

University Autonomy in Europe IV

Country Profiles (III)

Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium) - Croatia - Cyprus - England
- France - Lithuania - Portugal - Scotland - Slovakia - Slovenia - Spain -
Türkiye

April 2024



This publication is licensed under the Creative Commons [Attribution-NonCommercial](#) CC BY-NC

This information may be freely used and copied for non-commercial purposes, provided that the source is acknowledged (European University Association).

European University Association asbl

Avenue de l'Yser 24

Rue du Rhône 114

1040 Brussels

Case postale 3174

Belgium

1211 Geneva 3, Switzerland

+32 (0) 2 230 55 44

+41 22 552 02 96

www.eua.eu · info@eua.eu

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium)	7
Croatia	15
Cyprus	22
England	28
France	35
Lithuania	46
Portugal	52
Scotland	60
Slovakia	66
Slovenia	74
Spain	80
Türkiye	89

Introduction

The EUA Autonomy Scorecard offers a methodology to collect, compare and weight data on university autonomy. The Scorecard is based on more than 30 different core indicators in four key dimensions of autonomy. These include:

Organisational autonomy

covering academic and administrative structures, leadership and governance



Financial autonomy

covering the ability to raise funds, own buildings, borrow money and set tuition fees



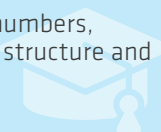
Staffing autonomy

including the ability to recruit independently, promote and develop academic and non-academic staff



Academic autonomy

including study fields, student numbers, student selection as well as the structure and content of degrees



The report *University Autonomy in Europe IV: The Scorecard 2023* details the scope and methodology of the Autonomy Scorecard.

Since its previous edition in 2017, the Autonomy Scorecard's data and results have been presented not only through a comparative report, but also in the form of dedicated profiles. This report features a selection of profiles updated with the information collected for the 2023 Autonomy Scorecard.

The profiles focus on individual higher education systems. They are referred to as 'country profiles' by way of simplification, although they may focus on sub-national systems (as is the case for Belgium, Germany or the United Kingdom).

The country profiles contain information that allows, on the one hand, a comparison of the 35 higher education systems and, on the other hand, to provide more details on each of the systems. The main focus is nevertheless on providing a comparative view rather than a detailed in-depth country study.

EUA developed the profiles on the basis of the data collected from its collective members (national rectors' conferences and university associations) throughout the process of updating the Autonomy Scorecard. This included a) a survey; b) follow-up interviews; and c) interview reports.

The 2023 Autonomy Scorecard comprises 35 higher education systems, as listed in the following table.

Code	Country/system	2011	2017	2023
AT	Austria	●	●	●
BE-fl	Flanders (Belgium)	●	●	●
BE-fr	Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium)		●	●
CH	Switzerland	●	●	●
CY	Cyprus	●		●
CZ	Czechia	●		●
DE-bb	Brandenburg (Germany)	●	●	●
DE-he	Hessen (Germany)	●	●	●
DE-nrw	North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany)	●	●	●
DK	Denmark	●	●	●
EE	Estonia	●	●	●
ES	Spain	●	●	●
FI	Finland	●	●	●
FR	France	●	●	●
GE	Georgia			●
GR	Greece	●		●
HR	Croatia		●	●
HU	Hungary	●	●	
IE	Ireland	●	●	●
IS	Iceland	●	●	●
IT	Italy	●	●	●
LT	Lithuania	●	●	●
LU	Luxembourg	●	●	●
LV	Latvia	●	●	●
NL	Netherlands	●	●	●
NO	Norway	●	●	●
PL	Poland	●	●	●
PT	Portugal	●	●	●
RO	Romania			●
RS	Serbia		●	●
SE	Sweden	●	●	●
SI	Slovenia		●	●
SK	Slovakia	●	●	●
TR	Türkiye	●		●
UK-en	England (UK)	●	●	●
UK-sc	Scotland (UK)			●

EUA will release the country profiles in batches from late 2023 to early 2024.

HOW TO READ THE PROFILES

Each profile includes several sections. These can be consulted separately, but together they depict the main characteristics of the system in question.

The first section describes the higher education landscape, providing information about the types of higher education institutions, student enrolment, and legal framework. It helps the reader understand how public universities, which are the core focus of the Autonomy Scorecard, feature in the broader higher education system.

The second section is a factsheet providing a snapshot overview of university autonomy in the considered system: score per dimension and over time, main changes recorded in the recent years.

The next four sections summarise the key features of the system per autonomy dimension: it dives into organisational autonomy (executive leadership, governance bodies, structures); financial autonomy (public funding allocation, financial management and tuition fees); staffing autonomy (recruitment, salaries, careers) and academic autonomy (student enrolment, academic programmes, external quality assurance).

The fifth section considers recent developments of relevance to university autonomy in the system, particularly when there have been changes posterior to the release of the 2023 report.

Finally, the sixth section outlines the views of the sector in relation to the university autonomy, sourced from EUA's collective members (national rectors' conferences and university associations).

Autonomy of public universities in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation

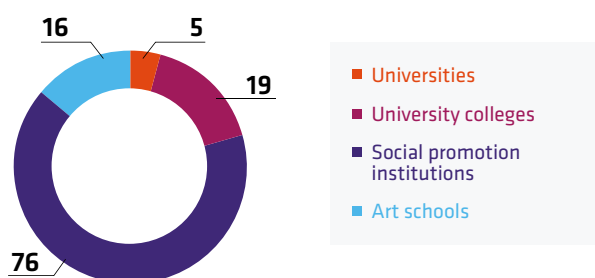
BELGIUM

Higher education landscape

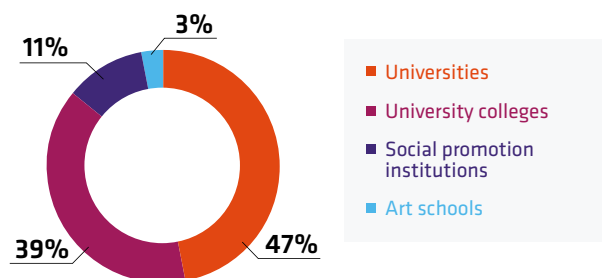
The three linguistic communities in Belgium are responsible for culture and education and have competences in the field of scientific research (fundamental and applied research).¹ The Wallonia-Brussels Federation (French-speaking Community of Belgium) exercises its competences in the Walloon provinces, with the exception of German-speaking communes, and in Brussels.

Higher education in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation is delivered by universities, university colleges (hautes écoles), schools of art, and 'social promotion' (social mobility) education providers or 'adult higher education institutions' (enrolling adult students usually on a part-time basis). The higher education system consists of, on the one hand, the professionally oriented higher education ('short-cycle' higher education) and, on the other hand, the academically oriented higher education ('long-type' higher education). Academic bachelor's and master's degrees are awarded by universities, but can also be awarded by university colleges, while doctorates are only awarded by universities. This profile focuses on the legal framework applying to universities.

Graph 1. Higher education providers in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation by type²



Graph 2. Number of students enrolled in higher education courses in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation per type of institution (2021/2022)³



¹ Next to the linguistic communities, Belgium's regions are responsible for research which is related to the economy, energy policy, public works, environment, transport and have other regional competencies. These include support for basic technological and industrial research and development, promotion of innovation and support of regional scientific institutes.

² Source: <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=28260&navi=4596>

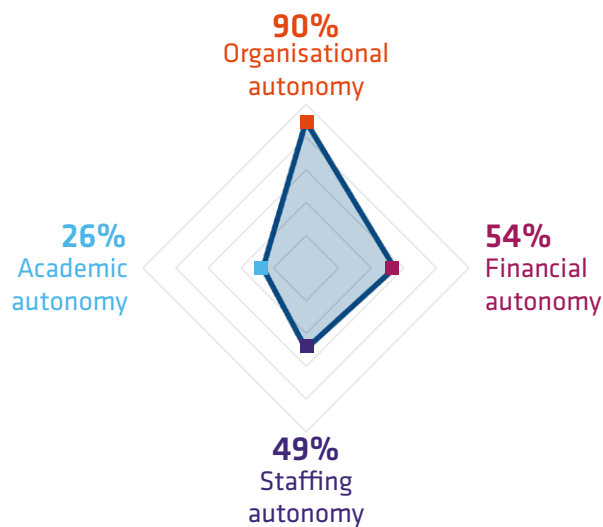
³ Data corresponding to the 2021/2022 academic year retrieved from the ARES website: <https://www.ares-ac.be/fr/statistiques>

At the start of the 2023 academic year, there were five universities for the French-speaking community, following the completed merger of the Université Saint-Louis and the Université catholique de Louvain (initiated in 2017). The government of the Federation is the organising power of the Université de Liège (ULiège) and the Université de Mons (UMONS). The three other universities – the Université de Namur (UNamur), the Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain) and the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) – are supervised by different organising authorities. ULiège, ULB and UCLouvain are comprehensive universities. UMONS and UNamur have historically developed a certain academic focus and offer a selection of disciplines. The present analysis refers to all five universities. Differences of legal status nevertheless generate clear-cut contrasts in organisational and staffing autonomy, and thus the scoring retained is that of the universities not governed by the Federation (UCLouvain, ULB and UNamur), since they form the largest group in terms of student enrolment (about two-thirds of the student population).

The legal framework applicable to universities governed by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation is based on the 1953 law organising university education offered by the state. The 1971 law on university financing and control established the foundations of the funding model. More recently, the 2013 ‘higher education landscape’ decree reshaped the system governance around academic clusters.

Factsheet

The data below corresponds to ‘free’ universities (institutions not governed by the Federation).



Autonomy dimension ⁴	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	90%	90% →	High	4
Financial autonomy	54%	54% →	Medium low	24
Staffing autonomy	49%	49% →	Medium low	27
Academic autonomy	26%	26% →	Low	35

4 Corrections were applied to the 2017 score for financial autonomy (+2 points: limited restrictions when selling real estate acquired with public support), staffing autonomy (+5 points: possibility to increase fixed salaries for staff and no obligation to open a higher position to promote staff) and academic autonomy (-6 points: limitations on the choice of language of instruction and minimum programme contents prescribed externally).

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including possible legal amendments, cannot be captured by the Scorecard, as they may fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring must not necessarily be interpreted as absence of system-level change.

Timeline

2013 'Higher education landscape' decree ('Décret définissant le paysage de l'enseignement supérieur et l'organisation académique des études'), reshaping the system governance and organisation of academic studies

2014 'Decree adapting the financing of higher education institutions to the new organisation of studies' ('Décret adaptant le financement des établissements d'enseignement supérieur à la nouvelle organisation des études')

2016 'Decree on the refinancing of higher education' ('Décret relatif au refinancement de l'enseignement supérieur')

2019 'Decree on initial teacher education' ('Décret définissant la formation initiale des enseignants')

2023 Université Saint-Louis merges with the Université catholique de Louvain ('Décret organisant la fusion entre l'Université catholique de Louvain et l'Université Saint-Louis - Bruxelles')

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

'Free' universities may change their statutes without requiring external validation, which is needed in the case of universities governed by the Federation. However, it must be considered that there is a form of ex-ante control, as the university board includes government commissioners and/or delegates and a representative of the minister for budget.

Executive leadership

The executive head (rector) is selected through an election process in which the different university communities have weighted votes (academic/scientific/administrative staff, students). Respective vote shares vary across the 'free' universities.

There is no validation of the process by public authorities in the case of 'free' universities. However, the successful candidate is officially nominated by the government in the case of universities governed by the Federation.

The law does not specify selection criteria for the position of rector in the case of 'free' universities, but candidates must be full professors of the institution for the universities governed by the Federation.

The rector's dismissal is an internal procedure; however, rectors of universities governed by the Federation have their mandates officially ended by the authorities.

The rector of a university governed by the Federation is elected for four years, with a mandate renewable once. The term of office is set in the university statutes in the other cases, where it is four or five years, with variations regarding renewability.

Governance bodies

Belgian French-speaking universities follow a unitary governance model where decision-making belongs to a board-type body.

The law regulates the composition of the board of universities governed by the Federation. It includes provisions on the number of the different staff categories, students and external representatives, bringing the total number of members to over 30. The rector and vice-rectors are also members of the board, and the rector is the president of the board. External members are drawn from business and industry and may also be local/regional politicians. The government decides and appoints external members to the board/council.

Since 2003, the law specifies a 20% minimum proportion of student representation in all governing bodies in all universities in the system.⁵ Trade union representation is also mandatory.

While the 'free' universities can decide on the composition of their board, and whether to include external members in the board, all universities in the system must include a government commissioner, a representative of the minister for budget and a representative of the trade unions. The main role of these delegates is to verify, *a posteriori*, the legal and financial compliance of decisions made by the boards.

'Free' universities may also have a president of the board who is an external member.

Structures

Both types of universities can autonomously decide on their academic structures. They are also authorised to create legal entities and have generated a variety of spin-off companies.

⁵ The same law makes it mandatory for all universities to have a student council.

Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Universities receive an annual block grant. Internal financial reallocation is limited by law, with possible exemptions. The main constraint, with no possible exemption, relates to the fact that staff salaries may not represent more than 80% of the budget.

Financial management

Universities may keep surpluses on public funding, the use of which may be earmarked by the external authority.

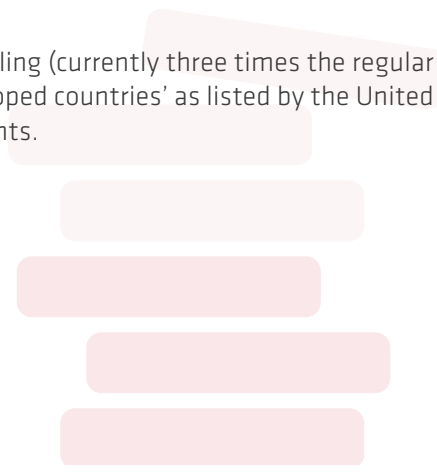
Borrowing requires an external authorisation in the case of universities governed by the Federation.

Universities can own buildings. They may buy and sell properties, with restrictions. When selling a building the acquisition of which was supported by public funds, the university must direct the product of the sale to real estate purposes. The universities of Mons and Liège need to secure the approval of the government for operations involving publicly funded real estate (as opposed to real estate acquired on own income). The law also grants universities pre-emption rights on properties that may be of interest to the institutions.

Tuition fees

Tuition fees are fixed by the public authorities (€835 for home and EU students, at all levels, for all universities).

Universities may set the fees for non-EU students under a certain ceiling (currently three times the regular fee), with exceptions, notably for students coming from 'Least developed countries' as listed by the United Nations, who benefit from the tuition fees applicable to home students.



Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Senior academic staff has civil servant-type status in all universities, while administrative staff may have civil servant or contractual status (in the 'free' universities, the administrative staff may have only contractual status).

A specificity of the two universities governed by the Federation is that they must obtain government approval on their annual recruitment plans.

Universities recruit administrative staff autonomously but must respect rules regarding maximum shares for certain academic and scientific staff categories (for example, max. 10 % of non-tenure positions in the academic staff, and min. 30 % of assistants).

Salaries

Salaries for senior academic and administrative staff (with civil servant and contractual status) are set according to a scale set by public authorities, although universities may decide to increase salaries on their own income.⁶

Careers

The capacity for universities to promote senior academic and administrative staff is limited by legislation applying to all institutions. There are limits set in law for the share of full professors over the total academic and scientific staff of the institution (20%). General promotion criteria are codified in the law for administrative staff with a civil servant status. The process generally requires opening the post at a higher level, but the decision on procedures is with the university. Promotions are also often limited by the budgetary 'envelope' set for promotions decided at the level of the institution.

Dismissals are strictly regulated for all staff who have civil servant-type status and may only result from cases of serious misconduct. The universities may, however, decide on the internal procedure. Regular labour law provisions apply to staff with contractual status and, for the three 'free' universities, also partially to the academic staff.



⁶ Universities may also, exceptionally, grant a salary supplement to the principal investigators (PIs) of a European Research Council project, for example.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Universities do not have the capacity to decide on overall student numbers in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, which is characterised by free admission.

Exceptions include medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine, which are subject to a numerus clausus, either through an entrance examination or after the first year of study. Engineering studies are subject to an entrance examination with no quota. The entrance examination to medicine and dentistry is organised by the 'Académie de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur' (ARES), the federation of all higher education institutions of the Belgian French-speaking community.

Special restrictions are applied to non-resident foreign students for medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy.

Admission criteria to bachelor's and master's degree programmes are set externally via decree. Nevertheless, universities have the possibility to define additional general admission criteria for bachelor's & master's degrees and so-called specialised master's degree programmes. Faculties have also the possibility to set specific criteria, depending on the programme.

Degree programmes

French-speaking Belgian universities have pre-determined academic responsibilities, in the sense that the list of study fields and courses they can offer is set by public authorities, as well as the territory on which they are allowed to operate in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

Universities seeking to open a new bachelor's or master's degree programme (not included in the list of approved programmes in appendix of the 2013 'higher education landscape' decree) must secure accreditation from ARES. The planned degree must be proposed to other institutions for collaboration. However, in certain cases, in particular to support innovative initiatives or initiatives linked to a team's particular skills, ARES may propose an exemption from this obligation to collaborate. ARES analyses the applications and makes a proposal to the government of the Federation. Its role is to guarantee the overall coherence of the academic offer in the system, avoiding redundancy or 'unjustified' specialisation.

Universities terminate degree programmes autonomously.

The law specifies that all bachelor's and master's degree programmes must be delivered in French. However, courses may be taught and assessed in another language for a maximum of one quarter of the credits at bachelor's degree level and for half of the credits at master's degree level. In addition, the same courses must also be available in French. However, some English-taught programmes have been granted derogations, with such derogations increasing in recent years.⁷

There is significant system-wide coordination on the design of the content of academic programmes at bachelor's degree level. The government of the Federation may set minimum common contents of bachelor's degree programmes on the proposal of ARES. The Federation consults with the deans' conference to this end.

