

## Abstract

Until Portugal joined the European Union (EU) in 1986, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank were the main agencies playing a guidance role on higher education policies. Henceforth, those institutions lost some influence, and the European dimension gained increasing prominence. This article discusses the role of those international organisations in the definition of priorities for Portuguese higher education policy in recent decades, and provides a general overview of the outside perceptions of the Portuguese situation as understood by these international organisations. In particular the article focuses on those interventions that promoted the influence of market mechanisms in the Portuguese higher education system by emphasising the need for higher education institutions (HEIs) to strive for increased economic responsiveness.