

# Participation in University Continuing Education

Lessons from other countries

SPONSORED BY THE



Federal Ministry  
of Education  
and Research

In cooperation with



German Institute for  
Adult Education

Hilde Schaeper  
Higher Education Information System  
Hannover, Germany  
schaeper@his.de

CAUCE Annual Conference, May 30 – June 2, 2007, Edmonton

## Background

- Observation that in Germany university continuing education (UCE) 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 UCE 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 UCE, determining the position of HE institutions in the market for continuing education
- Identifying factors that favour participation in UCE, isolating conditions that discourage participation in UCE
- Conclusions and recommendations for developing the supply of UCE in Germany

## Focus and scope of the session

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

## Issues of definition

### Distinction of four types of UCE

- 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:  
UCE in the narrow sense

## Research design

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

## Data bases

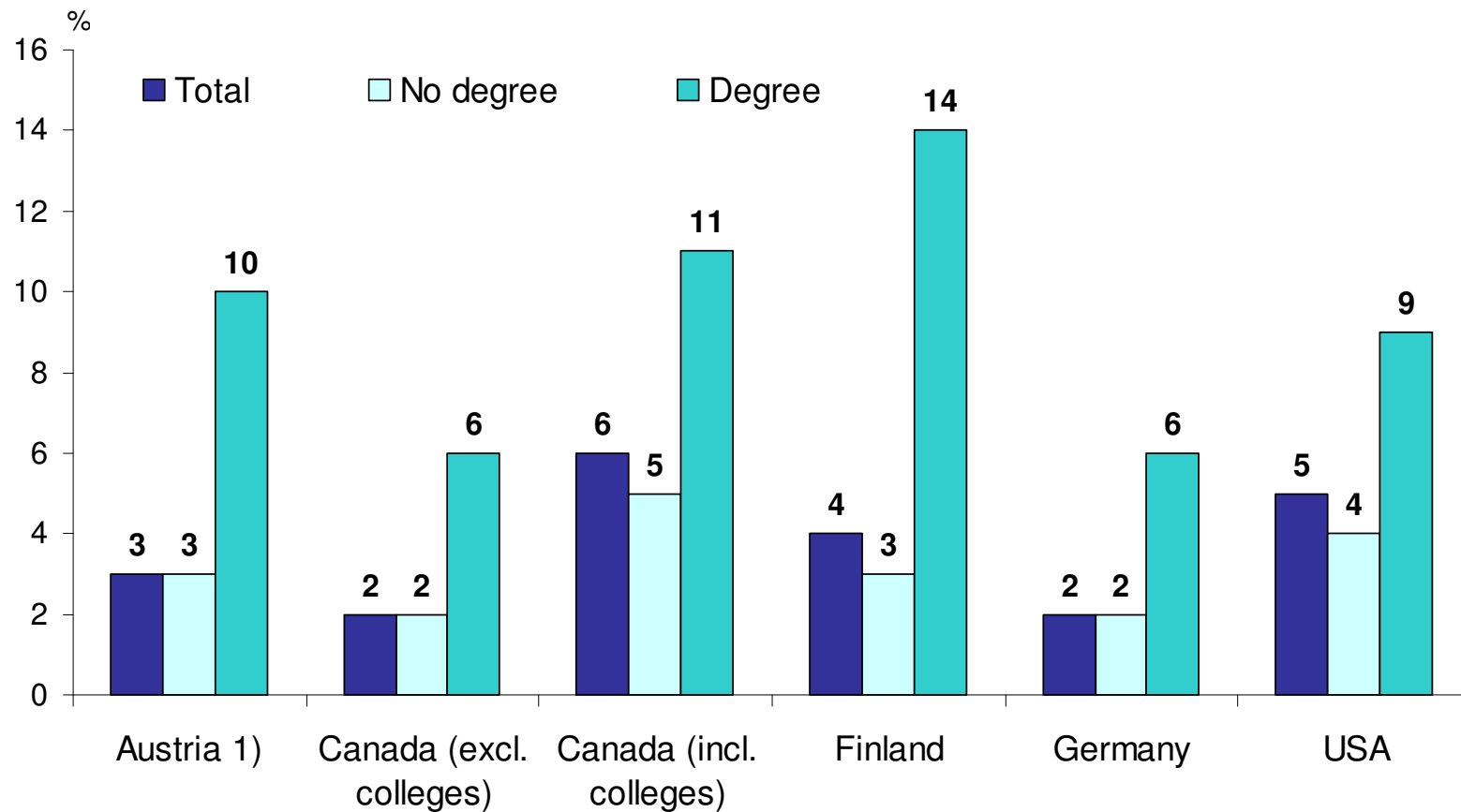
- Surveys of the general population for all but two countries (France, UK)
  - ➔ reference period: the year preceding the survey
  - ➔ only national data sets
  - ➔ different survey years (from 1998 (Canada) to 2003 (Austria))
- Surveys of higher education graduates for all countries
  - ➔ reference 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 UCE