External quality assurance

The 'Agence pour l'Evaluation de la Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur' (AEQES) is the quality assurance agency for higher education in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and carries out programme evaluation in clusters as well as institutional evaluation (every six years).

While it is possible for universities to select other EQAR-registered bodies, evaluation by AEQES remains mandatory. Two exceptions exist. Following an approval of their system of management of quality by AEQES, universities may choose another solution for the external evaluation of their programmes/clusters.⁸

⁷ More recently, from 2024, universities have been granted a derogation to organise a trilingual bachelor's degree programme in law (French/English/Dutch).

⁸ AEQES also recognises the CTI evaluation. CTI (Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur) is the France-based agency in charge of carrying out evaluation procedures that lead to the accreditation of the institutions to award the engineering degree.

Recent developments

Funding trends

The funding model is based on the relative number of 'fundable' students. The system of the 'closed envelope' generates competition to attract students at the expense of other universities. A partial funding upgrade in 2020 did not reverse the continued decline of funding per student aggravated by demographic pressure. The growth in student numbers at universities is significant, going from roughly 91,000 students in 2014/2015 to 119,000 in 2021/2022 (+29%).

The sector expects a new decree on research financing to be adopted in the course of 2024. The text should consolidate all provisions related to research financing in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

Views from the sector

The regulatory framework continues to constrain university autonomy. While there has been no legal change in recent years, the consolidation of the higher education ecosystem within the Federation has translated into lesser university autonomy in practice. The will of the government to enhance consistency in its interactions with the different higher education providers resulted in increased scrutiny of university activities. For public policy purposes, universities are now perceived as one type of higher education stakeholders, together with other actors such as university colleges (hautes écoles), art schools, social promotion institutions, which are all historically strongly regulated. This consolidation is reflected in the creation of ARES, a body set up by the 2013 decree to act as a federation of higher education providers on the territory of the Federation. The role of ARES has grown over the years, and the body now assesses applications to open new programmes and prescribes minimum content of bachelor's degree programmes.

Among other phenomena accentuating this pressure is the greater coordination among government commissioners and delegates, who sit in the university board, resulting in increasing attempts to homogenise the rules.

Broadly speaking, universities are increasingly considered as part of a wider group of providers, which leads to less recognition of their specificities. The 'Conseil des rectrices et recteurs' (CRef), as the representative body of universities, is the sole forum for university leadership to formally interact, while the structures available within ARES include other stakeholders of higher education. CRef has also in recent years further developed its collaboration with the 'Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad' (VLIR), its Flemish counterpart, in order to gain critical mass in discussions related to federal matters.

However, with the exception of a few legal texts mentioning it, CRef is still not officially recognised by the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and is therefore not officially consulted. In its [memorandum](#) for the 2024 elections, CRef specifically asked to be designated as an interlocutor of the public authorities in any reform project affecting university education in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

Autonomy of public universities in Croatia

Higher education landscape

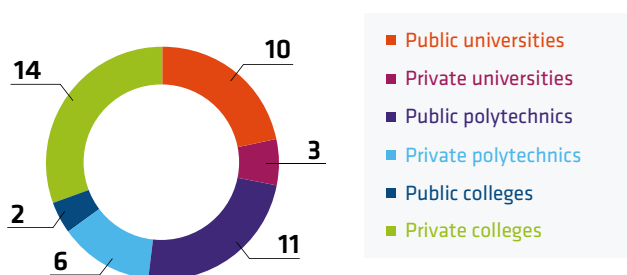
Croatian higher education is composed of universities, polytechnics, and colleges that can operate as either public or private entities. While polytechnics and colleges outnumber universities, the latter accommodate the largest share of the student population. Currently, the public university sector operates under a 9+1 model, which includes nine traditional public universities and one Catholic university. The Catholic university is supervised by the Catholic church but receives half of its funding from public sources.

All types of institutions are subject to the new Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity, adopted in 2022, which replaces the previous act dating from 2003.

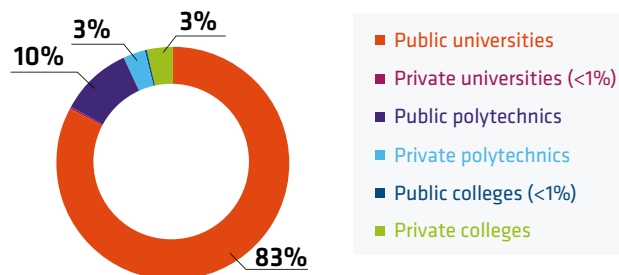
Private institutions are less regulated and benefit from greater autonomy in financial and staffing matters.

The four largest universities operate as non-integrated institutions, where each faculty functions as a separate legal entity with significant autonomy in financial and staffing responsibilities. The other five integrated universities are much smaller in scale, typically enrolling less than 5,000 students.

Graph 1. Higher education institutions in Croatia¹



Graph 2. Distribution of the student population in Croatia²

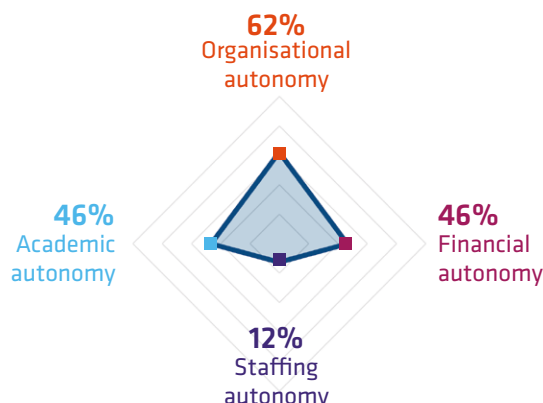


The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

¹ Data for 2021/2022 (Agency for Science and Higher Education).

² Data for 2021/2022 provided by the Croatian Rectors' Conference. The Catholic University of Croatia (HKS) is included under the public universities.

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension ³	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	62%	62% →	Medium high	20
Financial autonomy	46%	46% →	Medium low	26
Staffing autonomy	37%	12% ↘	Low	35
Academic autonomy	46%	46% →	Medium low	29

All collected data for Croatia, featuring in *University Autonomy in Europe IV: the Scorecard 2023* refer to the legislation that was in force until October 22, 2022, when the new Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity (NN 119/22) came into effect. The present document seeks to take account of changes introduced by the new law in a qualitative manner only. As such, it does not include any re-evaluation of the scores.

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including possible legal amendments, cannot be captured by the Scorecard, as they may fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring must not necessarily be interpreted as absence of system-level change.

Timeline

2016	External authorisation needed to open new positions
2022	Entry into force of the Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity (NN119/22) with changes in organisational matters Entry into force of the Act on Recognition and Assessment of Foreign Educational Qualifications (NN69/22)
2023	Entry into force of the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Science (NN 151/22) introducing new programme accreditation procedures

³ A significant number of corrections have been implemented in the financial, staffing, and academic dimensions, leading to changes in the scoring. This concerns the following indicators: capacity to keep surplus on public funding, tuition fees, introduction of new programmes at bachelor's and master's degree levels, and dismissal of senior academic staff.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

The university's statutes, and changes thereof, do not require external validation.

Executive leadership

The selection of the executive head (rector) is an internal process, as the senate elects the rector. The university statutes provide for the detailed procedure. Universities may thus decide on the procedure preceding the senate's vote. For instance, the University of Rijeka has revised its statutes so that the community pre-elects two candidates, and then the senate makes the final selection. Whereas, at the University of Zagreb, the candidate must be supported by at least three faculties, after which the senate decides.

The law requires the candidate for the rector position to have an academic position. The rector serves a fixed four-year term, which can be renewed once.

The 2003 law leaves the rector's dismissal procedure up to the university statutes. However, the 2022 law now sets the framework for the dismissal of the rector, which is initiated at the proposal of the university council or one third of the members of the senate in accordance with the university's statutes. The decision is taken by a vote in the senate requiring the majority of all members.

Governance bodies

Croatian universities have a dual asymmetric governance model. The main decision-making power is vested in the senate, while the council's role is limited to accountability to the parliament and starting the process to dismiss the rector.

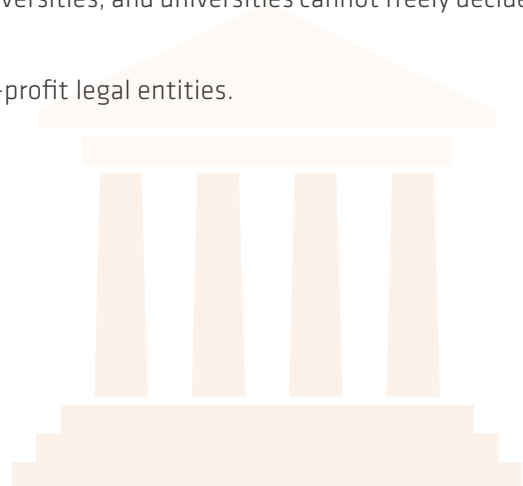
The 2003 law regulated some aspects of the composition of the senate, including thresholds for academic staff (60%) and students (15%). The 2022 law removes these provisions but stipulates that student representatives make up 10% of the senate.

The council comprises either six or 12 members as per the 2003 law. The new law changes this to one president and four, six or eight members. Members are appointed for six years. The university senate appoints half of the members and the other half are selected by the founder (public authorities). Together, the members elect a president on the basis of a public call (contrary to previous provisions whereby the members would elect the president among themselves).

Structures

The law specifies the faculties and academic structures of universities, and universities cannot freely decide on this matter.

Croatian universities are free to create for-profit and not-for-profit legal entities.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Universities receive annual public grants, with limited possibilities for strategic internal allocation. 80% of the funding is designated for salary payments, leaving the rest earmarked for operating costs. In addition to core funding, universities can enter into performance agreement contracts with the ministry. Funding connected to the agreement may be allocated more flexibly by universities, although this share is relatively minor compared to core funding. By way of example, the additional funding channelled through the performance agreements for the University of Rijeka amounts to 3-5% of the total funding.

Moreover, public funding allocation is largely based on student numbers, of which a recent decline has been a significant concern.

Financial management

Regulations in place do not allow Croatian universities to keep a surplus on public funding. In practice, however, it has been possible to re-invest such funds with the relevant justifications and an investment plan.

Universities may borrow money from financial markets with the approval of an external authority.

In Croatia, property ownership differs across the sector. Universities, faculties, the state or local public authorities may all own the university facilities.

Tuition fees

The state subsidises tuition fees for full-time students of programmes taught in the Croatian language for their first year of study. Students must maintain satisfactory performance and accumulate ECTS credits to continue receiving the state subsidy. Universities decide on fees for study programmes delivered in a foreign language and for doctoral programmes regardless of the language of instruction.

Demographic trends have put significant pressure on the higher education system. While the number of researchers increased and universities upgraded their infrastructure to adapt to previously rising numbers of incoming students, more recent negative demographic trends have resulted in a decline of the student population (15,000 students less over five years). This also means that full-time fee-paying students have essentially disappeared, as all students can now be accommodated in state-funded places.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Senior academic and administrative staff have civil servant status, markedly limiting the autonomy of Croatian universities in staffing matters. However, universities may recruit senior staff using alternative funding sources, such as project funds, although this practice remains rare.

The recruitment of some senior academic staff is constrained via the regulation of the number of posts and the requirement to have appointments confirmed by an external authority. For some senior administrative staff, only the number of posts is regulated.

Salaries

Due to their civil servant status, salaries for all senior academic and administrative staff are set externally.

Careers

Dismissals of both senior academic and administrative staff are strictly regulated because of their civil servant status.

Promotions for both categories are only possible if a higher-level post is available.

Since 2016, universities have been required to obtain approval from the ministry to open new positions. Furthermore, the pandemic has significantly impacted staffing matters, leaving universities with virtually no autonomy. They now require external approval for promotions, as well as for adaptations related to maternity leave, replacements, and other related issues.



Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Universities are autonomous to define student numbers per study programmes, provided that the programmes are accredited and the quotas align with the programme's capacity, while respecting the student-to-staff ratio of 1/30.

Admission to the Croatian higher education system is centralised and co-regulated at bachelor's and master's degree levels. Universities can develop admission criteria in addition to the student's results in the state examination. Students are allocated to the institutions based on their preferences and their ranking per study programme in the state examination, taking into account the additional admission criteria. This system governs the allocation of both state-funded and fee-paying student places.

Degree programmes

Degree programmes, irrespective of the source of funding, must undergo accreditation to be introduced, and every programme must be re-accredited every five years. Universities can terminate programmes independently.

Universities have the freedom to design the content of their degree programmes. They can also choose the language of instruction, but public funding is not available for foreign-language programmes.

External quality assurance

Currently, there are two types of mandatory evaluation in place: a programme-based and institutional evaluation, both of which recur every five years. Universities cannot choose the quality assurance provider. The national Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) is responsible for carrying out initial accreditation, re-accreditation, thematic evaluations and external quality assurance audits of universities. The agency also conducts programme accreditation and thematic evaluation as well as re-accreditation of doctoral programmes.

Recent developments

The new law brought about several changes, including those to the composition of governing bodies described above. The law also established the basis for a renewed 'results-based' funding framework.

The so-called 'programme contract' is concluded between the ministry and the university for four years. It consists of a basic budget component, a development budget component (max. 20% of the basic budget component) and an executive budget component (max. 10% of the basic budget component). The latter part is based on the achievement of individually set goals and indicators set in the contract.

In 2023, the Act on the Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Science entered into force, introducing changes to accreditation procedures. The Agency for Science and Higher Education now autonomously grants licenses for new study programmes. The law reduces the role of universities in this process, which is now mostly carried out between the faculties and ASHE.

Views from the sector

The discussions around the reform which led to the 2022 law triggered a debate on trust, quality and accountability. At the time of writing, it was difficult to foresee all the implications that the new law will have on the sector, especially on university autonomy and functioning of public universities in general. The new law increases the autonomy of faculties which might lead to the structural weakening of large universities. It is also possible that certain provisions of the new law might present considerable challenges for universities in defining their development policies in light of pre-existing and significant underfunding.

Autonomy of public universities in Cyprus

Higher education landscape

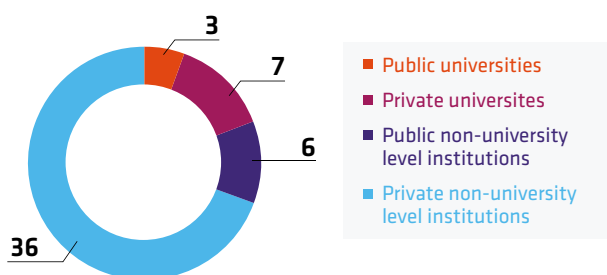
The Cypriot higher education system includes universities and non-university level institutions, whether public or private. There are three state universities, all founded by law (the University of Cyprus, 1989; the Open University of Cyprus, 2002; and Cyprus University of Technology, 2003).

The private institutions accommodate a larger share of students than the public ones.

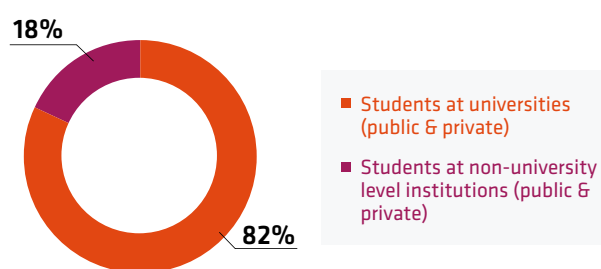
While the University of Cyprus and Cyprus University of Technology operate under individual laws, the latter may adopt provisions applying to the former in case of legal void. The Open University of Cyprus operates under distinct regulations, as only this university offers distance learning.

Public institutions are bound by stringent legislation, imposing significant constraints on organisational, financial and staffing matters. Both public and private institutions adhere to identical quality assurance standards and mechanisms. Private institutions, however, operate under a general framework and typically benefit from a high degree of autonomy in most areas, except for the academic dimension.

Graph 1. Higher education sector in Cyprus¹



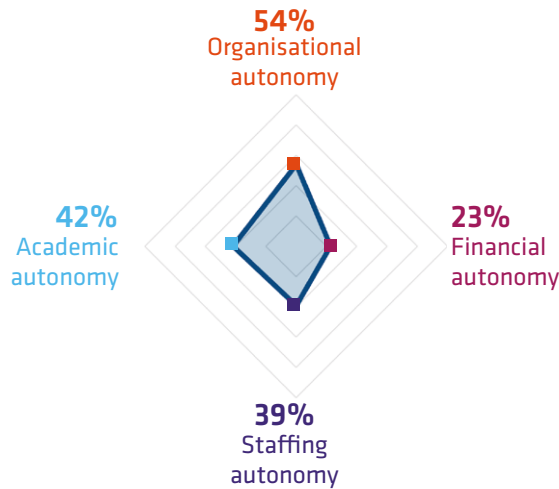
Graph 2. Distribution of student population in Cyprus



The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

¹ The data presented in Graph. 1 is provided by the Cyprus Rectors' Conference, covering the 2021/2022 academic year. Conversely, the data in Graph. 2 is derived from the ETER database and corresponds to the 2020 academic year.

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension ²	2010	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	54%	54% →	Medium low	30
Financial autonomy	23%	23% →	Low	35
Staffing autonomy	39%	39% →	Low	32
Academic autonomy	42%	42% →	Medium low	32

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including possible legal amendments, cannot be captured by the Scorecard, as they may fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring must not necessarily be interpreted as absence of system-level change.

Timeline

2015 Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws, 2015 and 2016 (notably establishing the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education)

2021 Introduction of a three-year strategic plan, leading notably to changes in financial reporting

² Cyprus did not participate in the second release of the Autonomy Scorecard (2017). The reference period for comparison is therefore 2010 to 2022.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Changes to university statutes require the validation of various public authorities. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, and the Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus must review the proposed changes before the House of Representatives can approve the statutes.

