and not on the Continental land mass. The most compelling country exception to small PHE shares in Western Europe is Portugal (Teixeira & Amaral, 2007), evolving along lines including substantial non-élite growth seen more in developing regions than in Western Europe, and peaking at about a third private. Spain also showed significant, though more modest PHE growth between 1984 and 2004, after having just 4 'non-state' higher education institutions as of 1983 (Wells, Sadlak, & Vlasceanu, 2007).

Even after considering several counterpoints, then, the generalisation of small PHE in Western Europe is clear. With reason, a prominent edited volume on PHE in Europe devoted less space to the West than to the East (Wells et al., 2007). The generalisation of smallness has been particularly clear for the German-speaking countries, as well as countries with languages similar to German. Austria and Sweden register significantly only for government-dependent privates. Switzerland has no legal provision for PHE, which does not preclude PHE *de facto*, while Denmark's legal prohibition does not preclude some PHE enrolment usually being shown.

### *Why Small?*

Among factors explaining the relatively low PHE share in Europe, especially low in the West, the broadest is a statist tradition. There has been a high expectation that social welfare goods would be publicly financed and provided by the State. Discomfort with 'private' and lesser acceptance of even private non-profit in Europe compared to the US has been a theme in comparative study of the 'third sector' and social policy (Anheier & Seibel, 1990). The higher education sector is not aberrant in this respect. Predictably, practice and political culture have been self-reinforcing, through laws, norms, and expectations (Pritchard, 1992). In general we can compare to the US political-economic heritage. Is anyone surprised that Europe traditionally has trailed far behind the US in PHE share? <sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See endnotes in PROPHE (2011b). According to some, the Dutch system is transitioning to a PHE only system and others say the same for Denmark. For whatever reason, the OECD data for 2008 and 2009 do not show any private-public breakdown for their Dutch total enrolment. <http://stats.oecd.org.libproxy.albany.edu/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=RENRL>.

<sup>16</sup> Yet no convincing evidence within regions has been found correlating level of welfare state provision and PHE size. Exploration across Latin American countries did not identify such correlation (Levy, 1986). Perhaps PHE

Europe is after all the birthplace and main breeding ground of the Continental Model (Clark, 1983), the embodiment of the region's statist tradition in higher education. This model and tradition put the State at the centre in structuring the higher education system, financing it, and standardising rules and practices within it. Higher education is considered an eminently public good. As Neave (2007) writes, even defining 'private' was not historically a concern, at least outside the UK, because of the centrality of this statist model. For the most part, PHE was not an issue or was simply 'peripheral' (Geiger, 1986).<sup>17</sup> Strong opposition to partial privatisation within public institutions remains common, as in Italy. Neither unique to Europe nor foreign to it is resistance to private growth from public university rectors, as in the Czech Republic.

It is instructive to see how the Continental Model would thwart each of the three noted types of PHE. The idea of a homogeneous, integrating form for the entire 'nation' works especially against distinctive PHE — religious, ethnic, or other. The idea of a high university standard works against the idea of élites having to create bastions of superiority outside the public system, as seen so importantly in Latin America since the middle of the last century (Levy, 1986). It also works against permission for demand-absorbing, low-end PHE. If there has been a 'European way' of higher education privatisation (hardly a unique one in all respects) it has involved mostly privatisation within the public sector and only belated and limited growth of PHE.

### *Prospects*

Might significant PHE growth be in the offing for Western Europe? On the one hand, we must weigh heavily the traditions, rules, and culture that remain formidable obstacles. On the other, Italy, and Spain — prominent homes of the Continental Model historically (Clark, 1977) — now show private stirrings, as analysed in national case studies (Triventi & Trivellato, 2012). France has had a rather stable PHE history ever since the demise of the Napoleonic State and now the entry of for-profits bring fresh prospects (Casta & Levy, 2016). Although a German private surge would be greatly exaggerated if we accepted EUROSTAT's 12.1% for Germany, there has been a steady private rise there since the 1990s (Stannek & Ziegele, 2007). It has been especially strong in professional schools, including law. Perhaps the most dramatic development comes in the UK, as the swelling push to open extensive PHE, including for-profit, now has its legal basis (Middlehurst & Fielden, 2011); furthermore, the simultaneous imposition of massive tuition

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expansion in Europe will allow for further exploration. On the broad global scale, we have noted that higher PHE enrolment share has to date been associated much more with developing than developed countries, which means more with countries offering less welfare state provision; key has been the demanding-absorbing mass of PHE growth in developing countries.

