

Participation in Continuing Higher Education

Findings from a comparative study of seven countries

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Background

- Observation that in Germany continuing higher education (CHE) plays a marginal role in the overall market for continuing education (CE) and does not meet the growing demand for high-level further education
- Assumption that continuing higher education in Germany is less developed than in other countries
- No reliable figures on the position of German higher education (HE) institutions in the market for continuing education
- No reliable and comparable information about the situation in different countries

Research objectives

- Assessing the level of participation in CHE, determining the position of HE institutions in the market for continuing education
- Identifying factors that favour participation in CHE, isolating conditions that discourage participation in CHE
- Conclusions and recommendations for developing the supply of CHE in Germany

Focus and scope of the presentation

- Empirical results on
 - ➔ rates of participation in CHE
 - ➔ share of HE institutions and other providers in the market for CE
 - ➔ thematic profile of CHE
- Explanations of differences between countries by relating the findings to the national contexts
- Conclusion and recommendations

Issues of definition

Distinction of four types of CHE

- First-degree higher education in case it does not follow the conventional, immediate route from secondary to higher education (non-traditional students)
- Second-degree higher education, excluding PhD programmes and post-doc studies

In this presentation focus on

- Credit-bearing non-degree higher education programmes: programmes that offer credits (e. g. certificate, diploma) but do not lead to a degree
 - Short-term non-credit higher education courses, seminars, work-shops etc.
- Combined category:
CHE in the narrow sense

Research design

- International comparative study including countries with different traditions, structures, levels, and conditions of CHE:
 - ➔ five European countries: Austria, Finland, France, Germany, UK
 - ➔ two non-European countries: Canada, USA
- Secondary analysis of existing data sets