Executive leadership

The executive head (rector), as well as vice-rectors, are elected by an electoral body composed of representatives of academic staff, permanent administrative staff, and students. Candidates for the position of rector must be tenured full professors at the university.

The rector serves a four-year term, renewable once. Dismissing the rector is only possible on grounds of breaching the law; misconduct is dealt with through disciplinary measures, as outlined in the statutes.

Governance bodies

The governance of Cypriot universities is organised as a dual traditional model. The board oversees strategic, financial, and staffing matters, while the senate focuses on academic affairs. The law for each university specifies the competences, composition, and size of these bodies.

As an example, at Cyprus University of Technology, the board comprises the rector and vice-rectors, five academic members, seven external members appointed by the Council of Ministers, three external members appointed by the university senate, one student, one administrative staff member, and the head of administration (who participates without voting rights).

The rector and vice-rectors are also ex-officio members of the senate, which includes deans, two elected and two integrated representatives of the teaching staff of each faculty, as well as proportional representation of students. The head of administration and the library director participate without voting rights. The mandate of the governing bodies differs across the sector.

In a recent change, the president and vice-president of the council (board-type body) must now be selected from external members. They are appointed by the Council of Ministers after consultation of the university senate.

Structures

The establishment of a new faculty is a politically sensitive decision requiring approval from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance. Once a decision is made, the respective university law must be amended and approved by the House of Representatives.

Universities are not allowed to create for-profit entities, limiting entrepreneurial activities within the sector.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Cypriot universities are allocated an annual line-item budget for teaching, research, and operational costs, leaving no internal funding allocation capacity to the institutions.

Financial management

Universities may not retain surplus on public funding. However, they have flexibility in borrowing funds from local and EU banks and in selling buildings, provided they obtain approval from external authorities. The state may transfer property ownership to the institutions (allowing them to sell real estate), but this is not common practice.

Tuition fees

The ministry sets tuition fees, regardless of the degree level and the student's citizenship. However, universities have some flexibility in setting fees for joint master's degree programmes.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

University staff hold civil servant status. While the recruitment process is considered an internal matter, the number of positions is regulated by the ministry. This is because staff salaries represent a significant portion of the budget, necessitating approval from the Ministry of Finance.

If a position becomes available, the university sets up an evaluation committee. This committee may conduct a written examination in the case of administrative staff recruitment, or an interview, for academic and administrative staff recruitment. The board makes the final decision.

Salaries

External authorities set the salaries of civil servants, including university senior academic and administrative staff.

Careers

Disciplinary regulations for academic and administrative staff differ and are stipulated by law.

Promotion procedures also differ significantly. Academic staff must undergo assessment by an evaluation committee, with specific regulations governing committee composition and assessment criteria outlined in the law. In contrast, administrative staff may be considered for promotion if a vacant position arises, for instance, due to retirement.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Universities negotiate the number of students with the ministry, from which final approval is necessary.

Admission at bachelor's degree level is externally regulated through centralised exams whereas admission at master's degree level is fully in the hands of universities.

Degree programmes

Introducing a bachelor's degree programme requires approval from the ministry and subsequent accreditation by the quality assurance agency. Master's and doctoral degree programmes do not require ministry approval but must still undergo accreditation before being introduced.

Universities may only provide bachelor's degree programmes in the national languages (Greek and Turkish). However, at master's degree level, they can opt for foreign languages only if the programme is also available in one of the national languages.

Universities can freely determine the content of degree programmes and courses. They also have the authority to terminate programmes independently.

External quality assurance

The quality assurance system entails three types of mandatory accreditation: institutional, departmental, and programme-specific, occurring every five years. Programme accreditation is compulsory for new introductions.

The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education was established in 2015 (replacing several bodies) and holds exclusive authority to accredit both institutions and programmes. Therefore, universities do not have a choice in this regard. They may however choose EQAR-registered agencies for evaluation purposes (but not for accreditation), with prior consent of the national agency.



Recent developments

In 2021, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance introduced a three-year strategic plan for universities aiming to streamline budget allocation. This plan mandates that universities submit detailed reports on costs, projected income, and future-oriented strategies. These must be annexed to the draft budget submitted to the ministry.

The current practice of Cypriot universities receiving a line-item budget while being restricted from engaging in entrepreneurial activities does not incentivise strategic planning. However, the government aims to foster strategic thinking within universities. The sector views this requirement as a potential transition towards a new funding model.

Views from the sector

The sector found it very important to modernise the legal framework for the operation of public universities and align it with modern European trends in higher education. The laws and regulations under which they currently operate need substantial amendments. For example, public universities do not have the opportunity to offer postgraduate programmes in English.

Cyprus, like other EU countries, is called upon to meet the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution of the 21st century. These challenges include:

- ◆ the rapid evolution of technology and the growing need for digital skills;
- ◆ the need for specialisation in new technologies and sectors of the economy, such as green, blue and circular economy;
- ◆ the continuous renewal of employees' knowledge and skills in order to meet the needs of the labour market.

Through its National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2021-2027, Cyprus aspires to provide a long-term strategic framework for the development of a knowledge society in which all citizens will have learning opportunities.

Universities are called upon to play a leading role in the implementation of the skills development strategy. Universities can contribute to meeting the challenges of modern times in the following ways:

- ◆ providing curricula that meet the needs of the labour market;
- ◆ boosting research and innovation in areas such as the digital and green economy;
- ◆ providing opportunities for lifelong learning and professional development;
- ◆ development of new skills in the same field (upskilling) and/or learning completely new skills for a different role or industry (reskilling) of the workforce.

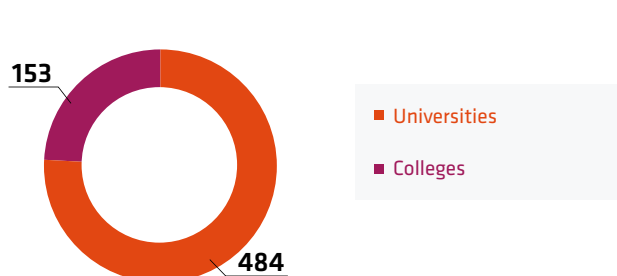
Autonomy of public universities in England

Higher education landscape

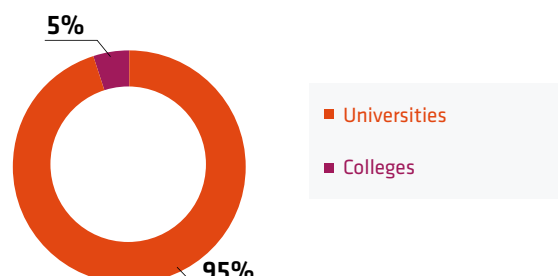
Universities in the United Kingdom operate within both a 'reserved' (UK-wide) and 'devolved' (specific to England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) policy and funding setting. The present profile relates to developments in England and not across the whole of the United Kingdom.

The English higher education system is mainly composed of universities. Adult education in England also includes colleges ('further education institutions') for students aged 16 or over who are not at the university level. However, many colleges also provide higher education courses.

Graph 1. Number of higher education providers in England by type



Graph 2. Number of higher education students in England per type of institution (2021/2022)

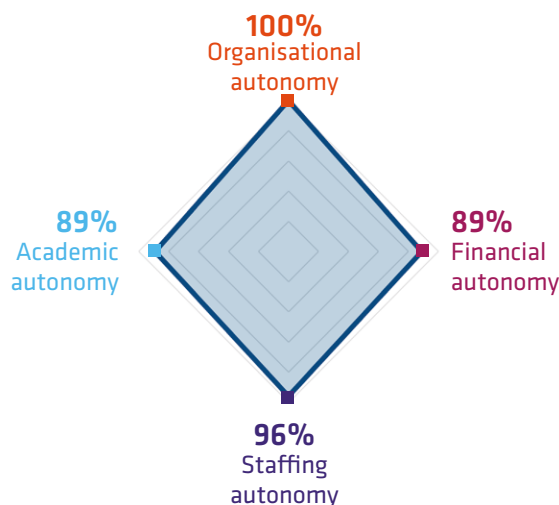


The system maintains a formal distinction between universities established before and after 1992; most pre-1992 universities were established through royal charters whereas newer, post-1992 universities and higher education institutions operate under their own 'Instrument and Articles of Government', which stipulate how institutional governance and decision-making processes should operate.¹ The Office for Students (OfS, formerly Higher Education Funding Council for England) oversees the registration of higher education institutions. This registration grants a range of rights, including access to the student support system, eligibility for public funding, the ability to recruit international students, and the use of university title. Furthermore, the registered institutions may have different statuses, depending on the category in which they are registered. The OfS categorises institutions into two types: those that both deliver programmes and have degree awarding powers and those that deliver provision validated or franchised from institutions with degree awarding powers.

While higher education institutions are predominantly regulated by the OfS, other regulatory frameworks may apply depending on the type of programme (e.g. apprenticeships).

¹ This is equivalent to statutes, which are approved by the Privy Council, a formal body of advisers that is part of the government.

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	100%	100% →	100% →	High	1
Financial autonomy	89%	89% →	89% →	High	2
Staffing autonomy	96%	96% →	96% →	High	4
Academic autonomy	83%	89% ↗	89% →	High	3

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including possible legal amendments, cannot be captured by the Scorecard, as they may fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring must not necessarily be interpreted as absence of system-level change.

Timeline

- 2016** Referendum on the United Kingdom’s European Union membership

- 2017** New Higher Education and Research Act

- 2018** The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) is replaced by the Office for Students (OfS) and the different Research Councils by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)

- 2020** The UK ceases to be an EU member state

- 2023** The OfS takes over the role of designated quality body previously carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Universities are free to approve and change statutes. However, if universities markedly change their statutes, they are obliged to report to the regulator, which will assess the alignment of changes with the baseline agreements. The Privy Council approves changes to the main regulations of post-1992 institutions.

Executive leadership

The executive heads of English universities are appointed by their governing bodies with no validation by an external authority. There are no selection criteria for executive heads stated in the law. English universities therefore may recruit executive heads from other sectors as well as from abroad. Universities decide freely on the terms and procedures for dismissal and set the term of office of their executive head.

Governance bodies

English universities typically have dual governance structures with a board/council-type body responsible for all strategic institutional matters and a senate-type body responsible for academic governance.

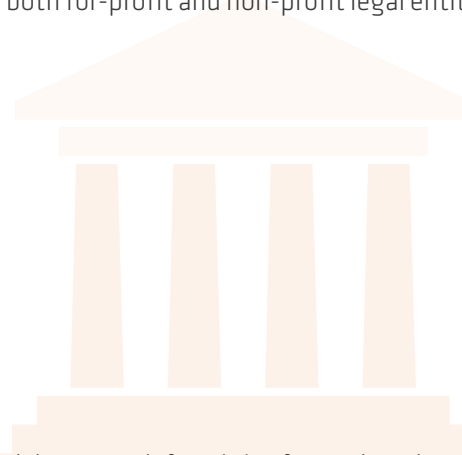
Universities in England can decide on their governance structures, as there are no framing legal provisions. They are free to include external members in their governance bodies (and do so), which is an exception among the systems covered by the Autonomy Scorecard. The Higher Education Code of Governance (the Code), produced by the Committee of University Chairs, provides a framework for effective university governance. The code identifies key values and elements that form effective governance and therefore differs from external regulation/legislation.

The Code recommends that the governing bodies include members who represent diverse views, attitudes, and experiences.² It also states that some constitutional documents specify governing bodies must include staff and student members. The Code suggests that the university establishes a nominations committee to advise on the appointment of members.

Compliance with the Code of Governance is considered by the OfS, in its regulation of higher education providers, as part of its management and governance conditions. The Code underwent amendments in 2020. Failure to comply with the OfS conditions may result in various sanctions, ranging from monetary fines to registration suspension, or even deregistration, depending on the severity of non-compliance. While the Code is per se non-compulsory, universities are still bound to follow it as it is part of the regulation of higher education.

Structures

Universities can freely decide on academic structures and create both for-profit and non-profit legal entities.



² In its previous (2018) version, the Code recommended that the main governing body be composed of a majority of external members.

Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

English universities in the OfS approved (fee cap) category³ receive contributions to funding for research, teaching of high-cost subjects, student access and success, and capital funding on an annual block basis with no restrictions on the internal allocation of funding.⁴

Financial management

English universities can keep any surpluses on public funding without restrictions and borrow money with the approval of an external authority. They can own and sell their buildings without restrictions.

Tuition fees

Universities can set the level of tuition fees for national (home and UK) students enrolling into bachelor's degree programmes ('undergraduate programmes') under a ceiling set by government and depending on their OfS registration category (£9,250 in 2023 for Approved Fee Cap providers).⁵ Universities are free to set the level of tuition fees for national students at master's and doctoral degree levels and for international students at all degree levels. Since the United Kingdom has ceased to be an EU member state, EU students studying in England pay non-regulated international student fees.

³ For more information: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/registration-with-the-ofs-a-guide/>

⁴ Subject to that funding being used for the activities and facilities eligible for funding under Section 39(1) of the Higher Education and Research Act and unless the funding has been earmarked.

⁵ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/access-and-participation-plans/fee-limits/>

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Universities freely recruit senior academic and administrative staff.

Salaries

Universities adhere to a nationally agreed pay scale for the strong majority of staff, with each institution able to apply specific pay policies in the context of that scale. Universities determine the salaries for their senior staff with these governed by a remuneration committee of the governing body.

Careers

There are no sector-specific regulations concerning the dismissal of either senior academic or administrative staff, and national labour market regulations apply. Universities can freely decide on promotions.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

English universities are autonomous to decide on the number of students they enrol and set admission criteria both at bachelor's ('undergraduate') and master's degree levels. Caps on student numbers were lifted in 2015, although this question continues to feature in the debate (with regard to international students, certain types of programmes, etc).

Degree programmes

English universities can introduce new programmes at all levels without prior accreditation and can terminate programmes independently.

Universities can choose the language of instruction for all programmes.

External quality assurance

Universities must undergo institutional quality assurance, which has historically been carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The agency works across the four nations of the UK. In England, alongside its wider work for the sector, it had since 2018 had a separate and discrete role as the 'designated quality body', providing assessments to the Office for Students. Since April 2023, the OfS has taken over the designated quality body role and undertakes its quality assessment functions.

The OfS has adopted a principles-led quality assurance approach to regulation, whereby the outcomes for students have become the focal point. The requirements also urge the universities to keep the content of the study programmes updated. However, universities are autonomous to decide what is the appropriate approach for them. For instance, there is no suggested student/staff ratio nor assessment methodology. Universities thus remain in control of designing a 'fit-for-purpose' approach. Student outcomes (continuation and progression rates) are monitored closely, and universities may face regulatory action in the case of negative student outcomes.



Recent developments

The 2017 Higher Education and Research Act

The reform of the Higher Education and Research Act introduced significant changes, including the establishment of the OfS, an independent public body that reports to the Department for Education. Besides its role as a regulatory body, it also ensures institutional autonomy of English higher education providers and promotes the delivery of 'value for money'. The OfS only provides a fraction of university funding (for specific high-cost disciplines or priority areas). The majority of the costs of teaching are supported through student loans. Universities need to register with the OfS to be able to receive the allocation of tuition fees. This has changed the overall funding relationship in the system, to the extent that the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was replaced by OfS and the different Research Councils by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The UKRI is therefore responsible for research funding.

Funding trends

English universities have experienced a decrease in the amount of the teaching grant (public funding distributed by the OfS) per year. In addition, the Government's Post-18 Education and Funding Review announced a freeze in tuition fees until 2024/25, at which point the £9,250 fee will be worth £6,600 in 2012/13 prices (when fees were first increased to £9,000). Universities UK (UUK) estimates that higher education will lose £2.2 billion over the period 2022-23 to 2024-25 due to this freeze.

As a result, and considering the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been an increase of institutions reporting deficits, from 5% in the academic year of 2015/2016 to 32% in the academic year of 2019-2020.

In 2021, the OfS report on institutions' financial health showed that net operating cashflow, which is necessary to support longer term sustainability, fell from 8.4% of total income in 2019-20 to 4.2% in 2020-21. An update in 2023 reported a figure of 11.7% for 2021-22 with a forecast of 6.7% for 2022-23.⁶

Declining funding incentivises specific behaviours such as recruiting more international students, cutting staff costs and changing teaching arrangements.

The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)

The Universities Superannuation Scheme is a private pension scheme used by universities, research institutes and organisations which carry out related education and research activities. A check of the scheme's financial health is carried out every three years; the 2020 evaluation revealed that the USS carried a large deficit as a result of increased pension costs, which triggered difficult negotiations among the involved parties, including large-scale strikes. The 2023 evaluation underlined an improved financial position of the scheme. At the time of writing, work was undergoing to develop alternative evaluation modalities that would take account of the open and long-term nature of the scheme so that disputes at each valuation can be avoided.

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a national scheme developed in 2017 and now run by the Office for Students, through which universities and colleges are assessed and rated for excellence above a set of minimum requirements for quality and standards. Universities and colleges that take part in the TEF receive an overall rating as well as two underpinning ratings – one for the student experience and one for student outcomes. Universities must obtain a TEF award to charge a tuition fees 'uplift' (£9,250 instead of £9,000). Participation in the scheme is mandatory for eligible providers with 500 students or more enrolled at bachelor's degree level.

⁶ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/0b7d9daa-d6c7-477e-a0b2-b90985d0f935/financial-sustainability-report-2023-updated-june-2023.pdf>

Views from the sector

Brexit

The sector considers that the observed decline of EU student numbers is a negative consequence of Brexit. Higher education institutions have adapted institutional practices with new marketing strategies to strengthen their presence in the EU and recruit EU students. The sector assesses this trend positively since most English universities had not considered capitalising on EU students before in the way they had for international students and consequently, there was no fully developed recruitment strategy in place. In addition, more English universities have recently introduced scholarship schemes for EU students. Brexit has thus pushed universities to further diversify their funding streams and institutional strategies.