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	<b>Underestimation</b>
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	<b>Strong underestimation</b>



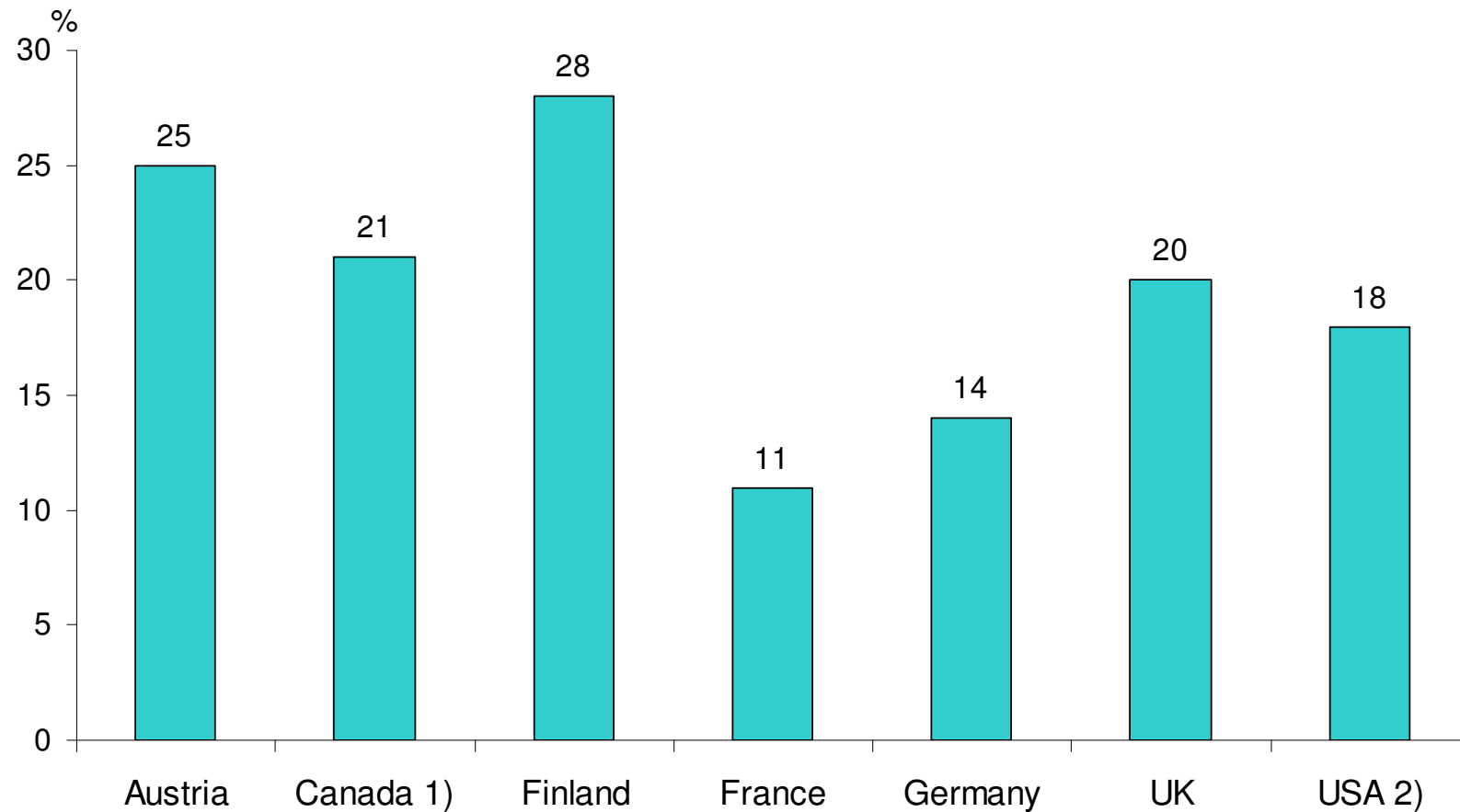
## Participation rates in UCE, for the population aged 20–64



