



University Autonomy in Europe

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HIGHER EDUCATION: AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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Structure of the presentation

- 
- **Autonomy**
 - Context and some perspectives
 - **EUA autonomy study**
 - Four elements of autonomy, trends and challenges
 - **Final thoughts**
 - Lessons learned?

Autonomy



CONTEXT AND SOME PERSPECTIVES

Changing context of HEIs



- HEIs have been vested with the task of economic & social change, and are expected to contribute to the competitiveness of nation-states as well as their local communities.
- At the same time, the relationship between the state and HEIs has been redefined
 - Strong institutional leadership & management, clear institutional mission and strengthened self-steering, including institutional and financial autonomy
 - Coupled with increased accountability
 - “supermarket steering model”: quasi-market mechanisms & self-regulation (Gornitzka & Maassen 2000)
 - Accountability: licensing, accreditation & audit procedures, league tables, assessment of learning outcomes, performance-based budgeting, external representatives in the governance structures.

Autonomy: two perspectives



- **Autonomy from:** - defined as absence of control/restrictions
 - State/region
 - Provider
 - Market
 - Political intrigues
 - ...
- **Autonomy to:** - defined as positive set of freedoms
 - Decide on procedures
 - Decide on substance
 - ...

Definitions of institutional autonomy



- **Two levels of autonomy (Salmi 2007)**
 - Between state and HEI
 - Between HEI and constitutive units
- **Procedural vs. substantial autonomy (Berdahl, 1990)**
 - Procedural: the power to determine the means to reach the goals set
 - Substantive: the power to set one's own goals and programmes
- **Conditional autonomy (Neave 1988)**
 - Only if fulfilment of national or establishment norms which are continually to be renegotiated in the light of public policy.
- **The freedom of institution to run its own affairs without direction or influence from any other level of government (Anderson & Johnson 1998)**

Elements of institutional autonomy

(Anderson & Johnson 1998)




- Staff and employment conditions, appointments, promotions and status of academic and administrative staff
- Issues related to admissions, progress and disciplining of students
- Teaching and curriculum issues, namely teaching methods, assessment and examinations, course content and choice of text books
- Academic standards, such as degree standards, quality audits and accreditations
- Research and publication, postgraduate supervision and teaching, priorities for research funding and freedom to publish
- Governance issues such as governing boards, academic boards and student associations
- Issues related to administration and finance, funding streams and management of institutional funds and accountability issues


EUA study on autonomy



**FOUR DIMENSIONS OF AUTONOMY
TRENDS AND CHALLENGES**







Methodology

- Online questionnaire to National Rectors' Conferences (2007)
- Series of telephone interviews + data from other projects (Winter 2008 – Spring 2009)
- Country profiles updated with information from other EUA work (EUDIS, Diversity study, IEP), reviewed by the NRCs (spring 2009)


UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY IN EUROPE I

EXPLORATORY STUDY


by Thomas Estermann & Terhi Nokkala

Available online at www.eua.be

EUA study on institutional autonomy



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- Extensive literature on the topic, but little updated information available
- Links between autonomy and institutional performance, efficiency and quality, etc.
 - Need for continuous monitoring, evidence-based information and comprehensive overview
- One of the EUA's priority areas
 - Analysis of institutional autonomy in 34 European HE systems
 - Aim: to provide institutional perspective to debate on higher education governance and autonomy

Challenges of the study



- Monitoring reforms in 34 systems (major but also minor changes may affect the degree of autonomy)
- Diversity of perceptions and terminologies associated with autonomy (for example: legal status & private HEIs)
- Evaluation & analysis of academic autonomy in relation to the implementation of the Bologna process
- Diversity of situations: need to simplify complex situations
- Limited resources available

Four dimensions of autonomy



Organisational autonomy

Academic and administrative structures

Governing bodies

Executive leadership

Financial autonomy

Funding framework

Public funding
Intermediary funding bodies
Financial reporting

Financial capacity

Reserves & surpluses
Students' contributions
Real estate

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment of staff

Civil servant status

Salaries

Academic autonomy

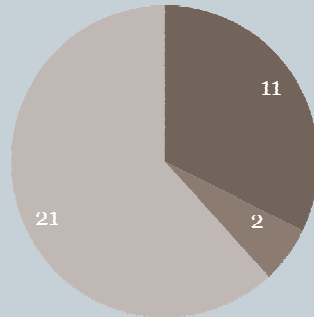
Institutional strategy

Academic profile

Degree programmes

Student admission

Governance structures



■ Unitary: BE fr, DK, FI, FR, GR, HU, NO, PL, RO, SE, TR

■ Varies between universities: PT, LV

■ Dual: AT, BE nl, BG, HR, CY, CZ, EE, DE, IS, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, RS, SK, SI, ES, CH, UK