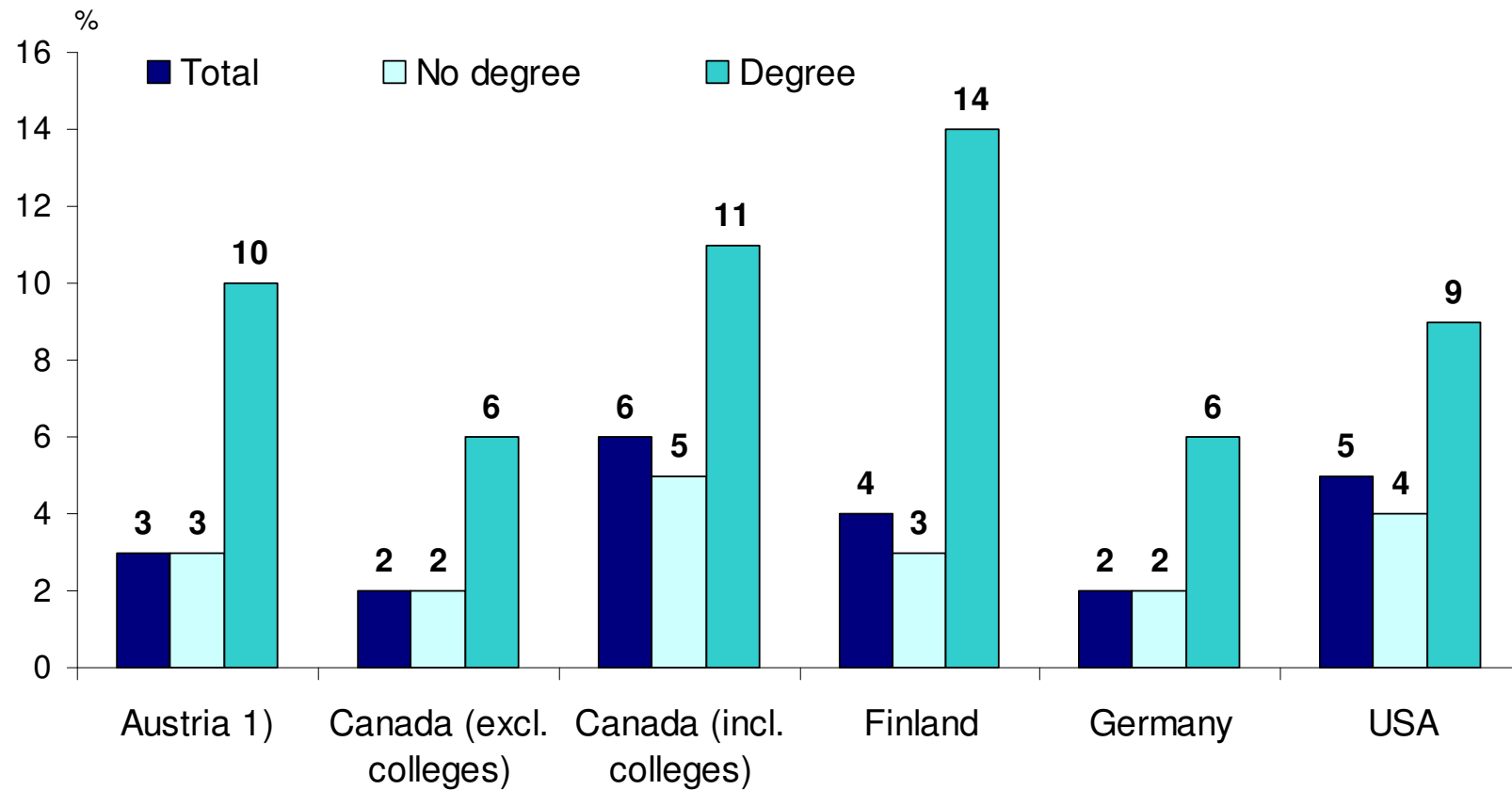
Data bases

- Surveys of the general population for all but two countries (France, UK)
 - ➔ reference period: the year preceding the survey
 - ➔ only national data sets
 - ➔ different survey years (from 1998 (Canada) to 2003 (Austria))
- Surveys of higher education graduates for all countries
 - ➔ reference period: four to five years after graduation
 - ➔ internationally comparative survey including all European countries, national surveys for the non-European countries
 - ➔ target population: graduates of the academic year 1995 (Canada, European countries) and 1993 (USA)