1) Slight underestimation possible

Source: General population surveys

## Participation rates in UCE for higher education graduates



1) Underestimation, 2) Strong underestimation

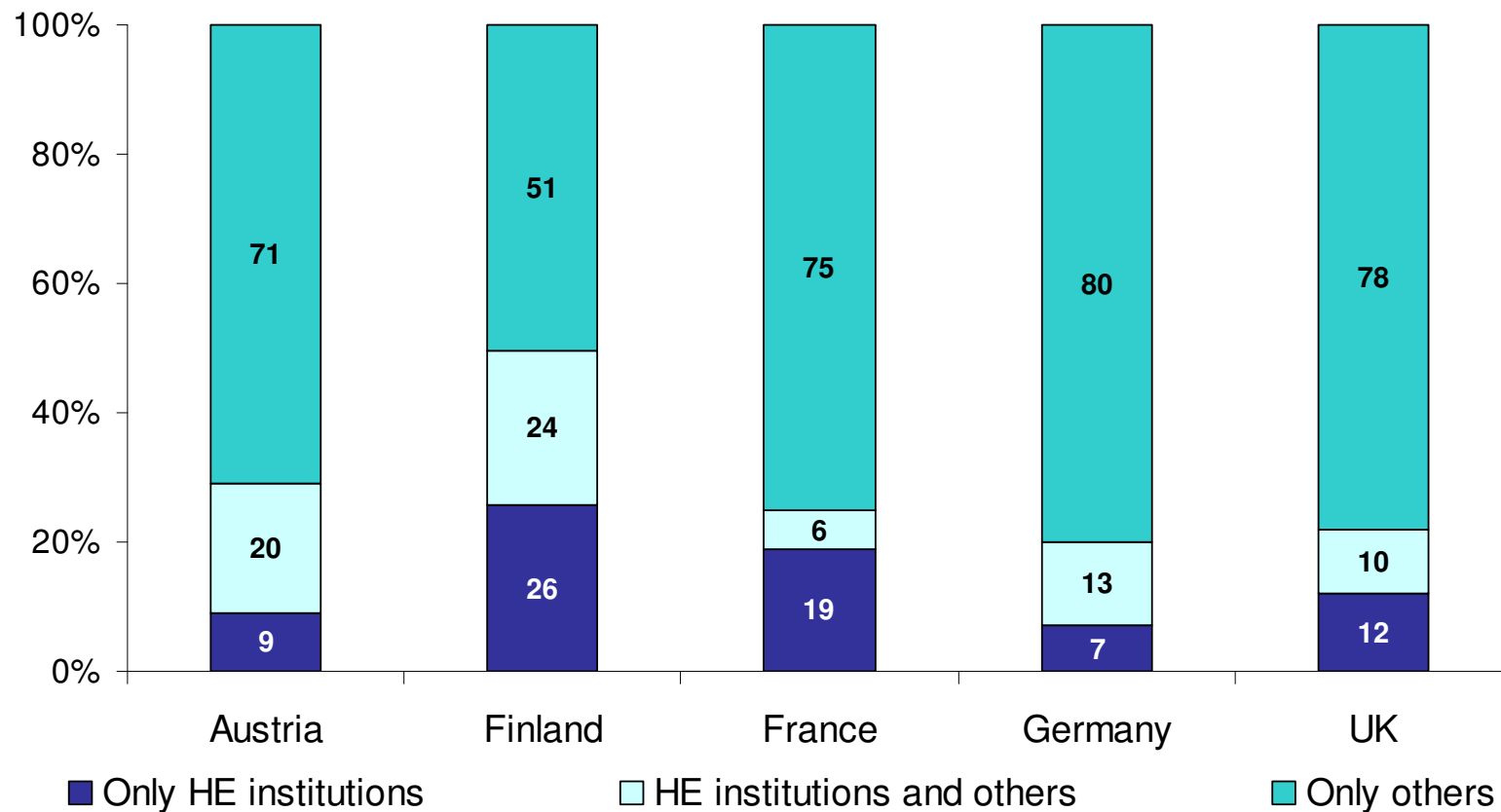
Source: Graduates Surveys

## Participation rates in UCE: interim summary

Divided world of UCE:

- “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

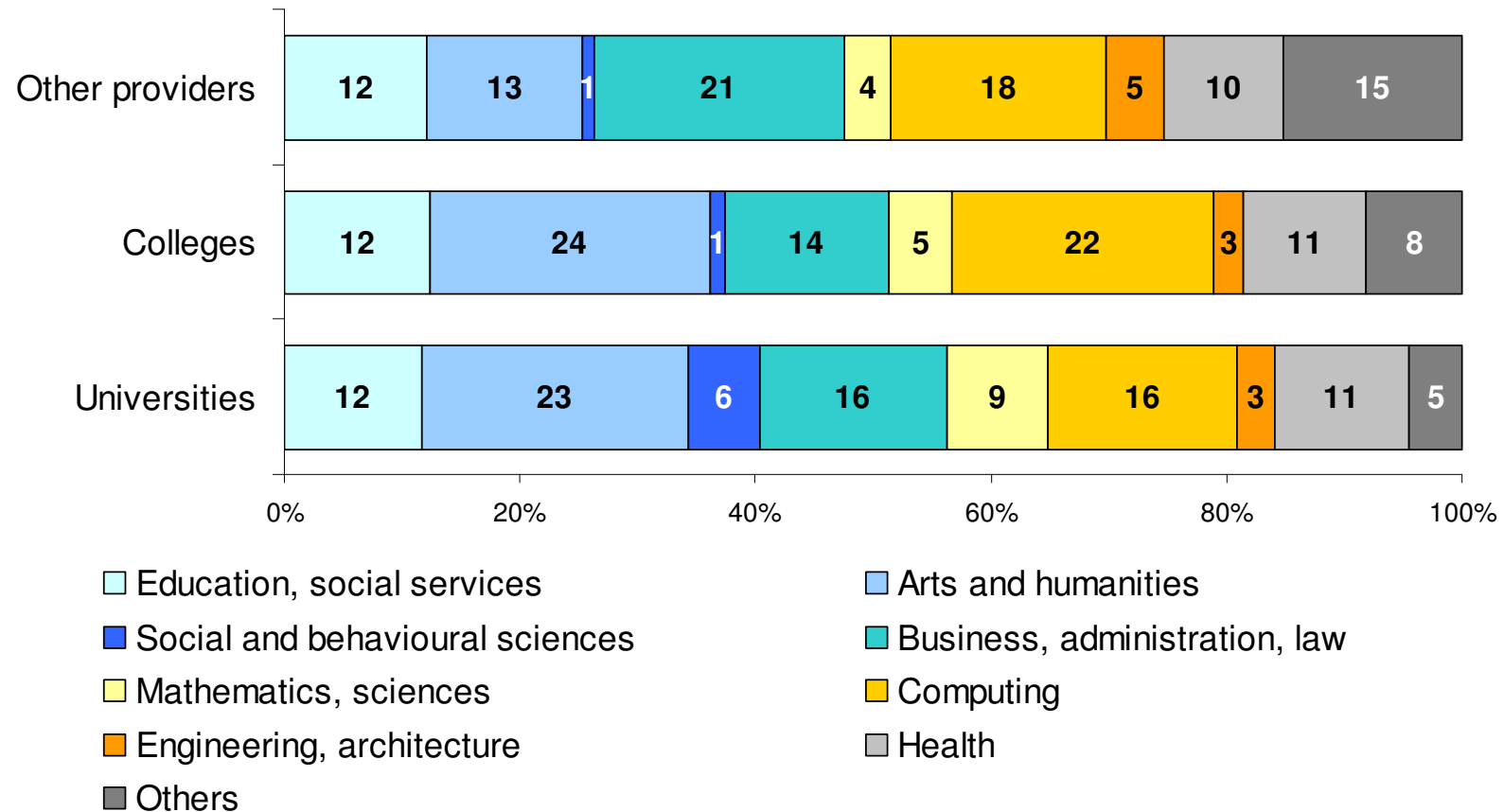


Source: European Graduates Survey

## Thematic profile of UCE as compared to non-university CE

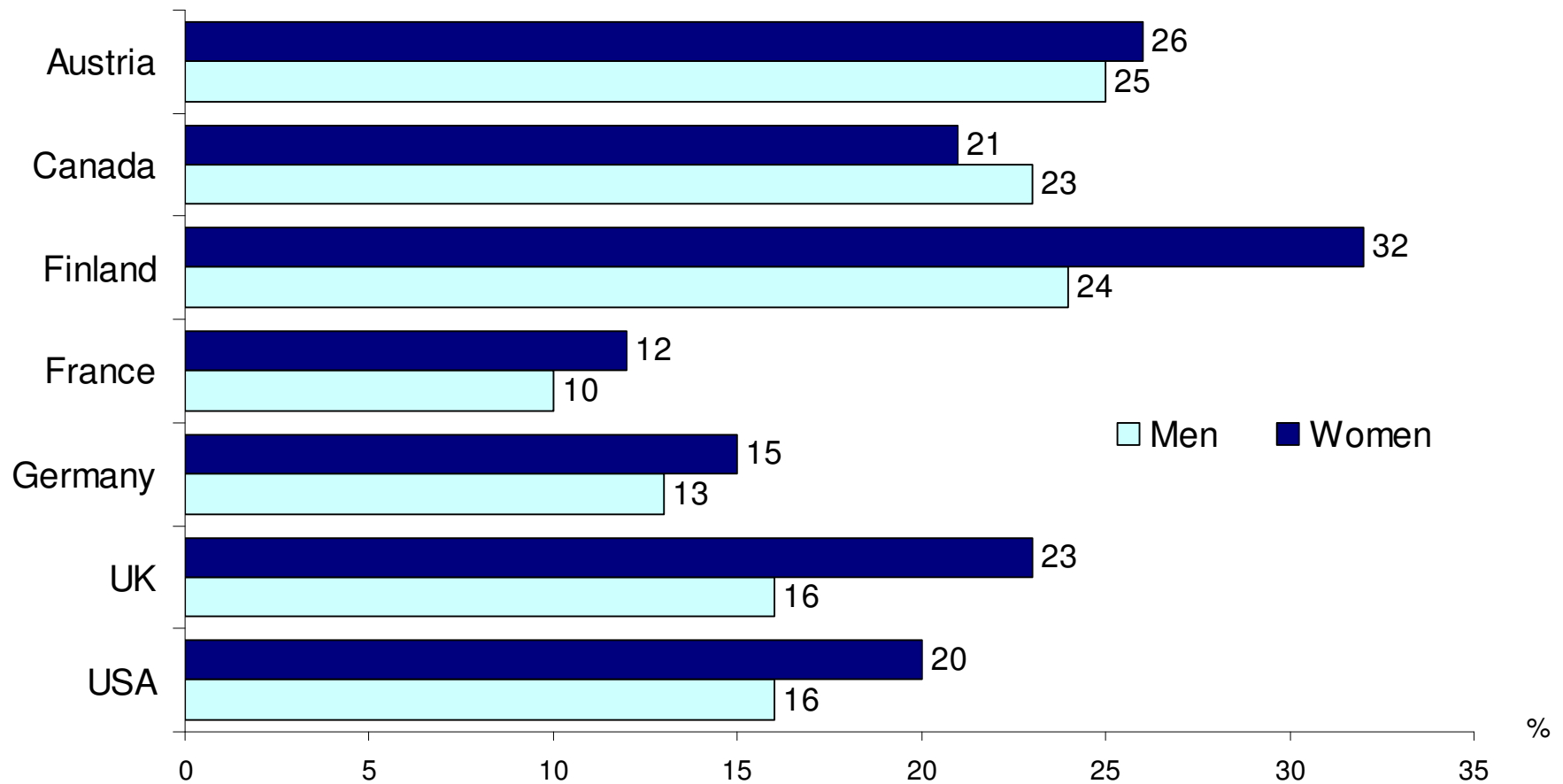
- Similar patterns in the European countries:
  - ➔ focus of HE institutions lies on their specific domain: the transmission of disciplinary knowledge, skills, and competencies
  - ➔ non-university providers can strengthen their competitive edge when economically oriented and application-related topics 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.