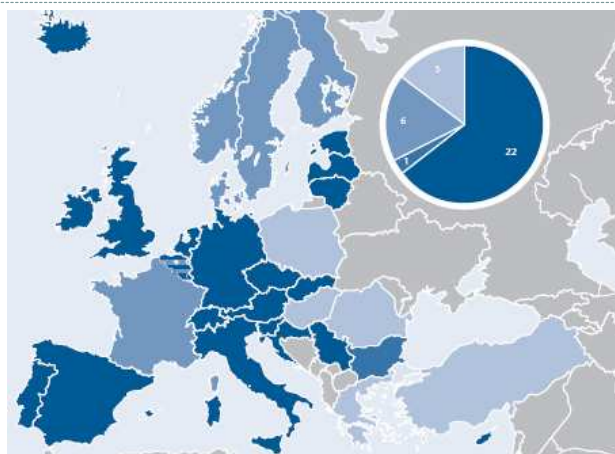
- Either dual or unitary structures
- In dual governance structures, power is divided between board/council and senate-type of bodies
- In some configurations, the second body has a mainly consultative function.

Dual governance with external members

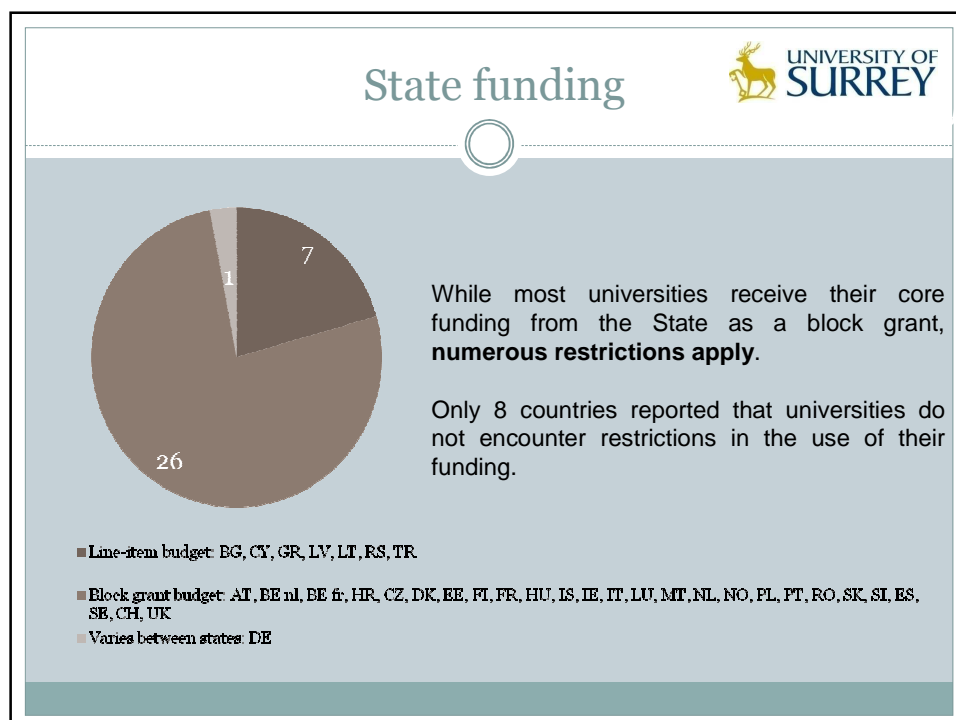
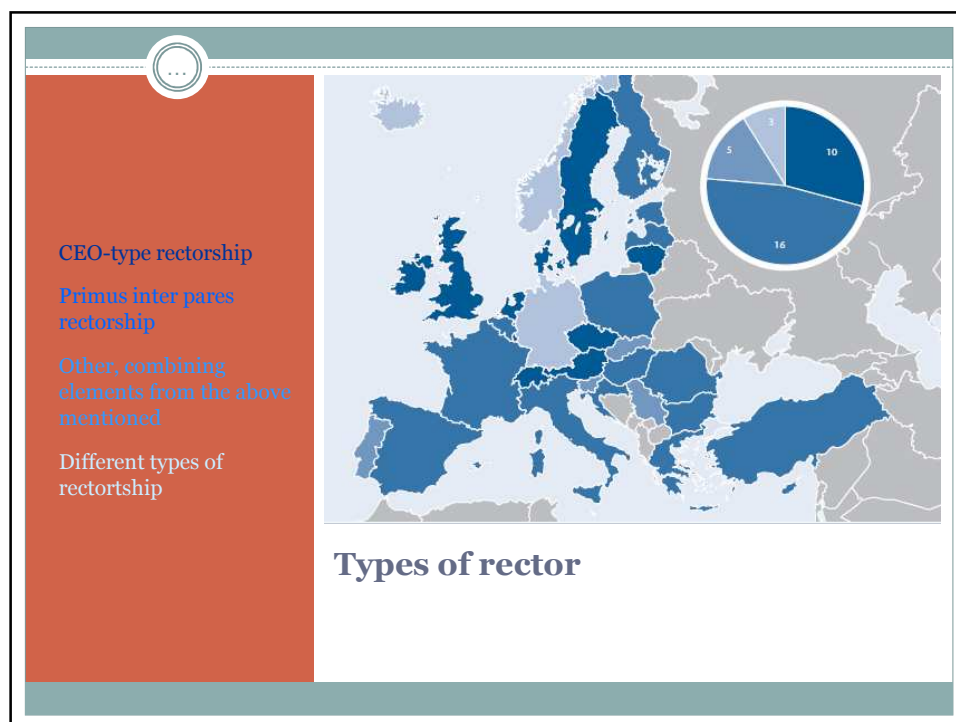
Dual governance without external members