Micromanagement and bureaucracy

The sector supported the establishment of the reform and the 2017 law; however, universities are critical of a trend of micromanagement and rising political pressure (on HEIs as well as on the OfS). Furthermore, the sector regrets a breakdown of trust in universities.

The sector, while acknowledging that the initial phase of transition would require more resources to adapt to the new system, expected a certain normalisation process that has not materialised. The burden of regulation has been seen as limiting by universities,⁷ insofar as the new reporting process has become bureaucratically heavy and required a continued increase in institutional resources related to these accountability obligations.

Funding and value for money

The discussion regarding value for money has recently regained importance and relevance, which has been addressed from multiple dimensions. For instance, there is a prevailing concern regarding the proportion of repaid loans in comparison to the expanding student population, a matter of significance for the government. Additional pressure stems from a focus on the employability of students. Since the pandemic, the value of digital teaching and learning has been questioned by some students. However, it is worth noting that certain groups, such as mature students, students with caregiving responsibilities, and disabled students, have reported specific benefits. Furthermore, there are ongoing discussions on themes like lifelong and flexible learning and upskilling, widening of participation, and freedom of speech.

⁷ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/challenge-regulatory-burden>

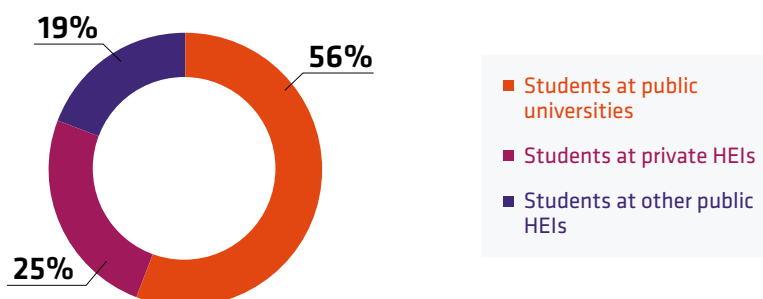
Autonomy of public universities in France

Higher education landscape

The French higher education system accommodates a diverse range of institutions, both public and private. Public higher education institutions are listed in seven categories in the Code of Education, which consolidates all applicable legislation. The Code records slightly over 50 universities (down from over 70 a decade ago), approximately 20 institutes and schools external to universities, roughly 40 'grands établissements' (a legal category grouping national specialised schools as well as some polytechnic institutions and four HEIs using the 'university' denomination), four national schools, four HEI communities ('COMUE', down from about 20 in 2014) and 14 'experimental scientific, cultural and professional institutions' ('EPE'), which is a legal form introduced in 2018 to experiment with new concentration and merger modalities among HEIs. Finally, four experimental communities combine the characteristics of the latter two categories, a possibility created by the 2018 ordinance.¹

The private higher education sector enrolls about 20% of students. It comprises diverse types of institutions with different founders or authorities, such as chambers of commerce, as well as institutions offering faith-based education. Student growth is faster in the private sector than in the public sector. The regulatory framework for private higher education providers is entirely distinct from the public sector; it notably includes private non-for-profit institutions ('EESPIG').

Graph 1. Number of students enrolled in higher education courses per type of institution²



¹ The Code also separately categorises five French HEIs operating abroad.
² The data is sourced from the Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

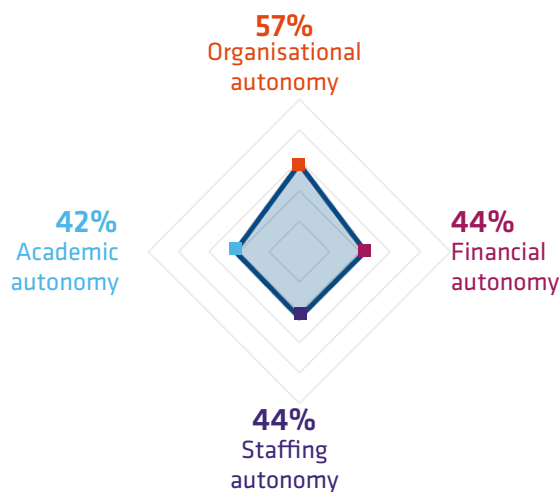
The overarching policy regarding higher education remains one of re-structuring and consolidation. Institutions are incentivised to work closely together. The 2006 law that set up clusters was followed by the 2013 law creating the communities. In 2018, the ‘EPE’ reform differed from previous schemes by granting greater flexibility to groupings of institutions with regard to governance modalities. In addition to the experimental institutions, other structures are also currently being tested.³

As with previous instruments, EPEs are meant to increase the international visibility of institutions of a given territory. It is important to note that EPE components may remain distinct legal entities, which may include private organisations. With a maximum lifespan of ten years, EPEs are not intended as long-term entities, but rather are meant create a space to test governance modalities that facilitate cooperation among the involved entities. Many COMUEs were terminated when the member institutions evolved towards EPE status.

Aside from EPEs, it is worth noting that the status of ‘grands établissements’ grants increased autonomy compared to regular public universities in relation to governance modalities, student admission and the setting of tuition fees.

The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy ⁴	57%	57% →	57% →	Medium low	24
Financial autonomy ⁵	47%	44% ↘	44% →	Medium low	27
Staffing autonomy	43%	43% →	44% ↗	Medium low	31
Academic autonomy ⁶	37%	38% ↗	42% ↗	Medium low	32

3 La Rochelle University did not take on the EPE status but transformed and federated its laboratories, master’s and doctoral degree programmes into a new theme-based institute (smart urban coastal areas).

4 A correction was applied to both previous editions with regard to selection criteria for the executive head due to the specific age limit for the position.

5 A correction was applied to the 2017 edition to reflect the possibility to shift funds internally and constraints on borrowing activity.

6 A correction was applied to the 2017 edition to reflect the shift from programme to study field accreditation.

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including possible legal amendments, cannot be captured by the Scorecard, as they may fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring must not necessarily be interpreted as absence of system-level change.

Timeline

2017 Act on student orientation and retention introducing co-regulated admission for bachelor's degree programmes

2018 Ordinance introducing the legal status of 'experimental scientific, cultural and professional institution' and experimental communities
Law on transformation of civil service introducing administrative staff recruitment based on contractual status

2019 Introduction of differentiated tuition fees for non-EU students
Pilot annual 'strategic management dialogue' scheme

2020 Research Programming Law committing additional investment and increased scientific career attractiveness

2022 Introduction of contracts for objectives, resources and performance (3-year performance monitoring of institutions connected to additional resources, replacing the strategic management dialogue scheme)

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Changes to university statutes must be submitted to the ministry. This is also the case for experimental institutions (EPE).

Executive leadership

The executive head (president) is elected by an absolute majority of the members of the board. This process varies in EPE institutions, with different bodies involved and less direct participation of staff.

The selection of the president does not require validation by an external authority. Selection criteria are stated in the law. Executive heads must hold an academic position, and there are no conditions concerning nationality. A specific age limit applies for the role (the president must be under 68 years old at the time of the election).

Equally, the law prescribes the procedure for the executive head's dismissal, carried out by the ministry. Upon the resignation of two-thirds of the board members, the board and the academic council are dissolved, and the executive head is automatically dismissed. However, it is also possible for the ministry to suspend the president on disciplinary grounds – after having been convicted of wrongdoing through penal and/or disciplinary proceedings. By law, executive heads serve for four years, renewable once.

As for 'grands établissements', the executive head is not required to be an academic and the selection procedure is regulated internally, with the sole obligation of having an open call for candidacies.

Governance bodies

The governance model of universities is organised around a board-type body and a senate-type body, the academic council (which itself has two separate components).

The board governs the university and as such is responsible for strategy, budget, and financial aspects including real estate, as well as overseeing staffing policy.

By law, the board is composed of between 24 and 36 members, with equal representation of men and women, at least one-third being academic staff representatives (between 8 and 16), one-sixth student representatives (4 or 6)⁷ and one-sixth administrative staff (4 or 6). It is chaired by the executive head. The board also includes eight external members. The types of external members (representatives of regional authorities, business representatives, etc.) are defined in the law. They are partly nominated by external organisations (maximum five) and partly by the board itself. The organisations involved in nominating external members must be mentioned in the university statutes and typically include regional public authorities, regional chambers of commerce, etc.



⁷ Certain institutions have set up student bodies such as the Student Parliament at Gustave Eiffel University.

The academic council is made up of two committees, one responsible for research and the second for teaching, student affairs and campus life. Together, they oversee academic and research affairs as well as academic staffing matters. Combined, these bodies are made up of between 40 and 80 members. The composition of these committees is regulated in law via shares (majority of staff representatives) and includes external members.

The governance models of experimental institutions (EPE) typically include a board and an academic council (although the latter is not an obligation). In addition, EPEs have a steering committee composed of the university president and the executive heads of the institution's components.

Both the exact composition and competence portfolio of EPE boards vary. They can include a greater share of external members. In practice, they tend to have a lower proportion of staff and students (under the 2/3 threshold in force for universities).⁸ The chair of an EPE board may come from outside of the institution (and some institutions have restricted the selection of the chair to external members in their statutes).

All public universities and EPE have the possibility to create a strategic orientation committee, which is fully composed of external members, often with a strong international orientation, recruited for their competences.

Structures

Universities cannot freely decide on their academic structures as guidelines exist in law on faculties and schools. The Education Code notably regulates 'mixed research units' (UFR). The university board can autonomously create other structures.

Universities can establish both for-profit and non-profit legal entities.



⁸ <https://www.aefinfo.fr/depeche/661972-comment-les-etablisements-publics-experimentaux-se-sont-ils-empares-des-derogations-possibles-pour-composer-leur-ca>

Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Universities in France receive core public funding on an annual block grant basis. The block grant is split into broad categories, differentiating between investments, salaries and operational costs. While the core grant is allocated via different 'envelopes', it is possible to move funds across these with the authorisation of the university board. This can thus be done internally, with the exception of earmarked resources that cannot be shifted towards other budget lines, which is often the case of investment credits.

In addition to the five-year contract, the ministry negotiates additional resources with each institution in the framework of the so-called 'strategic management dialogue', a scheme introduced in 2019. It is meant to support the sustainability of the institution's budget and aggregate payroll over a period of three years and can result in the allocation of a top up.⁹

Financial management

Any surpluses generated may be kept without restrictions.

Borrowing is severely constrained. Since 2013, universities may only borrow funds for durations shorter than a year or borrow from the European Investment Bank for real estate purposes, notably in the case of universities having benefitted from the 'plan campus' (support scheme focused on improving campus infrastructure).

Real estate ownership is possible but remains marginal, with initially three institutions concerned, then an additional four. There are currently about ten institutions that are interested in full ownership, which must undergo an audit before the ministry decides. While universities already have all the rights and obligations of owners, universities that have acquired ownership of their real estate are now allowed to sell buildings and land. It remains possible for universities outside the scheme to be full owners of buildings/land acquired on their own funds (marginal part of the real estate).

Tuition fees

Tuition fees are fixed by public authorities at all degree levels,¹⁰ including the differentiated fees introduced for non-EU students in 2019.

In addition to regular fee waivers, universities have the possibility to waive fees for up to 10% of enrolled students. Universities may decide on fees for programmes leading to 'university diplomas', which are institutional diplomas (not state-recognised ones). The number of these programmes is increasing but remains small (3% of students at bachelor's level, 11% at master's level). Since 2017, students must pay a specific contribution¹¹ towards 'campus and student life'. The corresponding funds go to enhancing social, health, cultural and sports-related aspects of student life.

⁹ In 2022, the total envelope was 30 million euros for all institutions together.

¹⁰ Universities can set fees for online courses.

¹¹ The fee amounts to €92 and can be waived under the same criteria as tuition fees.



Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

The large majority of senior university staff in France have civil servant status and as such a series of specificities apply.

Public authorities regulate the number of posts for senior academic staff and confirm the appointment of professors. The number of posts supported by public funds has a fixed ceiling, and the university is free to define the number of posts for each category within this framework. The 2020 research programming law lifts the requirement of a national peer evaluation to file an application for a position as full professor. Admission into the civil servants' list for lecturers' positions is now deemed sufficient.

Another change brought about by the 2020 law is the introduction of junior professorships (three to six-year contracts). Between 2021 and 2027, 2000 posts of junior professors are to be created (to be shared among universities and other higher education and research organisations). While limited in number, the aim of the initiative is to create more flexibility in recruitment, notably by allowing institutions to be more attractive to foreign-based academics. The university president makes the proposal to open the position to the ministry. Recruitment is carried out by a committee including the university president as well as professors not affiliated to the university (for half of the members). This mode of recruitment can be used for a maximum of 15% of the authorised annual recruitment processes for senior academic staff.

Since 2007, it has also been possible to recruit academics on open-ended contracts, which represent a small fraction of the overall staff. The 2020 law on research also foresees new open-ended contractual positions.

For senior administrative staff, recruitment is carried out by an external authority for some staff, particularly those working in libraries and central services, on the basis of national competitions. Other staff can be recruited by universities (supported by own resources). Changes in this area connect to the 2018 law on transforming the civil service, which has made it possible for universities (and other public organisations) to hire both junior and senior administrative staff on a contractual status, rather than via the civil servant system. At the time of writing, this remained a marginal phenomenon for the recruitment of senior administrative staff.

Salaries

Salaries are made of two parts. A fixed part common to all civil servants, which rises with seniority, and a variable part, which, in the case of academics, is left to the discretion of the institution within a band defined by the ministry. This variable part is set to gradually increase from 2020 to 2027. Salaries of junior professors are fixed by the ministry.

Contractual staff salaries are fixed by the institution but are usually on par with the civil servant scale. For doctoral contracts salaries are fixed by the ministry.



Careers

There are promotion quotas for civil servants, which are imposed by the state.

For senior academic staff, 50% of all promotions that are granted at French universities are decided at the national level - the same group of peers (cf. Recruitment) decides on these. The remaining 50% of promotions are assigned to individual institutions, which may then decide on the choice and evaluation of candidates for promotion. Junior professors on three to six-year contracts are offered civil servant status (senior academic staff) in case of positive assessment by a dedicated committee.

For senior administrative staff, promotions are not usually decided by the universities. Rather, other administrative staff who have been elected to a committee (usually by trade unions) decide on promotions.

For non-civil servant staff, promotions are freely decided by the university. However, these cases make up only a minority. Universities must develop 'management guidelines' that set conditions and modalities of promotions.

Dismissal procedures are strictly regulated considering the civil servant status of the large majority of the senior staff.



Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

The French higher education system remains characterised by free admission, and the number of programmes for which capacity is restricted is not significantly evolving.

The 2017 Act on student orientation and retention provides that universities may set their own admission criteria (such as prerequisite skills) and that they must rank all the applications for the same programme. This marks a change from the previous situation when universities had no say in student selection for bachelor's degree programmes.

Since September 2017, universities may apply admission criteria for entry to a master's degree programme but no longer between the first and second year of the programme. Graduates with a bachelor's degree retain the right to carry on studies at master's degree level.

Degree programmes

Universities are accredited for five years with a specified list of state-recognised degree programmes they are allowed to offer. Disciplinary fields are also evaluated every five years. Nevertheless, it is possible for universities to open new 'own' programmes (leading to 'university diplomas') at any time.¹²

Universities terminate degree programmes autonomously.

The language of instruction is a regulated matter for bachelor's degree programmes, which cannot be fully delivered in foreign languages, while universities have more flexibility for master's degree programmes. Since 2018, the 'Choose France' label is awarded by the national agency promoting French higher education internationally to universities meeting a certain number of criteria with regard to support for international students. One of the aims of this new mechanism is to "double the number of programmes taught in French as a foreign language or in English". At the time of writing, there were around 1,700 programmes taught in English listed by the national agency.

Universities can design the content of degree programmes without specific constraints.

External quality assurance

Institutional evaluation (every five years, with the French territory divided in five zones) or so-called 'integrated evaluation' is a methodology assessing individual institutions, research units and study programmes (as well as clusters of higher education and research institutions), replaces programme-level accreditation. The High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Hcéres) is the independent public authority responsible for evaluating all higher education and research structures, and for verifying the quality of evaluations carried out by other bodies by validating the adopted procedures.



¹² These programmes are not covered by the core grant. In such cases, universities may charge specific tuition fees as well as decide on admission policies.

Recent developments

French higher education reforms in recent years have focused on landscape consolidation and re-structuring. As such, incentives have been set to push institutions to work closely together. However, compared to previous schemes, the latest developments (from 2019 onwards) leave greater room to manoeuvre to universities to decide on governance modalities.

In 2023, public authorities introduced 'Contracts of Objectives, Resources and Performance' which aim at monitoring how universities perform with regard to certain strategic objectives agreed between the ministry and the institutions. These are meant to progressively replace the three-year 'strategic management dialogue'. The objectives concern:

- ◆ Learning, teaching and research geared towards graduates' employability in future-oriented, evolving or undersupplied jobs;
- ◆ student well-being and success: health, diversity, inclusion, support for success;
- ◆ the development of research and innovation at the highest European and international level;
- ◆ higher education and research geared towards the green transition and sustainable development;
- ◆ enhanced university governance and management;
- ◆ a specific objective elaborated by the institution.

The intention was to develop and sign the contracts in three waves over 2023-2024 (for the period 2023-2027), resourced with a total of €100 million per year over three years (per wave, with each wave comprising a third of the eligible HEIs). Where the HEIs are part of an experimental institution, the negotiation takes place at EPE level.

The new instrument is separate to the main five-year institutional contract, which is the main strategic document that aims to position the institution in the medium term, and which covers all the missions of the university, with the block grant as the basis for financing.