<sup>17</sup> As in other regions, contemporary PHE in Europe has precursors.

hikes at public institutions holds potential for PHE growth.<sup>18</sup> Notably, the five EU countries cited in this paragraph have the largest higher education systems in Western Europe.

But from just 6.0% in 2000, the West's EU independent private share rose only to 6.3% by 2009, as shown in Table III. The rise in the East was greater, Poland weighing importantly.<sup>19</sup> For the EU overall, the share rose from 8.1 to 10.1 in the same years (both figures lower than they would be if Romania had been included). At the same time, we must also contemplate possible PHE decline in post-Communist countries in the East, (including beyond the EU). Indeed, important instances of decline in the PHE share of enrolment have already been seen in Romania, though dramatically reversed upward to 42% after our 2009 dataset. The prospect of notable imminent declines arises in several countries.

Culling from the reasons provided in extant global analysis (Levy, 2013), we can identify the major factors already at play or looming that could negatively affect PHE share in Europe. One is a type of privatisation within public universities where new modules are created that are high in privateness, charging hefty tuition and competing with PHE in market arenas.<sup>20</sup> As in Russia, they siphon off much enrolment otherwise headed to PHE and already at least match PHE enrolment in some countries.<sup>21</sup> Or the political spectrum could swing in some countries to leftist or populist orientations unfriendly to PHE. Even short of that, regulations are increasing (Levy & Zumeta 2011). But probably the greatest threat to PHE especially in Eastern and Central Europe comes from demographic stagnation. The plunge has already begun in Poland (Kwiek, 2016) and Poland has been one of the enrolment giants of Europe. Russia is another giant (though only in raw numbers, not PHE shares) candidate given its demographics. Whereas demographic change can affect enrolment in both sectors, there are particular reasons that it can fall harder on the private sector, notably its non-élite subsector, where tuition is charged and perceived quality is often low. With a slowing of demand for higher education, public suppliers become less selective and marginal candidates need not as often as before choose between paying for low status private institutions or not attending higher education. Demographics may be a problem in much of Europe overall but the impact on PHE is greater in the East because the East has more demand-absorbing PHE. Portugal is the rare Western exception – and its PHE share has diminished.

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<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the UK's philanthropic tradition will weigh in, and wealthy individuals have made pledges elsewhere in Western Europe.

<sup>19</sup> The reality that Poland in the century's first decade shows private share growth could magnify the effect coming with falling PHE enrolment.

<sup>20</sup> This is a pattern described for Kenya by Wangenge-Ouma (2012) in this issue and the consequent challenges to PHE have been elaborated elsewhere (Otieno & Levy, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, if public universities impose or raise tuition, PHE decline might be offset.