Unitary governance with external members

Unitary governance without external members



External members in governing bodies



Financial capacity

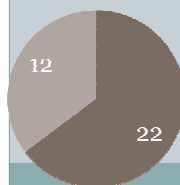
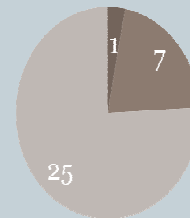


Surplus on state funding may be kept but common restrictions include: maximum percentage of total funding, limited re-allocation possibilities, required approval of public authorities, exclusion of surplus generated from earmarked funding.

■ Varies between states: DE

■ Universities may not keep surplus on state funding: CY, LV, LT, PT, RO, RS, TR

■ Universities may keep surplus on state funding: AT, BE nl, BE fr, BG, HR, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, GR, HU, IS, IE, IT, LU, NL, NO, PL, SK, SI, ES, SE, CH, UK

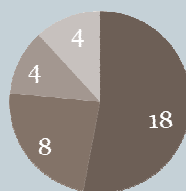


The university's borrowing capacity may equally be curtailed by the requirement to secure the public authorities' approval. Swedish HEIs can only borrow from the National Bank and only up to a limited amount.

■ Universities are able to borrow money: AT, BE nl, BE fr, BG, HR, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, GR, HU, IS, IE, IT, LV, LU, NL, NO, PL, RO, RS, SK, ES, SE, UK

■ Universities are not able to borrow money: BG, FI, DE, GR, HU, IS, LT, MT, PT, SI, CH, TR

Ownership of property



■ University: BE fr, HR, CY, CZ, EE, GR, IE, IT, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI, ES, UK

■ Public authorities: BE nl, BG, DK, HU, LT, LU, RS, TR

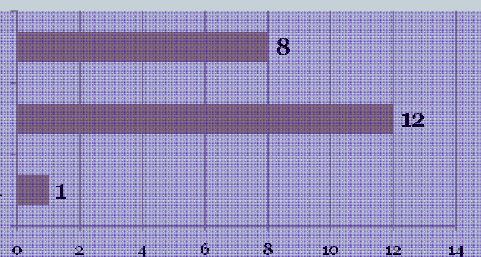
■ Public real estate companies: AT, FI, DE, SE

■ Variations: FR, IS, SK, CH

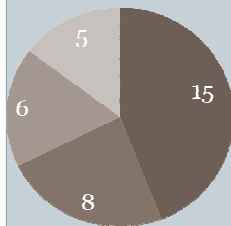
Universities may freely sell real estate they own: BE fr, CZ, EE, IT, NL, ES, CH, UK

Sale of real estate requires permission of public authorities: HR, CY, IS, IE, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI

Universities may not sell real estate they own: GR



Civil servant status

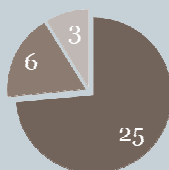


All members of university staff have civil servant status in 8 systems, predominantly in Central and Eastern Europe (along with BE and NO).

Elsewhere, civil servant status tends to be limited to specific categories of university staff (either being phased out, or related to the organisational hierarchy with civil servant status applied to senior academic positions).

- Staff members do not have civil servant status: BG, CY, CZ, EE, IS, IE, LV, MT, NL, PL, RO, RS, SK, SE, UK
- All staff members have civil servant status: BE nl, BE fr, HR, GR, HU, NO, SI, TR
- Some categories of staff have civil servant status: FI, FR, DE, IT, LT, ES
- Civil servant status being phased out: AT, DK, LU, PT, CH

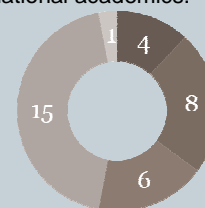
Salaries



- Determined by the university: AT, BE nl, BE fr, BG, CZ, DK, EE, FI, HU, IS, IE, IT, LV, LU, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SK, ES, SE, CH, UK
- Determined by the state: HR, CY, GR, MT, SI, TR
- Partially determined by state: FR, DE, LT

Salary levels tend to be strongly regulated. Universities may be able to determine the salary levels of some categories of staff, or set them within fixed salary bands defined by the state. There may be exceptions related to the recruitment of international academics.