## Field of study of CE courses taken by Canadian graduates, by provider (multiple responses; percentages based on responses)



Source: AETS 1998

## Participation rates in UCE for graduates, by gender



Source: Graduates Surveys

Effect of parenthood on participation in UCE (direction and significance of logistic regression estimates, results for control variables not reported)

Country	Effect of children for		
	Entire sample	Females	Males
Austria	—	—	—
Canada	—	—	Ø
Finland	Ø	Ø	Ø
Germany	—	—	—
United States	Ø	—	Ø

— Participation rate of parents significantly lower than of childless respondents ( $p < 0.05$ )

Ø No difference in participation rates

Source: General Population Surveys



## Singular factors explaining differences between countries

### Finland:

- Market for CE is less competitive than in other countries; to a larger extent CE is provided by public institutions
- Low or even no fees for UCE
- Financial support/loans for UCE participants that cover fees and cost of living, tax allowances
- Entitlement to educational leave

## Singular factors explaining differences between countries

### Canada/U.S.:

- Longstanding tradition of opening the doors of higher education to the outside community
- CE is traditionally central to the mission of HE institutions and integral part of their organizational self-concept
- CE as an important revenue generator for HE institutions
- Strong demand orientation
- Flexible UCE provisions catered to the needs of adult learners

## Systematic explanations: the institutional embeddedness of UCE

- "... 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." (Mike Osborne)
- Most important set of basic conditions (institution) for continuing education: the education system as a whole

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

### Type I (“qualificational space”)

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

## The embeddedness of UCE 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: UCE is embedded in a **complex** institutional environment with different institutions counteracting or reinforcing each other with regard to their impact on UCE
- Other important institutions: learning culture and the welfare state

## Orientations towards lifelong learning, and incentives and obstacles to participation in education for the population aged 20–64 (percentages)

Selected items	Austria	Finland	France	Germany	UK
<i>Lifelong learning ...</i>					
is mainly for people who did not well in school	37	33	<b>45</b>	48	34
is mainly for middle-aged people	18	12	11	30	11
<i>Incentives for taking up studies or training again:</i>					
If my employer or the employment office required me to do so	15	13	12	23	15
Nothing could encourage me to take up studies or training again (spontaneous)	14	9	<b>17</b>	8	13
<i>Obstacles to engaging in education or training:</i>					
I would have to give up some or all of my free time or leisure activities	15	18	17	21	17
I would not want to go back to something that is like school	9	11	<b>20</b>	8	9

Source: Eurobarometer 59.0/2003

## Interacting influences on CE participation in France

- Favourable conditions:
  - ➔ character of the education system
  - ➔ entitlement to educational leave
  - ➔ financial support for CE participants
  - ➔ obligation for employers to invest in CE
- Unfavourable conditions:
  - ➔ less-developed learning culture/demotivated learners
  - ➔ highly competitive market for CE
  - ➔ concentration of HE institutions on initial education as a result of the large number of students
  - ➔ low importance of CE in the universities' self-perception
  - ➔ low degree of flexibility of UCE provisions
  - ➔ business world views HE institutions as inflexible organizations lacking in practical relevance



## The significance of the welfare state

### The Finnish “social-democratic” welfare model

- Policies are strongly oriented towards social equality, in particular gender equality
- Emphasis on full integration of women and mothers in the labour market
- The role model of the working mother (and of the student mother) is widely accepted in society and structurally supported by an extensive provision of public childcare facilities and family allowances
- comprehensive rights to education, which encompass generous financial support or tax allowances even for continuing education.

## Transferability

- UCE 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 corresponds to their specific profile and core competencies

## Lessons to be learned from other countries (examples)

- 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!