Table III. EU Private Growth, 2000–2009

Countries	2000			2009			Independent Private Share Change (%)
	Total	Independent Private	Independent Private/Total (%)	Total	Independent Private	Independent Private/Total (%)	
<b>European Union</b>	15,207,955	1,225,549	8.1	18,088,380	1,835,438	10.1 <sup>1</sup>	2.1
<b>West EU</b>	12,319,813	733,736	6.0	14,095,073	891,535	6.3	0.4
<b>East EU</b>	2,888,142	491,813	17.0	3,993,307	943,903	23.6 <sup>1</sup>	6.6
<b>Austria</b>	261,229	0	0.0	308,150	0	0.0	0.0
<b>Belgium</b>	355,748	0	0.0	425,219	0	0.0	0.0
<b>Bulgaria</b>	261,321	27,426	10.5	274,247	58,380	21.3	10.8
<b>Cyprus</b>	10,414	5,855	56.2	30,986	22,210	71.7	15.5
<b>Czech Republic</b>	253,695	0	0.0	416,847	50,283	12.1	12.1
<b>Denmark</b>	184,514	0	0.0	234,574	220	0.1	0.1
<b>Estonia</b>	53,613	13,009	24.3	68,399	12,315	18.0	-6.3
<b>Finland</b>	270,185	0	0.0	296,691	0	0.0	0.0
<b>France</b>	2,015,344	235,356	11.7	2,172,855	348,975	16.1	4.4
<b>Germany<sup>2</sup></b>	1,799,300	50,453	2.8	2,119,500	96,100	4.5	1.7
<b>Greece</b>	422,317	0	0.0	672,284	0	0.0	0.0
<b>Hungary</b>	307,071	0	0.0	397,679	0	0.0	0.0
<b>Ireland</b>	160,611	8,225	5.1	182,609	5,715	3.1	-2.0
<b>Italy</b>	1,770,002	112,692	6.4	2,011,713	153,752	7.6	1.3
<b>Latvia</b>	91,237	11,353	12.4	125,360	40,858	32.6	20.1
<b>Lithuania</b>	121,904	4,803	3.9	211,389	25,528	12.1	8.1
<b>Luxembourg</b>	2,437	0	0.0	...	...	...	...
<b>Malta</b>	6,315	0	0.0	10,352	0	0.0	0.0
<b>Netherlands</b>	487,649	0	0.0	618,502	0	0.0	0.0
<b>Poland</b>	1,579,571	434,435	27.5	2,149,998	717,287	33.4	5.9
<b>Portugal</b>	373,745	118,737	31.8	373,002	90,564	24.3	-7.5
<b>Slovakia</b>	135,914	0	0.0	234,997	31,010	13.2	13.2
<b>Slovenia</b>	83,816	787	0.9	114,391	8,242	7.2	6.3
<b>Spain</b>	1,828,987	198,666	10.9	1,800,834	173,999	9.7	-1.2
<b>Sweden</b>	346,878	3,752	1.1	422,580	0	0.0	-1.1
<b>United Kingdom</b>	2,024,138	0	0.0	2,415,222	0	0.0	0.0

Sources: Author calculations from EUROSTAT's raw enrolment data ([http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=educ\\_enr11at&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=educ_enr11at&lang=en)) with OECD data added for Portugal's independent private figures. Additionally, the author made manual adjustments wherever the provided data in one column enable us to know that the entry should be 0 or a certain number where the dataset had listed as "not available" or left blank in another column of the same country. The countries in question are Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, and Portugal.

Note:

1. Author chose to delete Romania from this table. EUROSTAT shows its total enrolment and independent private enrolment as 452,000 and 0 respectively in 2000, and 1,098,188 and 464,763 in 2009. In fact, however, Romania has allowed independent private higher education since the 1990s and its independent private enrolment should not be 0 in 2000. Including EUROSTAT's 2009 data without having corresponding 2000 data would have exaggerated the EU's (and the East's) independent private growth in the decade. However, our exclusion of Romania means that the table understates the EU's (and the East's) independent private enrolment in both years. Had Romania been excluded from Table I (2009), the independent private share for the EU would have been 10.1 instead of 12.0% and the East's share in Table II would have been 23.6 instead of 27.7%.

On the other hand, Table III includes the Czech Republic, Denmark, and Slovakia even though EUROSTAT shows independent private enrolment only in 2009; and includes Sweden even though EUROSTAT shows independent private enrolment only in 2000.

2. On Germany 2009, see Table I, note 2 above. Similarly, in 2001, EUROSTAT shows 115,020/2,054,838 for private/total enrolment, but Germany's Federal Statistical Office 11/4.1) shows 50,453/1,799,300.

## INTER-SECTORAL DISTINCTIVENESS

If private sectors are mere replications of public sectors their significance is limited.<sup>22</sup> They would be basically providing more of a good or service but not offering anything different. The global literature in higher education has shown mixed findings and assertions as to the degree of private-public difference, the author's own weighing of which finding the evidence heavier on the distinctiveness side (Teixeira & Amaral, 2001; Levy, 2006a, 1999). What about Europe?