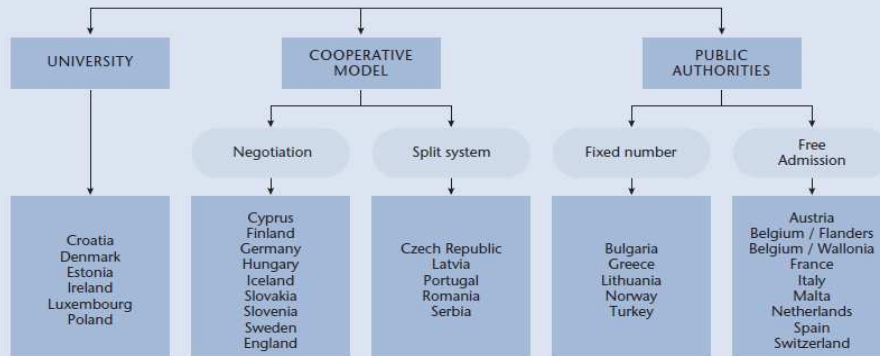
- Entirely decided by universities: BG, CZ, EE, NO
- Entirely decided by other body: BE nl, BE fr, CY, GR, IE, MT, SI, TR
- Universities may decide salaries of some categories only: AT, FR, DE, IT, PT, ES
- Universities may decide within certain limits: HR, DK, FI, HU, IS, LV, LT, LU, NL, PL, RO, RS, SK, SE, UK
- Varies between cantons: CH



Overall student numbers



The decision on the overall number of students is either taken by the university itself (in a minority of countries), by the relevant public authorities or shared by public authorities and universities.



Admission mechanisms



Basic qualification granting eligibility to apply to Higher Education
(usually Secondary Education qualification) – most often set in the law

Free admission

Austria
Belgium / Flanders
Belgium / Wallonia
France
Italy
Malta
Netherlands
Spain
Switzerland

Admission based on
grades in general exam

Cyprus
Denmark
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Latvia
Lithuania
Poland
Turkey

Admission criteria set by
universities

Bulgaria
Croatia
Czech Republic
Estonia
Finland
Iceland
Ireland
Luxembourg

Norway
Portugal
Romania
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Sweden
England

Perceptions: main challenges UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

Financial issues

- Low levels of public funding
- Short-term funding contracts
- Line-item budgets
- Lack of financial capacity
- Excessive reporting procedures

Student-related issues

- Challenge of free admission
- Inability to determine / introduce students' financial contributions

Institutional capacity

- Lack of support to implement governance reforms (autonomy & accountability)
- Limited management capacity when powerful sub-units

Relations with ministries

- Lack of long-term vision in steering of HE system
- Lack of experience with new steering instruments

Relations with state & society

- Long-term commitment to funding HEIs in economic crisis & low levels of funding
- Keeping politics & business interests at arms length

Trends UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

Organisational autonomy

- Balancing the role of the external members
- Shift towards a more CEO-type of rectorship
- Development of dual governance structures

Financial autonomy

- East/West divide in autonomy regarding tuition fees as well as in use of public funding
- Limited ability to borrow and raise money
- Limited ability to own real estate
- Heavy reporting procedures

Staffing autonomy

- Increased flexibility in staffing issues but little ability to determine salaries
- Civil servant status still widespread

Academic autonomy

- Determining academic profile & introduction of programmes
- Different models of student admissions

Next Steps



- Next phase: “**Autonomy scorecard**” project, October 2009 – September 2011
 - Objectives:
 - Enable **governments** to benchmark their progress on governance/autonomy reforms vis-à-vis other systems
 - Give **policymakers** feedback on their reforms from an institutional perspective.
 - Give **universities** a wider view on European trends in a globalised and competitive international higher education market.
- Consortium: EUA, University of Surrey, Universities Denmark, CRASP, HRK

Final thoughts

LESSONS LEARNED?

Final thoughts



- No single definition of autonomy ->dependent on the perceptions on the role of the government in HE, and thus vary considerably between European countries.
- Autonomy dependent on practices as well as regulations.
 - Formal vs operational autonomy
- Perceptions about the extent of autonomy dependent on the historical and social context, and point of reference.

Lessons learned?



- Several societal institutions and governance practices have an effect on autonomy
 - Legislative/regulative framework
 - Governance procedures
 - Financial steering
 - Political influence
 - Cultural perceptions and values
- Autonomy vs academic freedom?
 - Does more institutional autonomy equal more academic freedom?
- Autonomy as a negotiated space?
 - Conditional, within limits
 - No single right answer