In comparison, the new performance contract is intended as more flexible and responsive, with a budget identified and targeted to the priorities of the institution and the ministry.

Views from the sector

In practical terms, the sector considers that autonomy remains constrained by the ministry at the implementation stage, while the recent law on research (December 2020) was seen as providing relative openness. The sector particularly highlights the complexity of procedures, the centralisation of recruitment processes, strong constraints on payroll expenditure, marginal management of career development and promotions.

This was also identified as a cultural change issue. Although cautious steps may be taken in one direction, the sector often regrets that other aspects become more heavily regulated at the same time.

The lack of investment in higher education continues to limit autonomy in practice, in a context where universities must accommodate growing student cohorts, inflation and rising energy costs, while embracing the green and digital transitions and contributing to reindustrialisation and innovation ecosystems. A connected issue identified by the sector is the lack of evolution of the funding model for French universities, with extra funds often allocated in an ad hoc, targeted fashion. This creates significant financial tensions for smaller organisations with less capacity to apply to competitive calls for proposals.

In June 2023, a report issued by an expert group (the so-called 'Gillet report') similarly called for a restructuring of the French research and innovation ecosystem so as to give 'pride of place' to universities at local and regional level, that is coordinate all interactions with partners, including local authorities and academia-to-industry clusters.¹³

At the end of 2023, France's president presented several guidelines for the future of research and innovation in France.¹⁴ France Universités shared President Macron's view that the role of the different actors must be clarified to fight against the illegibility of a system and the effects of structures "that waste energy".

To achieve this, the sector called to give priority to a real steering and strategy function at the Ministry of Higher Education and Research instead of ex ante control, and to simplify the evaluation systems in order to really reap the benefits of such changes.

France Universités also welcomed announcements of plans for increased institutional autonomy, in particular in terms of human resources management, and for a contract of objectives, means and performance that would be backed by adequate resources.

The sector will thus pay particular attention to ensuring that the contracts of objectives do not result in intensified steering by the State at the expense of university initiatives.¹⁵

¹³ <https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2023-06/rapport---mission-sur-l-cosyst-me-de-la-recherche-et-de-l-innovation-28193.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://franceuniversites.fr/actualite/president-autonomie-des-universites-cheffe-de-file-sur-les-territoires/>

¹⁵ <https://franceuniversites.fr/actualite/autonomie-des-universites-en-europe-la-france-doit-mieux-faire/>

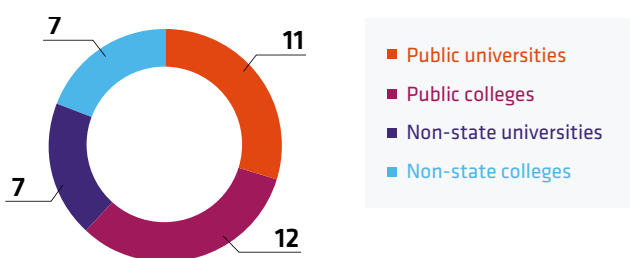
Autonomy of public universities in Lithuania

Higher education landscape

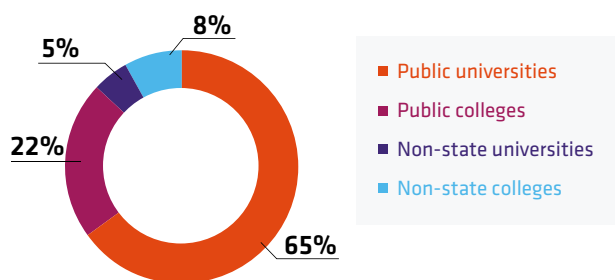
The Lithuanian higher education is structured as a binary system comprising two types of higher education institutions: universities and colleges. These institutions can be either state-run or privately operated. While private institutions enjoy more flexibility in terms of governance and funding, both state and private institutions share several similarities in terms of their organisational structure, academic programmes and staffing. Both types of institutions are regulated by the Law on Higher Education and Research, adopted in 2009 and subsequently amended several times.

Although colleges slightly outnumber universities, public universities enrol the majority of the student population.

Graph 1. Composition of the higher education sector in Lithuania¹

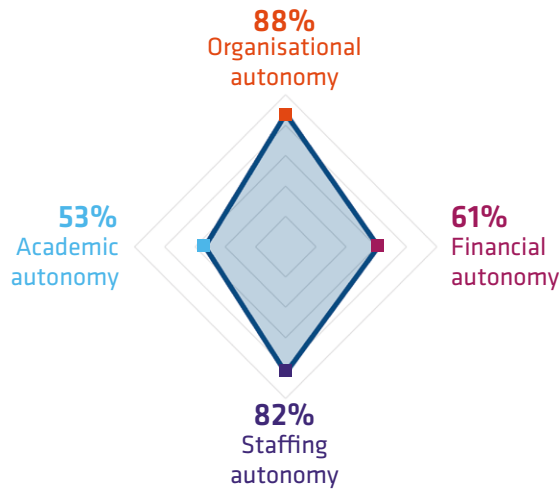


Graph 2. Distribution of students across types of higher education institutions



¹ Data for both graphs provided by the Lithuanian University Rectors' Conference (LURK) and correspond to the academic year 2022/2023.

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	75%	88% ↗	88% →	High	5
Financial autonomy	51%	61% ↗	61% →	Medium high	19
Staffing autonomy ²	82%	82% →	82% →	High	15
Academic autonomy	42%	42% →	53% ↗	Medium low	24

Timeline

2019 New regulations allowing for the transition from single study programme evaluation and accreditation procedure to evaluation and accreditation of study field. Universities may choose among EQAR-listed agencies to carry out the evaluation.

2023 Plan to reform the college network, including mergers in the public college sector (among colleges or with universities)

The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

² The score for staffing autonomy has been corrected for all years after a clarification related to salary setting capacity of universities for both senior academic and administrative staff. This correction was implemented after the release of the report “University Autonomy in Europe IV: the Scorecard 2023” and therefore the present country profile takes precedence over the Lithuanian data presented in the comparative report.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Changes made to the university statutes must be approved by the Lithuanian parliament.

Executive leadership

The university elects, appoints and dismisses the executive head (rector) autonomously. The university council elects the rector by a majority of three-fifths. The law stipulates basic criteria for the selection of the executive head, who must be an academic with impeccable reputation, pedagogical and managerial experience, holding a doctorate in science or the arts, or be a recognised artist.

The law also prescribes the term of office, allowing for a maximum of two consecutive five-year terms. Former rectors may stand for election again after a period of five years.

If the majority of the university council members do not approve the rector's annual university activity report, the rector may be dismissed with a two-thirds majority vote.

Governance bodies

Lithuanian universities have a dual governance structure consisting of a senate and board/council-type body. The council serves as the main decision-making body and is responsible for institutional strategy, while the senate focuses on academic matters. The council must consult the senate on a series of matters prior to making decisions. The council may however not overturn decisions made by the senate regarding academic affairs.

By law, the council consists of nine or 11 members. One member is elected by the students. The senate elects the remaining members, half of whom are drawn from the university's academic staff, and half are external members selected via public competition. A 2018 amendment prohibits persons holding public office to join university councils. The rector may sit on the council without voting rights. The council members' term of office is five years, with a maximum of two consecutive terms. The chair of the council is elected among the external members.

The senate is composed of representatives of academic staff (minimum 40%), administrative staff (maximum 10%) and students (minimum 20%). The senate may also include academic staff and recognised artists from other scientific and study institutions, selected by the university itself since 2016. The law does not regulate the size of the senate but sets the maximum mandate duration to five years. The rector is an ex officio member of the senate.

Structures

Universities have the autonomy to determine their own academic structure and can establish both for-profit and non-profit legal entities.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Universities receive their public funding through an annual block grant split into broad categories. There is no possibility to reallocate funds from one category to another. A new funding model for research, incorporating performance-based elements, is expected to be introduced (see under 'Recent developments').

Financial management

Lithuanian universities may not retain a surplus from public funding or own buildings. Universities are allowed to borrow with restrictions (alleviated by the 2016 amendments) and limits set by the ministry.

Tuition fees

Lithuanian universities operate with a mixed model of state-supported and self-funded study places. The university senate fully decides on tuition fees for international students at all levels as well as for doctoral candidates. Since 2016, this is also the case for any student enrolling in bachelor's or master's degree programmes on a self-funded place (while previously this was subject to a ceiling set by the ministry).

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Lithuanian universities recruit their senior academic and administrative staff on a competitive basis, respecting regulations regarding qualifications and publicity concerning vacancies. A special committee is involved in the recruitment process.

Salaries

Lithuanian universities may decide on the individual salaries of senior academic and administrative staff, but an overall limit for all staff payments applies. Due to limited funding, universities often face challenges in offering competitive salaries compared to private companies.

The salaries of senior academic staff may be increased based on individual performance.

Careers

The university committee responsible for hiring senior academic staff also conducts staff performance evaluations every five years, which determine contract renewals. The dismissal of senior academic and administrative staff is not subject to sector-specific regulations. Promotions for both types of staff are only possible if there is a higher-level position available.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Universities can decide on the number of fee-paying students while an external authority sets the number of state-funded study places.

At bachelor's degree level, the admission process remains centralised, with no capacity for universities to select students. However, universities can select students for master's degree programmes autonomously.

Degree programmes

All new programmes at all levels must undergo accreditation before being introduced.

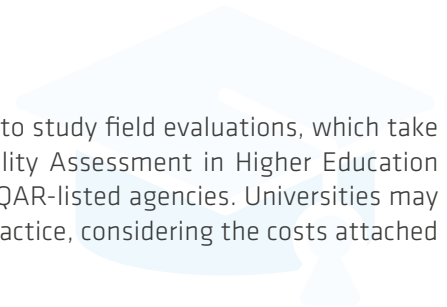
Universities may choose to terminate programmes. Programmes that receive two consecutive negative evaluations from the evaluation agency must be closed.

Lithuanian universities choose the language of instruction for the programmes they offer, with programmes in foreign languages requiring justification.

While some of the content of academic programmes is prescribed externally, the law allows for transdisciplinary programmes at all levels.

External quality assurance

Periodic programme evaluation has evolved from single evaluations to study field evaluations, which take place every seven years and are carried out by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), Lithuania's national accreditation agency, and, since 2019, EQAR-listed agencies. Universities may thus select the quality assurance provider but this is not common practice, considering the costs attached to the procedure.



Recent developments

Research and development (R&D) funding is expected to increase to 1% of GDP by 2030 (compared to 0.3% in 2018) and to reach 0,75% of GDP by the end of 2024.

The future R&D funding model is expected to be more performance-oriented and allocate funds to universities on the basis of two evaluations. The first evaluation will be carried out every five years by an international expert group and will carry a weight coefficient of 60%. The second evaluation, organised by the Lithuanian Science Council, will take place annually and will have a weighted coefficient of 40%. It will consider R&D factors such as contracts, publications, or patents, among others.

Views from the sector

There have been concerns within the sector about excessive involvement of the ministry in academic, financial and governance affairs, with various illustrations over the past few years. One notable issue has been the lack of suitable involvement of the sector by the public authorities on reforms and legal matters. A striking case was the plan by the government to merge universities without proper sector consultation, which were as a result met with opposition. The Constitutional Court ruled that the university community should be involved in such processes.

However, in 2023, processes were under way to merge some colleges into universities, by establishing the Lithuanian Maritime Academy in Klaipėda as a subdivision of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University and integrating Marijampolė College into Mykolas Romeris University.

There have also been attempts to centralise financial matters, such as university accounting, previously executed at institutional level. Several higher education institutions transitioned to the new model before the process was stopped. An open question is the distribution of competences between the university council and senate, where the sector is concerned that the perspective of universities may not be adequately considered. The overall perception is that in practice, Lithuanian universities face more constraints in their daily operations.

Autonomy of public universities in Portugal

Higher education landscape

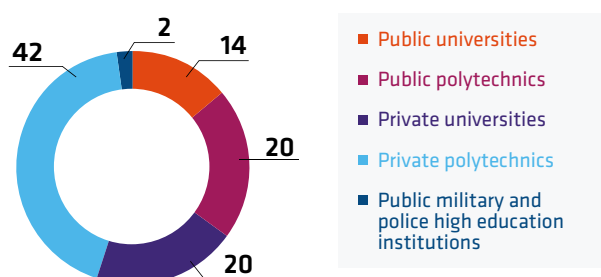
Portuguese higher education is structured as a binary system comprising universities and polytechnics.¹ In 2022, there were 36 universities and 62 polytechnics. 34 were publicly operated (14 universities and 20 polytechnics), 62 privately (20 and 42, respectively) and two by the military (both universities).

Since 2007, the law allows higher education institutions (HEIs) to apply for foundation status. In 2023, six HEIs had such status (five universities and one polytechnic institute).² These institutions benefit from greater autonomy on specific aspects. Foundation HEIs account for nearly one-third of the public sector student enrolment.

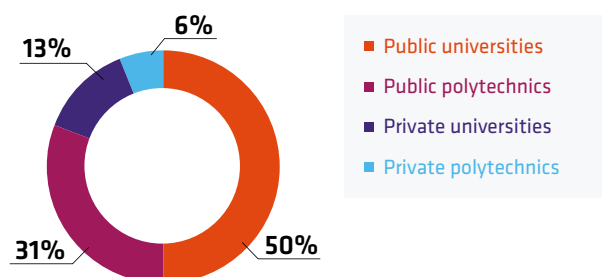
In 2022, the total enrolment in Portuguese HEIs was 433,217 students. Most students (81%) were enrolled in public institutions.

The laws governing higher education (46/1986, 62/2007) apply to all types of institutions.

Graph 1. Higher education institutions in Portugal³

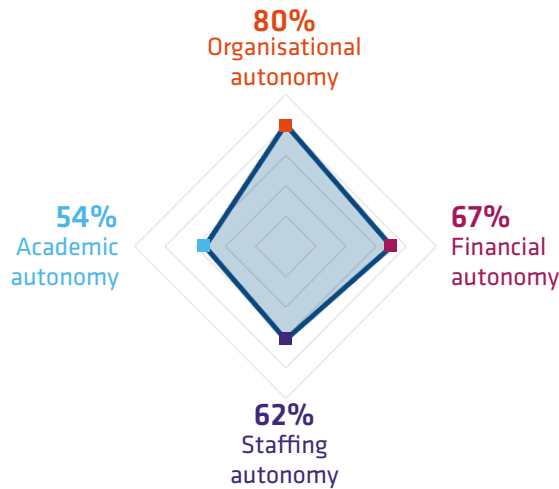


Graph 2. Distribution of students in Portugal⁴



1 In this profile, 'universities' includes universities and university institutes. 'Polytechnics' includes both polytechnic institutes and non-integrated polytechnic schools (specialised).
 2 The University of Porto, the University of Aveiro and the University Institute of Lisbon (2009); the University of Minho (2015); NOVA University of Lisbon (2016); the Polytechnic Institute of Cávado and Ave (2018).
 3 Data retrieved from Direção Geral do Ensino Superior: <https://www.dges.gov.pt/pt/pagina/ensino-superior-em-numeros?plid=371>
 4 Data retrieved from PORDATA for students enrolled in higher education: total and by sub-system of education in 2022: <https://www.pordata.pt/en/db/portugal/search+environment/table>

Factsheet



There have been no significant changes in the four dimensions of autonomy since 2017. This is due to the stability of the legal framework governing the higher education sector in Portugal, as shown in the table below. No large-scale reform has been reported within the frame of the current analysis.

Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	80%	80% →	80% →	Medium high	8
Financial autonomy ⁵	75%	67% ↘	67% →	Medium high	14
Staffing autonomy	62%	62% →	62% →	Medium high	23
Academic autonomy	54%	54% →	54% →	Medium low	23

The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

Timeline

2014 Decree 36/2014 sets a threshold for fees to international students

⁵ Corrections were applied to all three editions to reflect the constrained possibility to borrow and, as of 2014, the threshold model for determining fees to non-EU students at all degree levels. These corrections were implemented after the release of the report “University Autonomy in Europe IV: the Scorecard 2023” and therefore the present country profile takes precedence over the Portuguese data presented in the comparative report.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

The statutes of public HEIs and subsequent changes thereof need to be validated by an external authority (Articles 68, 69 of the Law n. ° 62/2007 of 10 September, which establishes the Legal Regime of Higher Education Institutions).

Executive leadership

The university's general council (board-type body) selects the candidate for the position of executive head (rector) according to the law and statutes. Dismissal of the rector requires external confirmation. The law stipulates that the candidate must hold an academic position, have relevant experience and be a person of 'recognised merit'. The term of office is four years with the possibility of one renewal.

Governance bodies

Portuguese universities retain unitary governance structures, with the general council (board-type body) as the main decision-making body.

The size of the board-type body is regulated and must be comprised of between 15 and 35 members. The university statutes further specify the composition. However, universities are required to include the following groups in the general council: academics (60% minimum), students (15%), and external members (30%). The institutions select external members freely, usually from the business/private sector, with fewer coming from local government (e.g. former officials with relevant expertise). The president of the general council is chosen from these external members. The mandate for general council members is four years, except for student representatives, who hold the position for two years.

The law also foresees the possibility for universities to set up a senate as a mandatory consultative body for the rector on issues listed in the university statutes.

Structures

Portuguese universities are allowed to establish both for-profit and non-profit legal entities, provided that this is supported by their own income and aligned with their core objectives. They may decide freely on their academic structures.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

The funding system for public universities has remained unchanged, with institutions receiving funding on the basis of an annual block grant, which is divided into broad categories.

The use of an incremental, historical approach to allocating core funding to public HEIs over the last decade has resulted in a significant divergence in the level of core funding received by institutions per enrolled student.

Financial management

Universities are allowed to retain surpluses on public funding, subject to the approval of an external authority.