Degree and shape of distinctiveness from the public sector often vary by type of PHE. Again we note that the chief types found globally are religious and other identity institutions, semi-élite, and non-élite and demand-absorbing, the last now usefully divided into serious and dubious sub-types of demand-absorbing (Levy, 2008). Several general points can be made about the balance in Europe compared to elsewhere. Religious institutions are limited. This is partly because they constituted a much heavier share of global PHE historically than they do today and Europe's PHE is mostly recent. Eastern Europe has some ethnically-based private higher education institutions, as in Latvia, but this type too is usually rather limited. With due allowance for definitional variation, both on private and on élite, Europe mostly aligns with the world outside the US in having precious little academically élite PHE and even its semi-élite subsector seems numerically modest. As in most of the world, most PHE is non-élite, with some of Eastern Europe hosting the dubious demand-absorbers so common in the developing world. However, we must pay attention to some of Germany's professional schools and some business schools in France, Italy, Poland and elsewhere, as well as to aspirations for the UK's recently opened PHE.

We now consider inter-sectoral distinctiveness consecutively in terms of finance, governance, and mission and activities.

### *Finance*

Usually the clearest objective evidence about degree of inter-sectoral difference comes in finance. We have numbers to quantify especially one key variable: share of income coming from private or public sources (see Reisz & Stock, 2012). In Europe, as globally, we rarely have comprehensive data for the private sector but rather have to build evidence by institution. Stark inter-sectoral contrast is usually so obvious in Europe as not to warrant much space to accumulate evidence. The private sector relies overwhelmingly on private finance, the public sector overwhelmingly on government funds. The context for the public sector is sometimes

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<sup>22</sup> An alternative view could define importance differently. Doing worthy things already done in the public sector could be important, while doing distinctive but unworthy or marginal things could be unimportant.

immediately set by national rules barring tuition or establishing a state responsibility that higher education be 'free.'<sup>23</sup> In contrast, PHE is mostly tuition-dependent.

A major exception occurs if PHE is deemed to include the government-dependent cases identified above, as UOE does and we prefer not to, especially those in the UK, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Inclusion greatly increases the financial publicness of the private sector. Exclusion greatly increases the financial privateness of the public sector. Either way, these institutions account for much of Europe's inter-sectoral blurriness in finance. Another exception to private-public financial distinction, an exception more widely seen and with more prospects to expand, concerns the rising tide of non-government sources for what remains indisputably public higher education.

What about public funds for PHE? Direct annual public subsidies for (independent) private HE are rare in the region, as they are worldwide (Pachuashvili, 2011; Levy, 2011). Fiorioli (2009) identifies France, Spain, and Switzerland among countries where PHE gets only private money.<sup>24</sup> Some countries give public money to private specialised institutions that perform a particular public function, such as serving the disabled (Levy, 1999). In post-Communist countries, new local governments often donated land and buildings to emerging private institutions (Slantcheva & Levy, 2007). A very common indirect (often unintentional and lamented) public subsidy comes as public universities pay full-time faculty who then work part-time in PHEIs.

Public money to PHE might increase. More countries could provide research or student assistance money in sector-neutral ways. Unless such money greatly bolsters PHE, however, the sector's lack of research would indicate only limited research funding; in Poland, PHE gets only about 2% of the public research money provided competitively. If more European countries impose major tuition in public institutions and couple that with offsetting student assistance, then the eligibility of private students can be a significant debate. Such debate is already underway in countries like Poland (Kwiek, 2011). But a key main point in the past, present, and foreseeable future is the lack of annual public subsidisation of PHE and this continues to mark a sharp inter-sectoral difference.

As is also the case worldwide, the main financial source for European PHE is tuition. There are few exceptions to the rule (unless we include the government-dependent institutions as private). Within that rule, the major variation occurs by type of PHE institution. Poland and Turkey – the two European countries for which semi-elite has been most explicitly researched –

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<sup>23</sup> Wherever countries allow PHE, however, such state legal responsibility is almost always interpreted as applying only to the public sector.