Reliability and validity of the measurement of CHE

Country	Data base	
	Surveys of the general population	Surveys of higher education graduates
Austria	Slight underestimation	Reliable and valid measurement
Canada	Underestimation as well as overestimation possible	Underestimation
Finland	Reliable and valid measurement	Reliable and valid measurement
France	—	Reliable and valid measurement
Germany	Reliable and valid measurement	Reliable and valid measurement
UK	—	Reliable and valid measurement
USA	More or less reliable and valid measurement	Strong underestimation

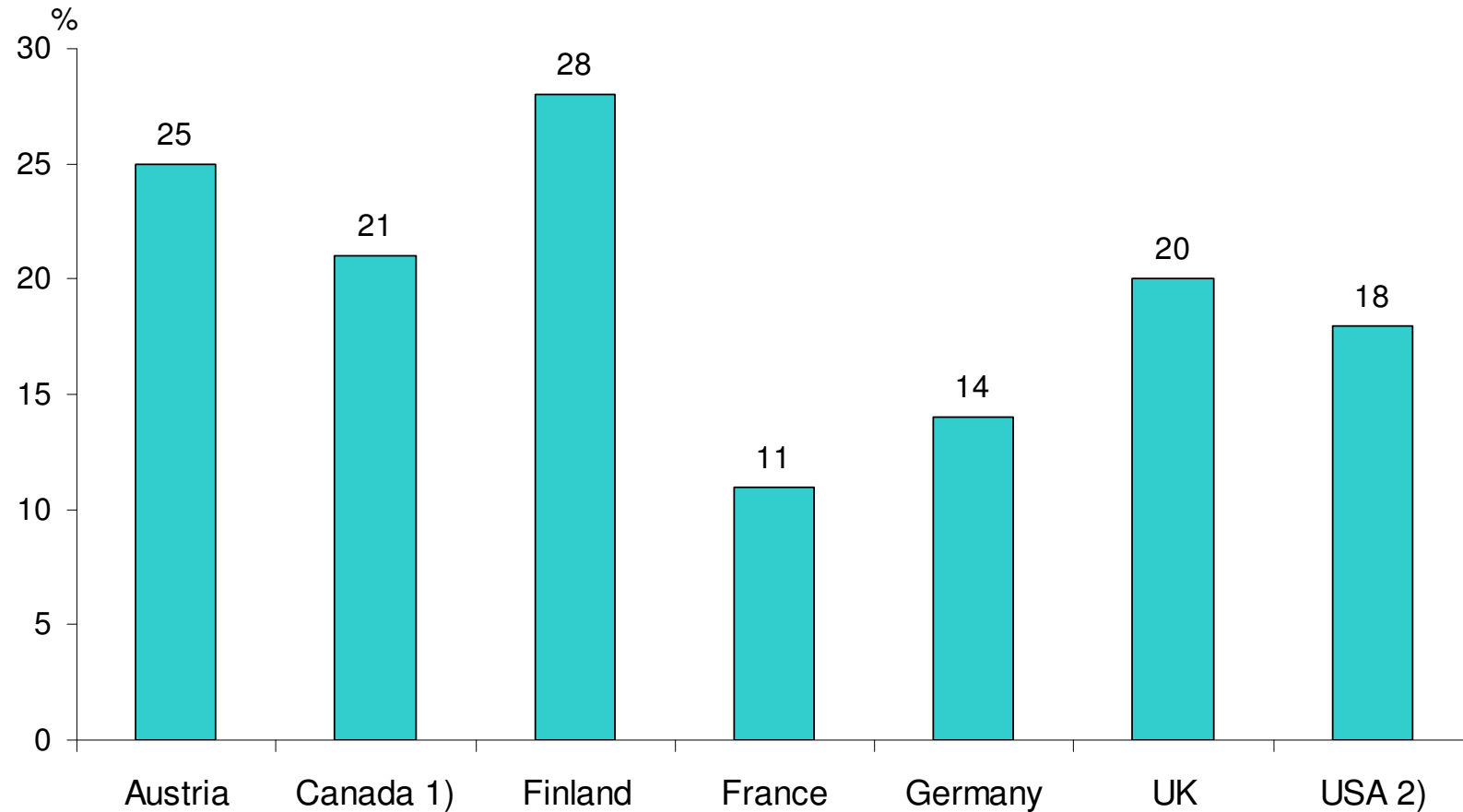
Participation rates in CHE, for the population aged 20–64