Borrowing is possible for foundation universities.⁶ Public universities must secure the authorisation from both the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Higher Education. However, the practical implementation of this process has proven to be complex.⁷ For example, the University of Lisbon borrowed funds in 2019 for the construction of a student residence.

Portuguese universities are permitted to own and sell buildings. However, procedures differ depending on whether the property is devolved by the state or acquired from the university's own income. Authorisation from both the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Higher Education is necessary to sell state-devolved property, while no external authorisation is needed for buildings acquired on the university's own income. No authorisation is required for foundation universities.

Tuition fees

Portuguese universities may set tuition fees at bachelor's degree level for both national and EU students under a ceiling set by the government. This ceiling decreased from €1,068 for the 2016/2017 academic year to €697 in 2021/2022.⁸ The practice of setting fees varies among institutions, some tend to align with the maximum ceiling, while others opt for lower rates.

Portuguese universities may freely set fees for master's and doctoral programmes,⁹ except when master's degree programmes are 'integrated' with bachelor's degree programmes.¹⁰

Universities may set tuition fees for non-EU students based on the actual cost associated with the respective programmes. However, these fees must not fall below the fees set for national students. This is prescribed by Decree 36/2014, prior to which universities had full autonomy to set fees for non-EU students.¹¹

6 The list of universities with foundation status includes: Universidade de Aveiro; ISCTE-IUL; Universidade do Porto; Universidade do Minho; Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

7 A correction was applied to reflect the possibility for universities to borrow funds upon the approval of external authority.

8 The level of tuition fees for bachelor's and master's degree programmes has been frozen by the Portuguese parliament in the budget law since 2020.

9 Fees for doctoral programmes tend to converge to €2,750, which is the maximum amount paid by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) for doctoral fellowships.

10 'Integrated master programmes' constitute a minority compared to regular masters and thus are not considered in the overall evaluation.

11 A correction was applied to register the 2014 change from complete autonomy to set fees to a threshold model.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Senior academic and administrative staff hold civil servant status. The recruitment procedures for senior academic staff are prescribed by law, as are the criteria for their selection.

Recruitment of senior administrative staff is an internal matter whenever the positions to be filled are accounted for and included in the institution's financial planning. An authorisation from the ministry becomes necessary in the case of new positions not included in the planning, because of the extra expenditure required.

Foundation universities hire new staff on private contracts (non-civil servant). Staff previously employed as civil servants before the change of legal status of the university maintain that status until retirement or resignation.

Salaries

Due to the civil servant status in public universities, the salaries of a large part of senior academic and administrative staff are set externally by the government.

Careers

The promotion of senior academic staff is organised through open competition and the law stipulates the composition of promotion committees. Dismissals are strictly regulated, as per civil servant status specificities.

Foundation universities have additional ways to develop salary packages to attract national and international talent or to offer additional rewards or share results with its staff, according to legally established parameters and principles. This option is almost non-existent for the other universities.



Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

The overall number of students, as well as admission at bachelor's degree level, are co-regulated by universities and the state. In addition to the high school graduation exam results, admission at bachelor's degree level involves taking a centralised exam in specific subjects chosen by the universities. The total score is calculated by a formula that considers both the high school graduation exams results (70%) and the centralised (30%) exam. Prospective students may rank five universities of their choice, and they will be placed in an institution based on their total score. Universities are free to set admission criteria at master's and doctoral levels, as well as for international students at all levels.

Degree programmes

All new degree programmes must undergo accreditation prior to their introduction. Delays in programme accreditation processes have generated issues and uncertainty for Portuguese universities, particularly in a context where the Portuguese recovery and resilience plan under NextGenerationEU foresees that new programmes will be introduced by universities within a tight timeframe.

Universities may terminate study programmes independently, with the caveat that the affected students must be reallocated to other programmes. The university may also progressively discontinue the programme by not accepting new cohorts while allowing registered students to finish their degree.

Universities remain autonomous to decide on the content of their degree programmes and the language of instruction, while taking account of the constraints imposed by the accreditation agency. Currently, very few programmes are delivered in English.

External quality assurance

Under the Legal Regime of Higher Education Institutions, all institutions in the high education sector must receive accreditation for all cycles (bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree levels) from the national accreditation agency. In addition to the programme accreditation, institutional accreditation is also required (both types every six years). Although the transition towards fully institutional accreditation remains part of the official discourse, no specific actions have been taken in this regard.



Recent developments

Despite several attempts and requests to update the Legal Regime of HEIs (Law n.º 62/2007), there have been no significant changes to university governance and funding. However, new reports followed by public discussions on the higher education sector in Portugal have engaged different higher education stakeholders since 2020. During the publication of the updated Autonomy Scorecard in 2023, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education established an external commission to provide recommendations for the upcoming update of the legal framework.

Reform proposals on funding

Proposals for reform include adjusting the funding model with multi-annual allocations of strategic development funding to public HEIs based on differentiated funding schemes for HEIs in regions facing a decrease in population and, consequently, the revision of tuition fees.

The university sector favours a revision of the funding model that better considers the needs and capacity of the HEIs. The current formula-based model heavily relies on dated student numbers. Discussions are ongoing to include a cohesion factor that would divide the universities into three groups based on their cost structure (larger, littoral-based universities; in-land universities; insular universities).

The financial framework for HEIs known as 'Contrato de Programa 2020-2023' provides for compensation to universities for the reduction of tuition fees implemented in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The state budget for 2023 includes an increase of 0.2% for this compensation.

Reform proposals on governance

In 2023, polytechnics were granted the right to award doctoral degrees. Those institutions were also given the right to use the terminology 'polytechnic universities' in English instead of 'polytechnic institutes'.

Views from the sector

The sector signals a significant lack of autonomy in practice, due mostly to (i) governmental, parliamentary or accreditation agency procedures, (ii) interpretations of existing laws or regulations, and (iii) financial restrictions. Furthermore, the sector is concerned that such changes are occurring without a comprehensive assessment of the institutions' needs, potential impacts, or accumulated experience and learnings from existing legal and regulatory frameworks.

Public discussions on the possibly evolving status of polytechnic institutions have created concerns about conflation in the system (mission drift) and semantic confusion, as well as a further weakening of the binary nature of the HE system in practice.

The sector also believes that a revision of the accreditation process is necessary to improve the functioning of the sector. Universities particularly emphasise that the current accreditation procedures and decisions place an excessive focus on resources and micro-management issues, rather than on efficiency, efficacy, or learning outcomes, and fail to address the specific context of each university and programme submitted for accreditation purposes.

As time goes on, programmes are required to meet increasingly demanding administrative or resource-based criteria, including a wide variety of ratios. There are concerns that some of these criteria may risk reducing the quality of teaching. Overall, the perception is one of reduced freedom for universities to design and manage their teaching activities. Therefore, the sector calls for the possibility of opening degree programmes without ex-ante evaluation, but rather with an ex-post evaluation by the National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation. While the foundation model theoretically provides greater autonomy for the universities concerned in some areas, such as the management of physical assets and human resources, those institutions continue to face hurdles in practice. For instance, they are still required to follow many of the rules and red tape that apply to public administration in Portugal, particularly in financial and budgetary matters. Therefore, there has been limited interest from other universities in applying for this status.

Autonomy of public universities in Scotland

Higher education landscape

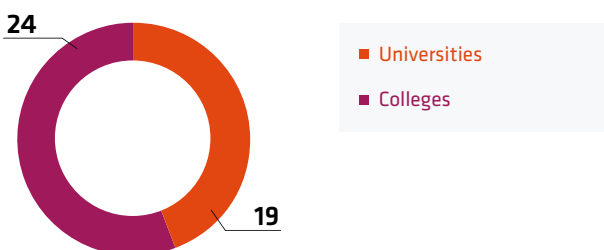
Universities in the United Kingdom operate within both a 'reserved' (UK-wide) and 'devolved' (specific to England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) policy and funding setting. The present profile relates to developments in Scotland and not across the whole of the United Kingdom.

The Scottish tertiary education system comprises higher education (HE) and further education (FE) providers. Universities are the main higher education provider and are the only providers offering degree and postgraduate-level study; colleges provide both further and higher education (sub-degree level) courses.

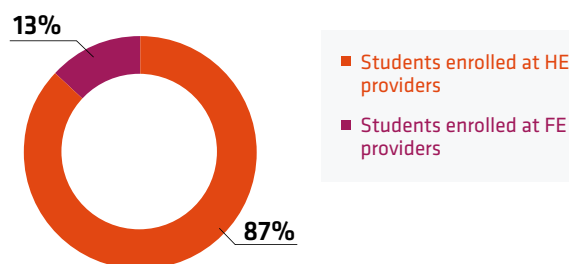
Although the detailed governance of each higher education institution in Scotland reflects its history, all institutions are covered by the 2016 Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act. Universities are not part of the public sector, although they are included as 'public bodies' in the coverage of some legislation. Colleges in Scotland meanwhile are part of the public sector.

In addition to the legal framework, universities in Scotland are expected to comply with the Code of Governance as a condition of public funding. This is a document produced by the Chairs of the university governing bodies, in consultation with all interests, including government, trade unions and students. The Code seeks to establish good practice in the context of the law.

Graph 1. Higher education providers in Scotland by type

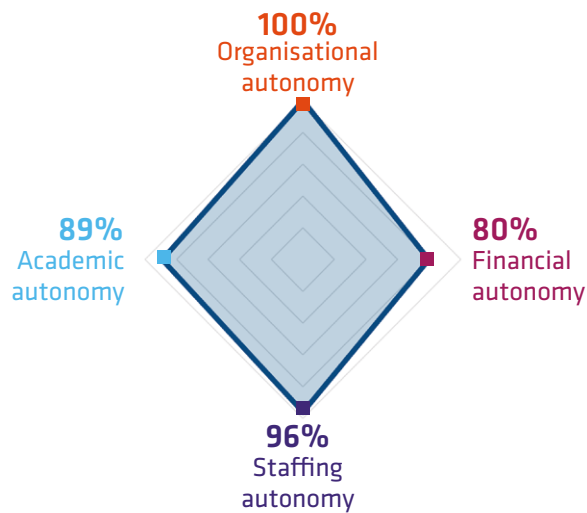


Graph 2. Number students enrolled in higher education courses in Scotland per type of institution (2021/2022)¹



¹ Data retrieved from HESA: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/19-01-2023/sb265-higher-education-student-statistics/numbers>

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	100%	High	1
Financial autonomy	80%	Medium high	3
Staffing autonomy	96%	High	4
Academic autonomy	89%	High	3

Timeline

2016 Referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union
Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act

2020 The UK ceases to be an EU member state

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Following the entry into force of the 2016 Higher Education Governance Act, universities had to secure the approval of the Privy Council (body providing advice to government) regarding any governance changes they sought to implement to meet the terms of the Act.

Executive leadership

The executive head of the university is the principal/vice-chancellor. There is no external validation or provisions in the law regarding selection criteria nor the appointment procedure. The Code of Governance nevertheless states that the selection process must ensure that student, staff and trade union input is taken into account, taking into consideration the academic and non-academic aspects of the principal's role. There are different practices regarding the engagement of the university communities in the process.

The Code of Governance states that the main governing body, often called 'the court', is responsible for both the appointment and dismissal of the principal. There is no set term of office – universities tend to have open-ended or renewable terms.

Governance bodies

The Higher Education Governance Act describes a governing body (often 'the court', a board-type body) and an 'academic board' (or senate). The governance model of Scottish universities may be characterised as 'dual asymmetric'. Although the court has the final authority, the academic board has responsibilities over academic matters. While the court can challenge or reverse the academic board's decisions, it does not do so in practice.

The law includes provisions on the composition of both bodies. The law mentions that the court membership includes at least the Chair (who must be external), two staff representatives, two trade union representatives (for academic and non-academic staff) and two student representatives. The Code of Governance complements these provisions by stating that the court should be composed of a majority of external members and should not be larger than is necessary to meet legal requirements and to ensure appropriate coverage of skills and stakeholder involvement. The Code recommends the use of set terms of office, which should not be longer than three (renewable twice) to four (renewable once) years.

The Chair, 'Senior Lay Member' of the governing body/court is elected by the members of the court and all staff and students since the 2016 Higher Education Governance Act. The Act sets out the distinction between the role of the 'rector' at some institutions.²

The law specifies that the academic board should include at least the executive head of the university, the heads of schools of the institution, academic staff and student representatives. Representatives from academic staff and students should together form a majority. Student representatives must make for at least 10% of the members but not exceed 30. There are no provisions restricting access to external members.

The Code states that the recruitment of members of the governing body must proceed through an open and inclusive process based on a skills evaluation.

Structures

Universities can freely decide on academic structures and create both for-profit and non-profit legal entities.

² The four oldest universities in Scotland also have the position of rector and are responsible to define the division of responsibilities between the roles of rector and chair / senior lay member.

Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Scottish universities receive most of their public funding from the Scottish Funding Council on the basis of an annual (largely formula-based) block grant with no significant restrictions on the internal allocation of funding, within the limits of accountability.

Financial management

Universities can keep any surpluses arising from their operations, including those supported by public funds, (contrary to the college sector).³ They may borrow funds with the approval of an external authority (the Scottish Funding Council) for substantial loans.

While Scottish universities own their real estate, selling property explicitly acquired with the support of public funds requires the permission of the Funding Council.

Tuition fees

Tuition fee regimes differ according to degree levels and student groups:

At bachelor's degree level:

- ◆ There is an externally fixed fee for Scotland-domiciled students (covered by the public authorities) (£1,820)⁴
- ◆ There is a ceiling for fees for students from the rest of the UK and students from the Republic of Ireland (£9,250)
- ◆ Universities are free to set fees at bachelor's level for international students (including EU, except Ireland)

At master's and doctoral degree level, universities are free to set fees for all students.

³ However, public funding for tuition and for research falls significantly below the costs of delivery of those activities and so in practice institutions do not generate a surplus from these.

⁴ The fixed fee is added to public funding through the Scottish Funding Council, with the level of funding varying depending on the subject being taught.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Universities freely recruit senior academic and administrative staff.

Salaries

Universities adhere to a nationally agreed pay scale for the strong majority of staff, with each institution able to apply specific pay policies in the context of that scale. Universities determine the salaries for their senior staff, with these governed by a remuneration committee of the governing body.

Careers

There are no sector-specific regulations concerning the dismissal of either senior academic or administrative staff, and national labour market regulations apply. Universities can freely decide on promotions.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Universities can autonomously decide on their intake of students.

Scotland-domiciled bachelor's degree student numbers are controlled in the sense that each institution receives a certain number of funded places, according to price groups (mostly on a historical basis). Universities may freely recruit students up to that number in each group (and may shift across price groups with the authorisation of the Funding Council). Recruitment over the number of funded places is possible up to a threshold (but such 'fees only' places are only funded via the regulated fee).

Admission criteria and procedures are set by universities themselves for all degree levels.

Degree programmes

Scottish universities can introduce new programmes at all levels without prior accreditation and can terminate programmes independently.

Universities can choose the language of instruction for all programmes.

External quality assurance

Quality assurance is based on institutional review (yearly) and an external review (also for the whole institution) every four to five years. The arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement are delivered in partnership with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).



Recent developments

Funding trends

Over the last five years, the Scottish government has recognised that public funds cover only part of the full economic costs of universities; therefore, there is a greater acceptance that activities are cross subsidised from international students, and that it is desirable to allow universities to act autonomously in that market. Fees from international students represent roughly 1/3 of Scottish universities' total income.

Expected regulatory changes

The Scottish government has created a '[fair work framework](#)' applicable to organisations in receipt of public funds, which spells out a series of principles related to staffing policies and is noted by the Scottish Funding Council as a condition of grant.

The UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) has indicated that it will review its classification of universities in Scotland mid-2024.⁵ Whilst not expected, if the ONS were to revise the designation of universities, to the effect that they are considered part of the public sector, it would have a substantial impact on their capacity to borrow, keep potential surplus, and create legal entities. This would also prevent universities from acting independently as corporate organisations.

⁵ In its [forward work plan](#), the ONS notes that "since the early 2000s, universities have been classified together within the non-profit institutions serving households (S.15) sector in the UK National Accounts. As there have been many changes in the higher education sector since then, including the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016, ONS will undertake a classification review of the sector in accordance with the latest international statistical guidance".

Views from the sector

The summer of 2023 saw a significant number of policy statements from the Scottish government that have prompted discussion on 'reform' and associated changes to accountability mechanisms. It is uncertain where these initiatives will lead and discussions on the future are taking place in a context of further cuts to Scottish government funding of the sector in 2024-25. As a result, institutions are seeking to continue to grow their income from non-public sources. As noted, the planned ONS review of institutions' classification is a key concern for the sector.

Autonomy of public universities in Slovakia

Higher education landscape

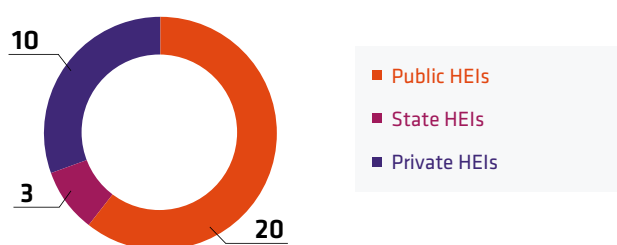
There are public, state, and private higher education institutions in the Slovak higher education system. State universities are specialised institutions administered by ministries other than the ministry of education (e.g. police, defence, health). Roughly 80% of students are enrolled in public universities, while the rest attend private and state institutions.

All three types of institutions are subject to the 2002 Higher Education Act, with different provisions applying. Staff from the state and public institutions are in state service, public service, or are hired on a contractual basis. Private universities hire staff on a contractual basis; they may receive public funding for educational purpose with the agreement of the Slovak Government.