<sup>24</sup> Jongbloed & Salerno (2002) found only 1% of German public money going to PHE; access to public money varies by Länder.

typify the tendency for semi-élite institutions to charge the most but also to have the highest shares of non-tuition private income, including business-related (Musial-Demurat, 2012; Mizikaci, 2011). Religious and some ethnic institutions limit tuition by having voluntary contributions and services. As Fioriolo (2009) notes, the source of PHE funding depends partly on ownership. But most PHE institutions in Europe are non-élite secular and depend basically on tuition.

Because significant public money for PHE is so rare (outside the government-dependent cases), the degree of inter-sectoral financial distinctiveness depends heavily on whether the public sector has come to garner much by way of private money; very limited in the past, such private money now varies across Europe. Several broad tendencies have spurred the drive to incorporate private funds into Europe's public universities. At the broadest level has been a partial but widespread move away from state-centred policy; in this respect, the US model has been ascendant. Increasingly, public universities may be 'public enterprises' or 'entrepreneurial' (Clark, 1998). Consultancies are now more common in Spain (Mora, 2000) and elsewhere (see Serrano-Velarde & Krücken, 2012).<sup>25</sup>

Here we highlight two major sources of private income for public higher education. Widely recognised and debated, though established still in only some countries, is tuition. The recent huge increases in the UK have taken centre stage in Western Europe, but some tuition had already been in effect in Norway, Spain, Sweden, and other countries, as opposed to Austria, Denmark, Greece and others. Moreover, in Poland and elsewhere tuition has become a major policy possibility. On the other hand, Germany is a case in which there has been opposition sufficient to push back tuition in several Länder. The other major financial privatisation is the creation of largely private modules within public universities, noted above in the discussion of prospects for declining PHE shares in Eastern Europe. Basically, the public university continues to take in a quota of no or low tuition students but after that admits another cohort on a fee-paying basis often similar to that of the private universities.

### *Governance*

To the extent that increased privateness in finance is accompanied by privateness or autonomy from the State in governance, the public sector gets to be less distinct than previously from the private sector. The 'new contract' gives public universities more autonomy, even as it also demands more accountability (Neave, 1998). Again, we cannot devote much space to the public sector and it has been analysed much more than the private sector.

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<sup>25</sup> Increased entrepreneurialism in the public sector may reduce financial inter-sectoral difference (Kwiek, 2007), at least from the semi-élite subsector.

A fair regional generalisation about PHE is that it has more autonomy from government than public higher education.<sup>26</sup> Admittedly scattered evidence indicates that the private institutions generally have more freedom in this respect to make their own decisions on financial policy, appointments, and programme and other academic matters. However, there are restrictions in all these realms. Moreover, this private-public contrast is not the same as saying that private institutions have more autonomy than public counterparts. They are often more restricted by religious or business ownership or, one could say, the marketplace and consumer power. Compared to the public universities, Europe's private ones derive less autonomy from academic status and tradition. But the fact that the *amount* of institutional autonomy may not differ all that much inter-sectorally need not diminish inter-sectoral distinctiveness, as the *shape* of autonomy (and who restricts it, and how) is quite different. PHE institutions are restricted mostly by external private stakeholders, which means diminished autonomy but not necessarily diminished privateness; in contrast, public institutions are restricted in their autonomy more by government.

Of course, as with finance, the private-public distinction is lessened by the 'government-dependent' institutions. This is again true whether we place them in the public sector, as we prefer, or in the private sector, as UOE does. If they are in the public sector, they show an unusual amount of autonomy from government for that sector. In fact, what we here call governance and autonomy are precisely what lead UOE to classify such institutions as private. Matters such as control and board autonomy are greater in these institutions than in their public counterparts within their countries (and, for the UK especially, greater than public institutions in other European countries). On the other hand, if the government-dependent institutions are put in the private sector, then they show less autonomy from government than the independent private institutions within the same country, Estonia and Latvia being examples.