1) Slight underestimation possible

Source: General population surveys

Participation rates in CHE, for higher education graduates



1) Underestimation probable; 2) Strong underestimation probable

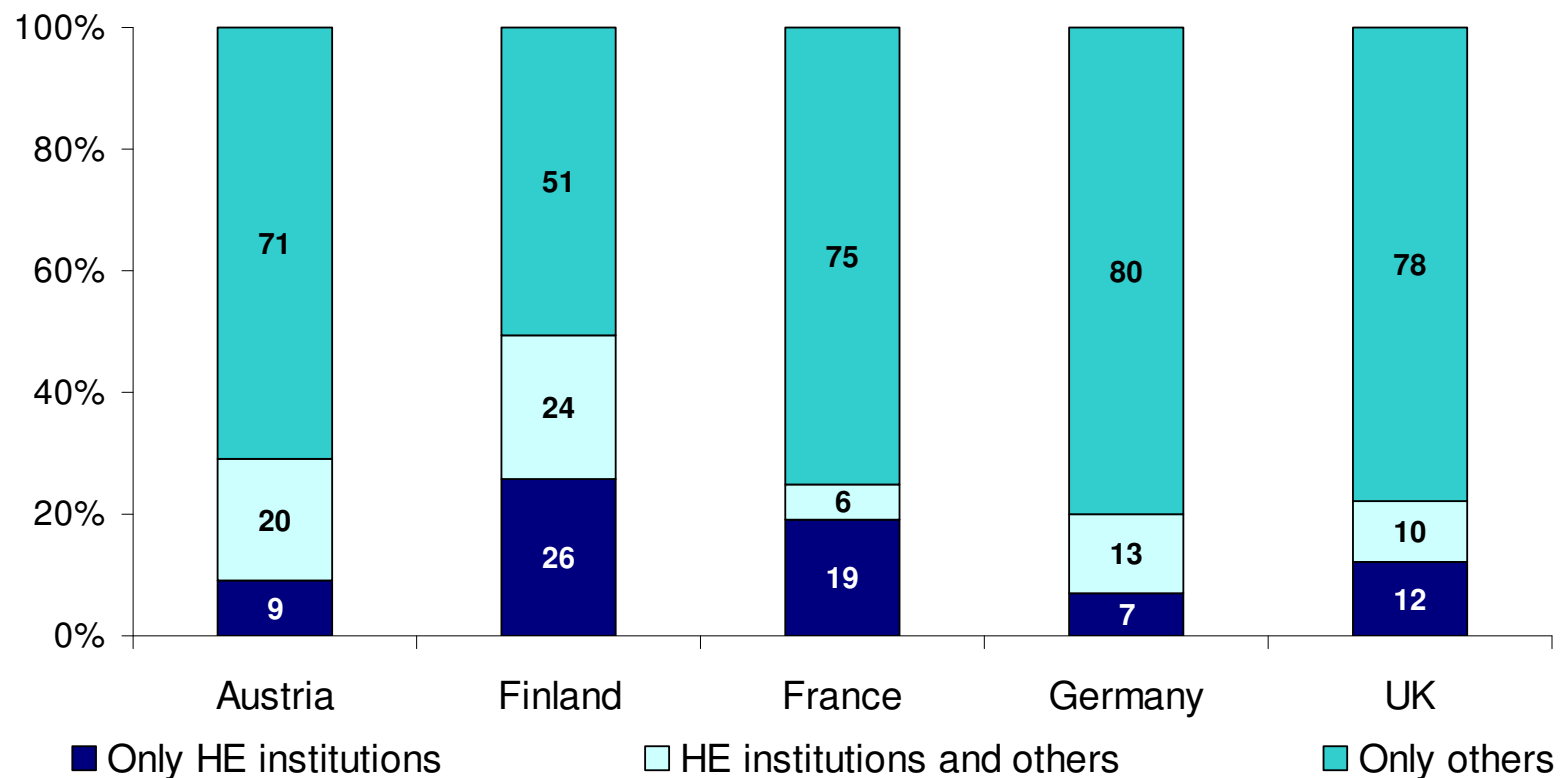
Source: Graduates Surveys

Participation rates in CHE: interim summary

Divided world of CHE:

- “developing” countries: Germany and France
- “well-developed” countries: Austria, Canada, Finland, UK, USA

Position of HE institutions in the CE market for the highly qualified: providers of CE courses attended by graduates



Source: European Graduates Survey

Thematic profile of CHE as compared to non-university CE

- Similar patterns in the European countries:
 - ➔ focus of HE institutions lies on their specific domain: the transmission of disciplinary knowledge, skills, and competencies
 - ➔ non-university providers can strengthen their competitive edge when economically oriented and application-related topics are concerned
- Differences between the European countries:
 - ➔ German HE institutions place even more emphasis on the supply of academic, research-oriented CE and provide less often CE that is geared to direct application and the immediate needs of occupational practice.

Systematic explanations: the institutional embeddedness of CHE

- "... the complex forms in which adult and continuing education manifest themselves are a function of and a response to a range of other characteristics of the societies in which it is situated." (Osborne, 2003)
 - ➔ description of the national contexts according to general, essential and salient attributes
- Most important complex of context conditions (institution) for continuing education: the education system

Essential characteristics of education systems (following Maurice, Sellier & Silvestre)

Type I (“qualificational space”)

Characteristics (selection)	Implications for CE and CHE	Countries
<p>Production of occupation-specific competencies</p> <p>Occupational segmentation of the labour market and the education system</p> <p>Tight coupling of qualification (in terms of content) and occupational allocation</p> <p>Well-developed system of vocational education and training</p> <p>Strong boundaries between vocational education and academic/general and higher education</p>	<p>Little need for continuing education, at least shortly after the transition to employment</p> <p>Division of labour between different CE providers: focus of HE institutions on research-related, scientific topics</p> <p>HE institutions less responsive to the immediate needs of the labour market</p>	<p>Austria</p> <p>Germany</p>

Essential characteristics of education systems (following Maurice, Sellier & Silvestre)

Type II ("organizational space")

Characteristics (selection)	Implications for CE and CHE	Countries
Production of general, academic competencies	Necessity of acquiring specialized occupational competencies after leaving initial education (on the job or in CE courses)	Canada
Prevalence of internal, firm-specific labour markets		(Finland?) France
Loose horizontal coupling of education and labour market	HE institutions cover part of vocational/professional education in form of CE provisions	UK USA
Low-developed system of vocational education and training	Stronger demand-orientation of CHE supply	

The embeddedness of CHE in a complex institutional environment

- Findings for Germany, Canada, the UK and the United States are in line with these descriptions
- Findings for Austria and France seem to contradict the assumptions
- But: CHE is embedded in a **complex** institutional environment with different institutions counteracting or reinforcing each other with regard to their impact on CHE
- Other important institutions: learning culture and the welfare state

Transferability

- CHE is an intricate system itself, it is strongly context-bound and path-dependent
- Recommendations on measures to strengthen continuing higher education must bear this context and path dependency in mind
- Advice to be cautious in singling out particular features of a country's system and in transferring it to another country
- Recommendation for German HE institutions: not to compete in market segments that are dominated by other providers but to concentrate on their particular strengths and strategically develop a portfolio of high-quality offerings that correspond to their specific profile and core competencies

Lessons to be learned from other countries

- Enhancing demand orientation and simultaneously holding to academic standards and the specific mission of HE institutions
 - ➔ exploring the demand for continuing higher education in close co-operation with (potential) learners and employers
- Enhancing flexibility
 - ➔ exploring the preferences of (potential) students
- Offering credentials that are standardized, can be easily recognized by employers and transferred to degree programmes

Thank you for your attention!