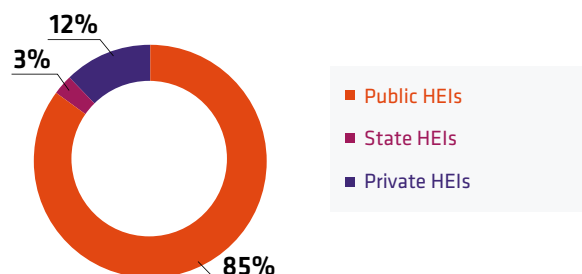
The 2002 law has been amended several times since the previous edition of the Autonomy Scorecard in 2016. In 2022, the Slovak Parliament approved a reform of the law focused on university governance and management.

This profile focuses on Slovak public universities.

Graph 1. Higher education providers in Slovakia by type for 2023/24¹

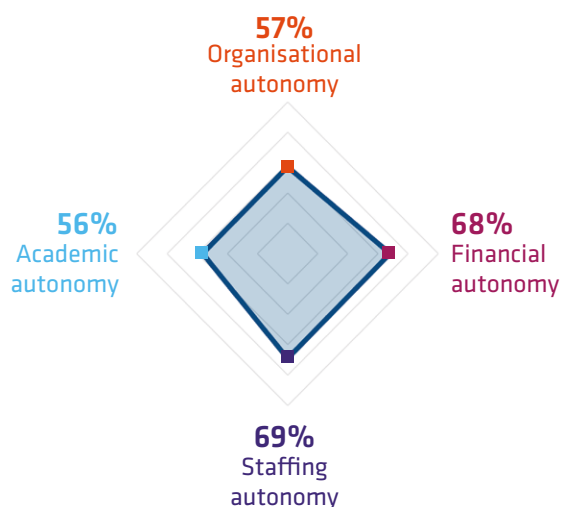


Graph 2. Number of students enrolled in higher education courses in Slovakia per type of institution for 2023/2024



¹ Source for both graphs: CVTI SR https://www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka-publikacia/statisticka-rocenka-vysoke-skoly.html?page_id=9596

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	42%	42% →	57% ↗	Medium low	24
Financial autonomy	70%	70% →	68% ↘	Medium high	13
Staffing autonomy ²	73%	73% →	69% ↘	Medium high	18
Academic autonomy	56%	56% →	56% →	Medium low	20

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including possible legal amendments, cannot be captured by the Scorecard, as they may fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring must not necessarily be interpreted as absence of system-level change.

Timeline

- 2018** Act 269/2018 on Quality Assurance of Higher Education
- 2020** The Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education takes over HEI accreditation, previously provided by the Accreditation Commission
- 2022** Amendments to the 2002 Higher Education Act voted in 2022 enter into force as of 25 April 2022

² Corrections were made for the first two editions (+12 points: externally set salary bands rather than externally set salaries).

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Changes to university statutes must be registered by the ministry. The ministry may reject the changes only if they are in contradiction with existing laws.

Executive leadership

The executive head of the university is the rector, who is formally appointed by the president of the Slovak Republic on the proposal of the minister of education. The selection process has evolved with the 2022 reform. While the rector was previously elected solely by the senate-type body, the procedure defined in the law now involves both the senate and the board-type body (board of trustees), convened together to form the electoral assembly. The rector is elected by absolute majority of all members.

There are no provisions in the law regarding selection criteria for the position of rector. However, the reform introduces certain limits: to be eligible, candidates to rectorship may not be current members of the governing bodies, nor can they have been members of the executive board of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education in the previous three years. The law also specifies that the hearing of the candidates by the governing bodies must cover issues such as governing experience, relation to university education, science, technology, relationship to the missions and areas of activity of the university. Candidates are expected to outline their proposals for the development strategy of the university at the hearing.

The rector is elected for four years, renewable once. The dismissal procedure follows the same logic as for the appointment, with a joint decision of the board and senate (with a majority in both bodies) followed by an official decision of the country's president.

Governance bodies

The governance structure of public universities in Slovakia follows a dual model, with a senate-type body (academic senate) and a board-type body (board of trustees). The 2022 reform altered the power dynamics between both bodies with a strengthening of the competences of the board. As a result, the governance has evolved from a dual, senate-focused asymmetric model to a dual traditional model. The amended law grants a larger portfolio of competences to the board, notably in finances, property, long-term strategic planning and overall responsibility for day-to-day university management. Its role is also described as strengthening the institution's links with society. The senate's competences have been revised; it notably approves the statutes, the budget as well as changes to the structure of the institution. Slovak universities also have a scientific council³ with specific competences in the academic, scientific and artistic fields.

The composition of the senate is described in the law. It is comprised of at least 15 and at most 66 members, with at least one third of seats reserved for students. The law sets their maximum term at four years. If a public university is divided into faculties, each faculty is represented in the academic senate of the public university.



³ Or an artistic council in the case of arts HEIs.

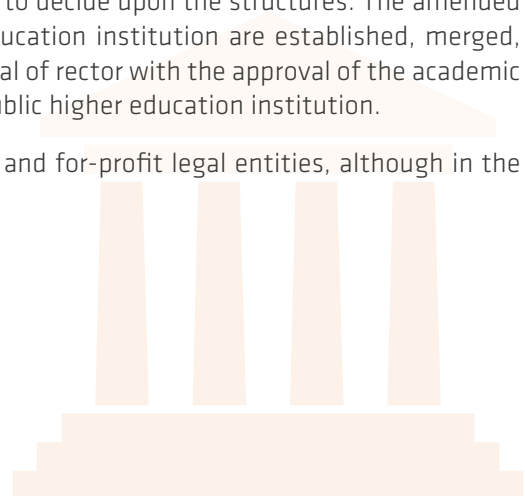
The 2022 reform changes rules regarding board membership. While boards were previously composed of 14 (external) members, the number of members shall now be defined in the university statutes. However, the law stipulates that this number must be odd, not smaller than five, and that there must be enough members to match one quarter of the senate. One member is elected by the other members of the board (if they fail to do so, the ministry appoints this member on the proposal of the Slovak Academy of Sciences). One half of the other members are elected and dismissed by the senate and the other half are appointed and dismissed by the Ministry of Education. Among the members elected by the senate, at least one is elected by the student part of the senate. The board is nearly fully external as board members may not be part of the academic community of the institution, with the exception of the member(s) elected by students. The function is also incompatible with public offices. A five-year term of office is set in the law.

Members of the board must be “prominent scientific figures or artistic figures, representatives of public life at the national or regional level, and significant representatives of the business field in accordance with the mission of the public higher education institution”, or persons with experience in the field of property and financial management. They must have at least a first-level university education and at least four years of management experience. Candidates are put forward by a variety of organisations, including NGOs, municipalities, self-governing regions, the Slovak Academy of Sciences, public research institutions, representative associations of employers, museums, galleries and theatres.

Structures

Until the 2022 reform, universities founded before 2002 had a defined list of the faculties attributed by their founding law, while those created after 2002 were free to decide upon the structures. The amended law now specifies that components of the public higher education institution are established, merged, ordered to merge, divided, and cancelled based on the proposal of rector with the approval of the academic senate and the board of trustees (in this sequence) of the public higher education institution.

Slovak universities are authorised to create both non-profit and for-profit legal entities, although in the latter case legal restrictions apply.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Slovak universities receive funding through a block grant on an annual basis, with parts of the funds earmarked, such as social support for students. The 2022 reform introduces three-year performance agreements in addition to annual allocation. The mechanism has evolved into performative agreements incorporated into standard agreements signed between the ministry and universities since the 2024 budget.

Financial management

Slovak universities can keep any surplus generated on public funding without restrictions.

Slovak universities can borrow up to certain limits related to their income in previous years as well as maximum loan repayment levels. The 2022 law now specifies that the board of trustees must consent to the rector's proposal before loans are contracted.

Slovak universities own their buildings and can sell their buildings without notable restrictions. However, the amended law now forces universities to transfer all funds from sale of real estate to a separate bank account of the public university maintained in the State Treasury. The funds may be used for purposes and to the extent determined by the board of trustees.

Tuition fees

There are no tuition fees for students enrolled full-time in programmes delivered in the Slovak language.⁴

Although there is an externally set ceiling to tuition fees charged for study programmes delivered in other languages, it does not apply if these study programmes are also offered in Slovak, giving full autonomy to the university in setting the fee level. The 2022 amendment allows universities to waive the fee for full-time students enrolled in programmes delivered in a foreign language,⁵ in an effort to increase internationalisation. The revised law also foresees a tuition fee exemption for students who have been granted asylum or protection.

There is a ceiling set by the government for fees charged to the part-time students (making for slightly under 20% of the student population).

4 Except in cases where students exceed the standard duration of study or study concurrently two or more study programmes provided by the public university in the same degree.

5 Provided that the programmes are also offered in the Slovak language.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Staff at public universities in Slovakia are part of the public sector and considered to be public sector employees in certain aspects of their terms and conditions, such as salaries, but do not have civil servant status.⁶

Recruitment of senior academic and administrative staff is carried out freely by universities. The 2022 revised law nevertheless introduces the notion of minimum criteria for pedagogical, research, development, or artistic activity, to be used in the recruitment of senior academic staff. These criteria are established by regulation of the ministry. Universities remain free to develop additional criteria.

The reform enables the recruitment as professor and docent (associated professor) of academics who do not hold the actual title. This initiative is mainly aimed at simplifying the selection procedure, also for people from a business/external environment or from abroad.

Salaries

Salary bands are set by an external authority for all staff (law applying to public employees in education and healthcare). The law sets out a table of salaries according to staff grade, qualifications etc.⁷ Universities can decide to exceed the salary bands through additional benefits using criteria such as performance or additional responsibilities (variable part of the salary). The government and trade unions negotiate salary increases and other benefits.

Careers

While universities could decide on promotions for senior academic and administrative staff freely, the revised 2022 law introduces regulations regarding the composition of the selection committee for academic staff promotions.

Professors and docents (associate professors) go through tenure track and are offered an open-ended contract after completing successfully two five-year contracts.

Dismissals follow national labour regulations as well as the higher education law and public service law.



⁶ Staff who work at the state universities, which are smaller and more specialist institutions focusing on the military, police and medical fields, have full civil servant status or are in public service, or are hired on a contractual basis.

⁷ This is used in the calculation of the block grant funding.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Overall student numbers are fixed in agreement between universities and public authorities, as far as the ministry may decide to limit the year-on-year increase in the number of full-time students (but by no less than 5%). Each university's statutes set out the framework for enrolment including the total number of enrolled students (both full-time and part-time). The university sets out the number of enrolled students in its study programmes on the basis of proposals by deans of faculties which are then approved by the university senate and the board. The numbers set out by the university must take into consideration the long-term institutional strategy, development programmes and personnel and material resources.

Admission criteria and procedures are set by universities themselves for all degree levels.

Degree programmes

All new degree programmes, at all levels, must be submitted to a prior accreditation before they can be introduced. The external quality assurance system is in transition and it is expected that in the medium term, accreditation will only be required to open new programmes that do not fall within the pre-accredited study fields of the institution or if HEIs fail to receive institutional accreditation.

Universities can terminate study programmes independently but must ensure that students are given the possibility to continue to study in a similar programme within the institution or at another HEI.

Universities can choose the language of instruction for all programmes.

Universities can freely design the content of degree programmes and courses. It is worth noting that the 2018 law on quality assurance requires the participation of external partners in the elaboration of the descriptions of all study programmes.

External quality assurance

Programme accreditation and accreditation of the internal quality assurance system of the institution are mandatory. They are carried out by the Slovak Accreditation Agency (SAAHE), which has replaced the previously government-connected Accreditation Commission since 2020. Universities may contract EQAR-registered agencies for the initial phase of the internal QA system compliance assessment. This report shall be automatically recognised by SAAHE. The rest of the process and final decision rest with SAAHE.



Recent developments

Reform of the Higher Education Act

The rationale for the reform focused on enhancing the performance of Slovak universities, against a background of a sharp decline in student numbers and imbalanced outward mobility. The reform also seeks to tackle the issue of perceived over-enrolment at master's level by increasing third-party involvement in the governance of the universities. Enhanced representation of stakeholders such as employers is meant to gear the academic offer towards labour market needs.

The preparation process for this reform package was difficult, with the sector rejecting early drafts. Discussions were held in the 'contact group' including representatives of higher education and of the ministry. A subsequent version of the amendments was rejected by academia and followed by protests. The outcome of a year-long discussion was eventual support by student representative bodies and part of the sector, with reserves from academic senates and deans, whose competences were affected by the amendments. The reform features in Slovakia's recovery and resilience plan; thus, its completion is connected to delivery of supporting European funds.

Funding model

As part of its wider focus on enhancing university performance, Slovakia included a reform of its funding model for universities in its NextGenerationEU resilience and recovery plan. Through the 2022 reform of the law, the country plans to introduce performance-related contracts and revise the funding formula used to distribute financing to its higher education institutions. The intention is to move away from a model based on past activity to develop a system that supports strategic university profiling. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport subsequently drafted performance-related contracts incorporated into standard contracts signed with public universities. These came into force in 2024 for a three-year period.

Views from the sector

The sector considers that institutional autonomy will not be fully exercised in practice, let alone increase, in a context of financial dependency towards the state (with public funding covering about half of the university costs) and limited or diminishing own income sources. This could change with the establishment of a buffer body acting as funding council for universities to avoid possible political interference in university funding, but no such activity is foreseen.

The sector has called on public authorities to move from a 'control' paradigm to a more supportive approach. The State's perspective on the matter could be illustrated by the introduction of the board of trustees. As there is no internal representation in the board, with the exception of the member now elected by students, the board remains perceived as an external organ rather than a fully-fledged university governance body. As the competence portfolio of this body has grown, the sector expressed concern regarding increased external supervision combined with greater influence from external parties in financial, staffing - and even academic - matters.

The sector has underlined that insufficient funding and capital investments into infrastructure remain an obstacle to reaching goals demanded by state and increase attractiveness of the institutions. The sector has pointed to the long-lasting paradox of requiring universities to implement reforms without the necessary public funding to do so in a sustainable manner. Only recently has the budget of public universities increased with the introduction of performative agreements and the implementation of measurable indicators.

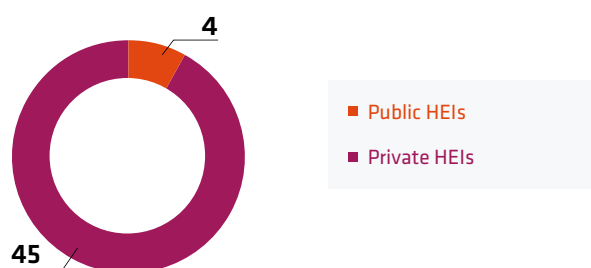
Autonomy of public universities in Slovenia

Higher education landscape

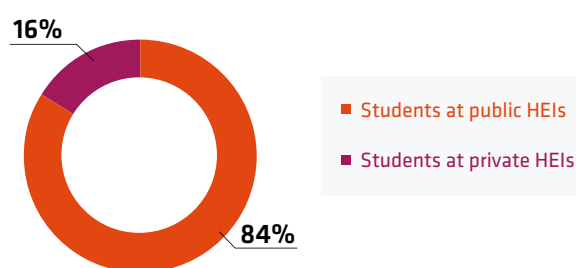
The Slovenian higher education system distinguishes between public and private institutions. Although private higher education institutions outnumber public higher education institutions, most students are enrolled at public higher education institutions.

Among these, the University of Ljubljana caters to approximately 65% of the student population and delivers over 40% of the degree programmes available throughout the country.

Graph 1. Higher education sector in Slovenia¹



Graph 2. Distribution of student population in Slovenia



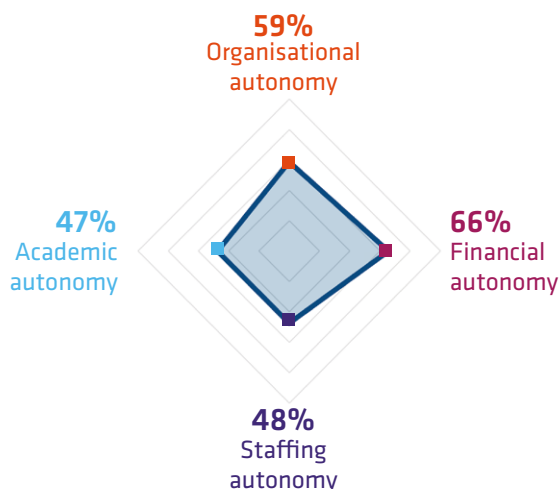
Higher education institutions in Slovenia are regulated by the Higher Education Act, which was first passed in 1993 and was subsequently amended several times, notably in 2016 and 2017. Public universities are also notably subject to the Public Finance Act, the Public Procurement Act, as well as the Public Sector Salary System Act and the Public Employees Act. Additionally, public universities are audited by a state audit commission. In 2021, Slovenian authorities passed the Scientific Research and Innovation Activity Act, which updates research funding modalities.

Private higher education institutions must only comply with the Higher Education Act. Consequently, they enjoy significantly more autonomy in financial and staffing matters.

The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

¹ The data is provided by the Slovenian Rectors' Conference and corresponds to the 2021/2022 academic calendar.

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	70%	59% ↘	Medium low	21
Financial autonomy	66%	66% →	Medium high	16
Staffing autonomy	41%	48% ↗	Medium low	29
Academic autonomy	47%	47% →	Medium low	28

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including possible legal amendments, cannot be captured by the Scorecard, as they may fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring must not necessarily be interpreted as absence of system-level change.

Timeline

2016-2017 Amendments to the Higher Education Act

2016 Changes to the public funding model

2021 Adoption of the Scientific Research and Innovation Activity Act

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

Universities must obtain approval from the ministry for changes to certain parts of their statutes, such as academic affairs.

Executive leadership

The executive head (rector) is elected by the university community, following a weighted vote system that includes both academic and administrative staff as well as students. The law prescribes certain provisions regarding the share of the different voting groups.