Notwithstanding the lack of precise measures of autonomy from government, it appears that PHE is more regulated in Europe than in most of the world other than under repressive political regimes. Or at least Europe's regulations are probably more enforced than in many developing countries. It is unsurprising that a region with a weak PHE tradition and with statist norms, emphasising the public nature of higher education, would have comparatively strong regulation when it does eventually permit PHE. An unusually close examination of several post-Communist countries finds heavy regulation frequent, enough to limit both growth and

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<sup>26</sup> Where public universities enjoy autonomy from their birth or legal status whereas private universities must earn it by review, there is a private-public inversion of sorts — with PHE having less autonomy from the State. But even in the extreme cases of government-dependent PHE in Belgium and the Netherlands, where private came to resemble public in key respects including finance one could still discern greater autonomy from government in the private over the public sector.



inter-sectoral distinctiveness (Pachuashvili, 2011). Commonly the first half decade of post-Communist rule allowed easy proliferation but then 'delayed regulation' set in (Levy, 2006b).

Accreditation illustrates the limits on PHE autonomy. In some cases, such as the German, it is required only of the private sector. In others, such as the Netherlands, the formal rules are the same for both sectors, which promotes isomorphism over diversity. Even more, a common observation and a keen grievance of PHE is that the accreditation criteria are geared to norms of public universities, often quite unsuitable for private institutions, and that accreditation agencies are dominated by senior professors from prestigious public universities (Fried et al., 2007). Likewise, national higher education councils tend to be seen as very restrictive of PHE (Mizikaci, 2011). An even-handed observation is that the very pursuit of quality standards often imposes rules that limit PHE choice and distinctiveness – whether for good, bad, or both.

Another limit on private-public distinctiveness lies in the typical proscription of for-profit institutions. Few post-Communist States allow them (Pachuashvili, 2011), with Ukraine being a notable exception (Stetar & Panych, 2007). Of course, many legal non-profits resemble for-profit institutions in practice. Again, recent changes in British public policy mark a big change (especially within the West European context) as they allow a for-profit sector. Perhaps more surprising is that France, with its grand Statist heritage, allows for-profit status, has welcomed foreign providers, and treats for-profits much as it treats nonprofits, which is with broad acceptance (Casta & Levy, 2016).

Focusing on institutional autonomy and other matters of relationships between European higher education institutions and external stakeholders including government tells only half the story, however. A focus on the *internal* governance of higher education institutions is equally relevant. An ad hoc review of many pieces touching on internal governance appears to echo the sharp inter-sectoral difference demonstrated in detail for Latin America and repeatedly observed worldwide (Wells et al., 2007; Levy, 1986). In PHE as opposed to public higher education, students tend to have much less representation and power – except as consumers – and faculty also are notably weaker, even when we refer to the same professors who teach in both sectors. In turn, private rectors (with boards) have much wider power than their public counterparts.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Blurring in governance occurs not only when public universities create internally their own rather private modules, but also when they are active in creating separate private institutions which may be affiliated with them. Russia is a potent illustration (Suspitsin, 2007). Affiliation of private colleges and public universities is prominently seen elsewhere in the world as well, e.g. China.

### *Mission and Activities*

Of course, some lack of inter-sectoral distinctiveness in mission and activities relates to the national regulations and rules just discussed. But much of the explanation for the lack emanates from the private side. Most private institutions do not seek to be very distinctive or innovative. Isomorphism can be 'coercive' but can also be 'normative' and 'professional' (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Levy, 2006a). Applied to our subject matter, we see that private institutions copy public ones not only because they are politically forced to do so, but, for example, because they seek legitimacy and use public university professors. Or private institutions seek to be different either only in finance or one particular pursuit, such as religion. In other respects they mostly copy without imagination or skill. Turkey is a good example of this tendency for the great majority — the demand-absorbing ones, even including most of the 'serious demand-absorbing' ones — whereas only its few semi-élite private institutions along with a few serious demand-absorbers are innovative in academic and administrative matters (Mizikaci, 2011).<sup>28</sup>

Lack of distinctiveness in mission echoes our earlier observations about the weakness of the concept of 'private' when it comes to European higher education. Trivellato (2007) notes how little talk of private apartness there is in Italy, as illustrated in discussion of curriculum. A crucial variable in the degree and shape of inter-sectoral distinction is whether PHE represents the preferred sector. In the US it famously often does. In Latin America (outside Brazil) it also does, depending on field. But Europe is much more like Asia and Africa, where public is the first preference. Semi-élite privates are sometimes the first choice but again they are mostly limited or niche choices in Europe.<sup>29</sup> Its public sector does not often collapse as it often has in the developing world. So PHE is more about getting some spot than about getting a better spot (Geiger, 1986). For the non-élite bulk of PHE, PHE is mostly about access, not distinctiveness.

Thus, the legitimacy quest is central for PHE in Europe. It was a key challenge for emerging PHE in the post-Communist world and remains a challenge (Suspitsin, 2007; Slantcheva & Levy, 2007; Slantcheva, 2007). An empirical study in Romania underscores the point (Reisz, 2007). Copying curriculum, using public university professors part-time, and conforming to national accreditation rules are all routes to legitimacy — and to limited distinctiveness.

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<sup>28</sup> Tomusk (2003) argues that the first post-Communist efforts were revolutionary, as reflected in novel curriculum. But they were overwhelmed by the dominance and legitimacy of the public university, employment difficulties, and then regulations and accreditation. A second wave was mostly business schools, some good. But then came the massive PHE wave, demand-absorbing and quite lacking in innovation. In terms of our paper's consideration of mission, Tomusk's view is that initiatives for distinctiveness were mostly crushed and isomorphism became dominant.

<sup>29</sup> As Musial-Demurat (2012) shows for Poland, semi-élite PHEs try to become the 'first second-choice' for students whose aspiration to the top tier publics is frustrated, and they do so by offering differences as well as quality.

But such evidence must be weighed against pursuits that involve inter-sectoral distinctiveness. Although Europe may be the region where religion plays the least role in marking distinctiveness from public higher education,<sup>30</sup> there has nonetheless been a role, as in Italy, France, and Spain. Spain's first non-state university was Jesuit, established in 1886. The post-Communist era brought religious PHE to some countries. Turkey (like China) is exceptional for banning religious higher education institutions. But as seen elsewhere in the world, religious universities often become less distinctive over time, even sometimes warranting being called 'Old Privates'. Unlike in some other regions, the decline of Catholic higher education has not been much offset by a rise of Evangelical or Islamic PHE. Notwithstanding numerous exceptions, religion remains mostly marginal to higher education in a largely secularized Europe (Glanzer, 2014a, 2014b).

If religious higher education is largely a story of marginality and decline, commercially oriented or other 'modernising' PHE gains ground. Business schools are a significant PHE presence in most of Europe's PHE sectors. Broader marketization and economic opening have promoted the demand, most spectacularly but not only in post-Communist Europe. Hunter (2009) closely studies a set of Italian PHE institutions that are markedly in the marketplace (see Triventi & Trivellato, 2012). In Spain and elsewhere, some private institutions are more 'Anglo-Saxon' in teaching than are public counterparts (Wells, Sadlak & Vlăsceanu, 2007) and in some ways PHE institutions are closer to Bologna reforms (Kwiek, 2007).<sup>31</sup> Several of these modernist institutions may be semi-elite. As in governance, so in mission and activities, the semi-elite may bring the greatest distinctiveness from the public sector. Recent research substantiates the point for countries as different as Poland and Turkey (Musial-Demurat, 2012; Mizikaci, 2011).

Yet even non-élite PHE concentrates heavily in certain fields of study, marking a strong private-public contrast. These studies are usually market-oriented, 'soft', and inexpensive to offer. In country after country in Europe (as in region after region globally), field of study shows very large inter-sectoral distinctiveness.<sup>32</sup> Business, tourism, and administration are prominent examples, with expensive engineering, agronomy, and medicine as well as the natural sciences rare, and humanities and academic social science often also trailing the share seen in the public sector.

The rarity of certain fields of study in PHE raises a point that is often missed: a kind of inter-sectoral distinction emerges where one sector *fails* to do something the other does. In addition to certain fields of study, a salient example is research. Europe is no exception to the non-US

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<sup>30</sup> In Romania (and Georgia), religion is partly lodged in the public sector (Pachuashvili, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> The US model obviously looms large at exceptional institutions like the American University of Bulgaria.

<sup>32</sup> The same holds for the much greater concentration in fewer fields within private institutions; on Italy see Trivellato (2007); on Poland see Musial-Demurat (2012).

global rule that PHE does far less research than public higher education. Another powerful example is academic graduate education, especially at the doctoral level. Furthermore, European PHE is probably more concentrated than European public higher education in non-university institutions. European PHE is much more restricted than its public counterpart to teaching and training. It also relies more on part-time teaching. In sum, significant limitations that translate into lower academic status for PHE are consistent with inter-sectoral distinctiveness.

## CONCLUSION

A conclusion based on sectoral size would be that Europe's PHE is noteworthy but less than PHE globally. Europe's PHE is on the small side even for the developed world: hugely smaller than in Japan and Korea and with less than half the share held in the US. But it is larger than in the Commonwealth nations of European population descent. These comparative assessments hold regardless of whether we focus on the EU or Europe more broadly. They also hold when we include "government-dependent" private institutions. Yet however modest Europe's private share is in global perspective, any sector of higher education that has millions of students (5.4 million in the latest PROPHE dataset on Europe) must be considered "important."

Overall, the impression of comparative PHE importance reached by analysing size need not be fundamentally altered because of findings on degree of private-public distinctiveness.<sup>33</sup> That is, Europe does not appear to have decisively more or less private-public distinctiveness than found in other regions. It has perhaps modestly less. If so, this fits impressions that inter-sectoral distinction in higher education tends to be lower in developed than in developing regions. Within the developed world, Europe's private-public distinction seems smaller than in Japan and Korea but larger than in the US.<sup>34</sup> Yet if on the one hand, degree of private-public distinctiveness seems neither markedly high or low compared to global context, the fact remains on the other hand that private-public distinctiveness tends to be high globally in higher education. Regarding finance, relations with the State and other external stakeholders, internal governance, and a variety of missions, Europe's private sector shows ample distinctiveness from its public sector.

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<sup>33</sup> Each of the European national case studies in the European Journal of Education's special issue on "*The Privatisation of Higher Education: comparative perspectives*" appears to fit this paper's regional generalisations on size and inter-sectoral distinctiveness (including the low semi-élite weight of PHE).

<sup>34</sup> Two additional considerations: First, inclusion of government-dependent institutions as private obviously would increase PHE size but the effect of these institutions on inter-sectoral distinctiveness is similar regardless of their sectoral placement: *they diminish inter-sectoral distinctiveness*. Second, if the parallel to global tendencies of low elite weight means a certain lack of importance for European PHE, the parallel to global tendencies of higher inter-sectoral distinctiveness means a certain importance for European PHE.

As this paper's assessment of PHE importance has been based on size and distinctiveness, it arguably has given too little weight to national leadership and knowledge development. Europe's private sector is dwarfed by its public sector when it comes to such weight. (Indeed the strong public presence juxtaposed to the large private absence is itself an intersectoral distinction.) A counterpoint is that such dwarfing is common globally, with the unique U.S. exception. But, just as commonness of intersectoral distinctiveness in global higher education should not lead us to downplay its presence in Europe, contributing to PHE importance in Europe, so the commonness of PHE weakness in national leadership and knowledge development should not obscure how this restricted role limits the importance of European PHE.

PHE importance can be gauged by various criteria. Enrolment size and share have the advantage of being countable and objective. In the European case they yield a view generalizable to the PHE's overall importance in the region: not as important as in most of the world but important, including more important than in the past.

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