The only criterion stated by the law is that the rector must be a full-time professor from the university. Previously, the selection criteria were not provided by the law, but it was common practice to elect a full professor from within the university. The law now fixes the term of office at four years, with the possibility to renew it once.

The dismissal of the rector is an internal matter that the statutes regulate. At the University of Ljubljana, the rector's dismissal may be proposed by the senate with a two-thirds majority. The statutes determine the grounds and procedure for calling early rectoral elections.

Governance bodies

Slovenian universities have dual governance structures, including both senate and board/council types of bodies. The board/council is responsible for financial and organisational issues, while the senate is responsible for academic issues, including promotions and teaching.

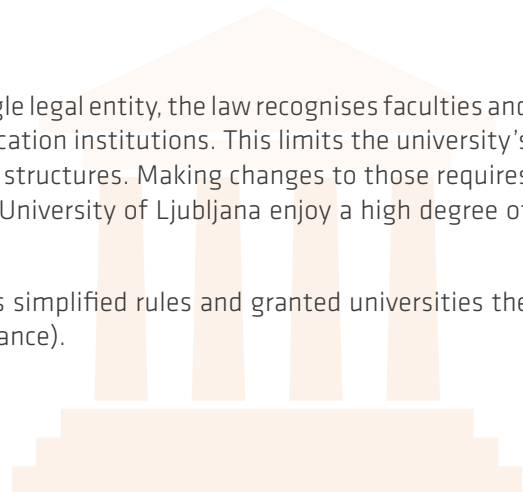
The senate is composed of academic staff and student representatives. The rector is an ex officio member and chairs the senate. Besides the rector and student representatives, members of the senate are usually deans of the faculties and academies. According to the law, students shall make up one-fifth of the senate. Union representatives are also invited to the senate sessions, although they do not have voting rights. The actual size of the senate is not regulated, but all member entities of the university and disciplines are to be equally represented.

The law lays out the composition principles of the board, which includes representatives of the founder, academic and administrative staff, students, and employers. At the University of Ljubljana, the board consists of nine members: three appointed by the government, one approved by the government upon the suggestion of the chamber of commerce and with the prior approval of the university, and five elected through internal procedures, including one student representative. The board is chaired by one of the internal members.

Structures

Contrary to the other two public universities, which have a single legal entity, the law recognises faculties and academies of art of the University of Ljubljana as higher education institutions. This limits the university's capacity to make autonomous decisions regarding academic structures. Making changes to those requires an authorisation from the ministry. Member entities of the University of Ljubljana enjoy a high degree of autonomy when conducting activities on the market.

The 2021 Scientific Research and Innovation Activity Act has simplified rules and granted universities the freedom to set up for-profit legal entities (spin-offs, for instance).



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Slovenian universities receive funding through an annual block grant aimed at teaching activities only, excluding doctoral level training. Public funding is allocated to the central level of the university, which then channels it to the faculties.

The public funding model changed at the end of 2016. While public funding allocation continues to be annual, it is now framed by a four-year contract concluded between each institution and the ministry. Universities have a certain margin for negotiation with the ministry as far as the 'development pillar' is concerned, where different criteria are used to reflect the strategic priorities and profiles of the institutions. Although the capacity of the university to allocate these funds internally has grown with the change in the funding model, constraints remain.

Financial management

Universities may retain surplus from public funding if it is used for core activities, including building maintenance. Universities own all their buildings and require approval from the state to sell property. Slovenian universities also have the possibility to borrow money from the financial market, subject to approval from an external authority.

Tuition fees

Full-time Slovenian and EU students enrolled in bachelor's and master's degree programmes in Slovenian universities are not required to pay fees. However, public universities have the authority to set fees for international students at all levels and for Slovenian/EU students at the doctoral level, with the caveat that they do not exceed the full cost of the student's education. Consequently, fees vary across programmes depending on their cost intensiveness.

It is worth noting that the number of fee-paying part-time students has sharply decreased over the past few years.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

All staff in Slovenian public universities have civil servant status. Universities develop an annual human resources plan that requires approval from the ministry, thereby imposing external control over the number of available positions funded by the government.

Salaries

Civil servant status comes together with strict regulations regarding the salaries of some senior academic and all senior administrative staff. The 2021 Scientific Research and Innovation Activity Act allows universities and other research institutes to increase salaries for researchers by a maximum of 100%, but this does not apply to teaching and administrative staff.

Careers

Dismissals are also regulated in accordance with civil service rules. Promotion to a higher salary category is possible following an evaluation every three years. However, the university has limited flexibility to reward staff performance. Academic promotion, which includes a change of academic title, is possible every five years via the habilitation process.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Overall student numbers are determined through negotiation between the universities and the ministry. The decision is subsequently approved by the Slovenian government. Each university submits a proposal to the Ministry of Education based on the student numbers provided by the faculties.

Admission at bachelor's degree level is regulated and organised through a centralised exam. Universities may set additional criteria for specific programmes. The required threshold of points for admission depends on the programme applied for.

At master's degree level, admission does not involve public authorities, giving universities a greater role in student selection. The process is mainly managed at faculty level.

Degree programmes

Programme accreditation is mandatory, although the process has transitioned from individual evaluations to sample-based evaluations. Each year, approximately 2% of programmes undergo evaluation based on a given thematic priority set by the council of the Quality Assurance agency. A different sample of programmes is included in the institutional accreditation. For the introduction of new programmes at all levels, prior accreditation is still required, which can only be undertaken by the national agency.

Universities can freely design the content of degree programmes. There are restrictions regarding the choice of the language of instruction. Universities may open full study programmes in languages other than the national language, but the law imposes that the corresponding programme is also be provided in Slovenian, at the same university. This also applies to private providers.

External quality assurance

External quality assurance has evolved, and the three public universities have now successfully completed institutional accreditation. The process of reaccreditation is repeated every five years and is exclusively carried out by NAKVIS, the agency responsible for quality assurance of higher education in Slovenia.



Recent developments

Despite a commitment from Slovenian authorities to allocate 1% of GDP to scientific research expenditure, funding continues to be a persistent challenge, particularly in an inflationary context. This poses significant difficulties for comprehensive universities in conducting research activities, as they must often rely on competitive funding schemes at national or European levels to finance their core research work. Consequently, this creates notable disparities in the financial situations of different faculties and universities. Moreover, accessing these funding sources typically requires co-funding, further limiting the available options due to legal restrictions.

Views from the sector

The government has shown interest in the further integration of the University of Ljubljana, but it has faced opposition from the institution. The University of Ljubljana strongly advocates for a highly decentralised organisational structure, which promotes a sense of 'healthy competition' among its members and allows for distinct branding and research profiles. State audits have confirmed the university's ability to effectively operate within the decentralised framework.

The sector has expressed concerns about the inability of universities to be competitive on the labour market for some professional profiles such as IT or financial specialists, as compared to private companies.

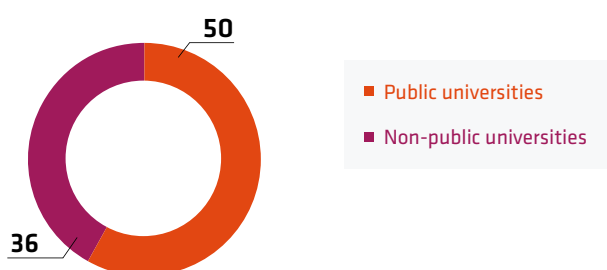
Representatives of the sector also note a tendency of state intervention, for instance to increase enrolment in 'priority' fields.

Autonomy of public universities in Spain

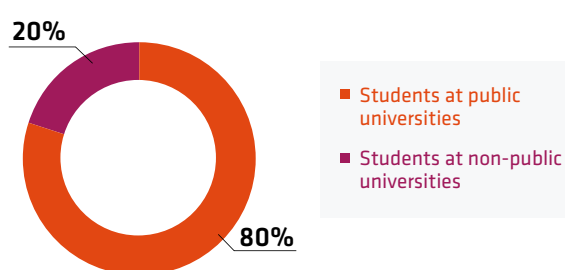
Higher education landscape

The Spanish higher education sector consists of university and non-university education, with the latter including advanced vocational training, artistic and advanced sports education. Higher education institutions may be public or private. Public universities make up the largest part of the sector, both in number of institutions and share of students.¹

Graph 1. Number of universities in Spain²



Graph 2. Students' distribution across universities in Spain³



The private university sector comprises both for-profit (minority) and not-for-profit institutions (often foundations). These institutions enjoy greater organisational, financial and staffing autonomy than public universities. They must however comply with regulations established by both the central government and the Autonomous Communities.

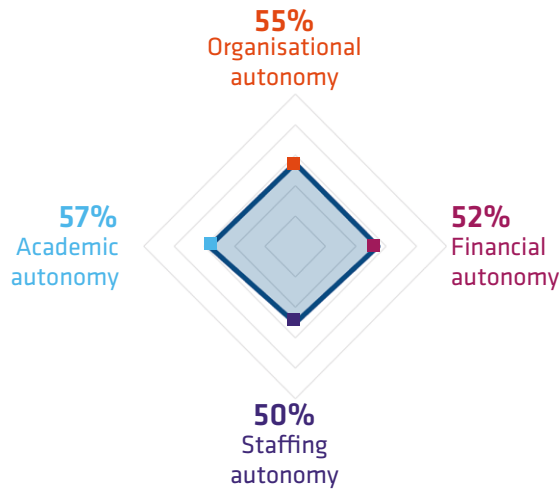
Competences for higher education are distributed between the central government and the Autonomous Communities. The nationwide regulatory framework governing university activities changed in 2023 with the adoption of Organic Law 2/2023 on the University System ('LOSU'). The data recorded for Spain in the 2023 Autonomy Scorecard corresponds to the regulatory framework prior to this reform. The present profile seeks to take the new law into account, as it notably brings about changes in staffing and academic matters. The 2023 law focuses mainly on the regulation of public universities but devotes Title X to the specific regulation of private universities.

¹ The Polytechnic University of Cartagena is the most recently founded public university (1998); over 20 private universities have been established since then. In Catalonia, the public university sector comprises regular public universities and public foundation universities. The latter still report to Parliament and must respect public procurement rules. The main difference between the public universities and public foundation universities relates to the status of academic staff, who at public universities are civil servants, but not at public foundation universities. Public funding makes for a smaller share of the income structure of foundation universities in comparison to public universities.

² Data is validated by the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE) and reflects 2021/2022 academic year.

³ Ibid

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension	2010	2017	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	55%	55% →	55% →	Medium low	28
Financial autonomy ⁴	55%	52% ↘	52% →	Medium low	25
Staffing autonomy ⁵	50%	50% →	50% →	Medium low	26
Academic autonomy	57%	57% →	57% →	Medium low	19

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including possible legal amendments, cannot be captured by the Scorecard, as they may fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring must not necessarily be interpreted as absence of system-level change. The scores above correspond to the regulatory framework before the implementation of law 2/2023.

The following description concerns only the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

Timeline

2020 Adoption of Law 3/2020 on Education (amending Law 2/2006) introducing changes to the university admission system

2021 Adoption of Law 3/2022 on 'University coexistence', setting principles for conflict resolution at universities

2023 Adoption of Law 2/2023 on the University System ('LOSU')

4 A correction was applied for 2017 to reflect that financial surpluses must be used to reduce debt. The score for 2022 is also corrected and therefore differs from the data published in the report University Autonomy in Europe IV: the Scorecard 2023, published in March 2023.

5 Corrections were applied for the 2010 and 2017 edition to lower the value of restrictions on the recruitment of senior administrative staff.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

The statutes and related changes must be approved by the regional government to ensure legal compliance. This also applies to public foundation universities, but not to private universities.

Executive leadership

In public universities, there were two ways to elect the executive head (rector): through a direct election or through the senate-type body ('claustró'). The former involves the whole academic community (academic staff, administrative staff, and students), although the weight of their votes differs. At least 51% of the votes must belong to the academic staff with permanent contracts.

Most universities have such an election procedure in place. The University of Seville has been the only institution in which the senate elects the rector (with the same rules regarding vote weighing), reflecting a usual practice before the law introduced the direct election option in 2006.

The 2023 law only retains the direct election procedure.⁶ The rector remains formally appointed by the government of the Autonomous Community.

The legal framework defines the criteria for the selection of the rector. Candidates must be full professors and carry the highest civil servant status ('catedrático') at public institutions. Moreover, the candidate should be already employed by the university.

The rector's term of office was not set in the law until 2023 and was usually four years, renewable once. The new law introduces a fixed, non-renewable six-year term.⁷

The rector is dismissed by the university senate based on a procedure specified in the law, with the regional government formally validating the dismissal.

Governance bodies

Spanish public universities have a dual governance model with specific characteristics. The board has the central steering power on managerial, academic and financial matters, while the senate is responsible for approving the statutes as well as management of the university on an annual basis. However, the social council is a third body, which is consulted on the matters that may generate economic consequences (i.e. real estate matters, the opening of new programmes). The social council has control and supervision powers and is responsible for approving the annual university budget.

According to the pre-2023 legal framework, the board comprises a maximum of 50 members, whereas the senate consists of up to 300 members. The majority of board members must be senior academic staff. The senate selects part of the board members. Up to three members of the social council may also sit on the board. The composition of the social council is regulated by regional law and its members are appointed externally from the cultural, professional, economic, trade union and social sectors.

⁶ Therefore requiring the University of Seville to adapt its statutes.

⁷ Spanish universities must adapt their statutes within two years of the entry into force of the 2023 law.



The 2023 law modifies these rules. Universities may decide on the size and composition of the board and the senate, only specifying provisions regarding ex officio membership and minimum representation of students, academic and administrative staff. The law also specifies that the senate elects student and staff representatives to the board, while the rector selects one-third of the members. Contrary to the board and senate, the social council's size and composition remain regulated by the Autonomous Communities.

Private universities are steered by the board ('consejo de gobierno'). They also have a board of trustees ('patronato'), which is composed of external members (mostly public figures) whose role is akin to the social council of the public institutions. The composition and the related procedures of the governance bodies at non-public institutions are outlined in the statutes.

Structures

The law describes the academic units of public universities; however, the universities have the freedom to deviate from the traditional model, insofar as some universities have departments and no faculties. In most cases, though, the institutions have both in place. The 2023 law mentions that the creation, modification and suppression of faculties and schools must be approved by the Autonomous Community.

Universities in Spain can create both for-profit and non-profit legal entities.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Autonomous Communities set up their own public funding model for universities operating on their territory. Overall, universities in Spain receive core public funding on an annual basis through a block grant with no specific restrictions on the allocation of funding. In addition, the 2023 law stipulates that multiannual funding instruments should be developed by all Autonomous Communities.

Financial management

Universities can keep any surplus generated on public funding. However, the 2012 organic law on budgetary stability and financial sustainability⁸ specifies that public authorities and public organisations must use surplus to reduce the level of net debt.

They can also own and sell their buildings; the Autonomous Communities set the rules regarding the sale of real estate.

Public universities (including Catalanian public foundations) must get prior approval from the regional government to borrow money and justify the need for investment.

Tuition fees

The tuition fees are fixed by the regional government for domestic and EU students, within an overall range defined by the central government. Tuition fees are regulated at the regional government level for non-EU students. For instance, in Madrid, the government sets the maximum ceiling of 100% of actual costs. Overall, tuition fees markedly vary across regions and relate to the attractiveness of the region. An objective of the 2023 law is to establish a general framework of containment or progressive reduction of public prices, which will have to be agreed at the General Conference on University Policy (*Conferencia General de Política Universitaria*), where the Autonomous Communities and the ministry are represented.

8 <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2012-5730>

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

The majority of senior administrative and all academic staff from the public institutions are considered civil servants. The recruitment of civil servants is subject to specific regulations, insofar as a special announcement must be published, but is handled by the university. ANECA, the national quality assurance agency, delivers the Academic Staff Assessment Programme (PEP) to qualify candidates. The recruitment of senior administrative staff (such as the 'gerente', who is the head of administration) requires internal approval from the social council, while for medium or lower-level administrative staff, the universities are free to administer the process, in compliance with law regulating public administration.

At the time of writing, the Statute of Teaching and Research Staff, which will develop the provisions of the 2023 law regarding university personnel, was still pending. An already known evolution, however, is that the competitions for access to positions of teaching staff (civil servants) and permanent labour teaching staff (non-civil servants) must be held by committees of experts. These committees will be mostly external to the university and will be appointed from a list drawn up by each university from among experts of equal or higher category. On the other hand, to access these teaching staff positions, research or teaching activities must have been carried out in universities and/or research centres other than the institution where the doctoral thesis was presented.

Private universities are free to recruit their staff, however, they tend to emulate practices from the public sector, which fosters the mobility of academic staff across Spanish universities. Non-public universities are nevertheless not required to go through external accreditation when seeking to hire international academic staff.

Salaries

Because of their civil servant status, senior academic staff have externally set salaries. This is the case for some administrative staff as well.

The 2023 law indicates that public authorities may establish additional remuneration linked to individual merits for the exercise of teaching, research and transfer activities, to be assigned after assessment by ANECA. The Autonomous Communities may also establish additional remuneration, and these complements will be assigned by the Social Council ('*Consejo Social*') at the proposal of the Governing Council ('*Consejo de Gobierno*') within the limits set by the Autonomous Community. Universities themselves may also establish additional remuneration through transparent negotiation procedures.

Private universities may set salaries autonomously.

Careers

Promotion of academic staff is regulated, with a positive assessment from ANECA necessary to proceed. Universities have the obligation to promote staff who have succeeded in this assessment but limited financial capacities have made this difficult.

The 2023 law stipulates that there can be no more than 20% of academic staff in temporary positions. It also introduces a new title: distinguished professor, to employ prestigious academics who are working abroad. As all non-civil servant positions, this position will be regulated by the Autonomous Community.

The 2023 law stipulates that a minimum of 15% of annual open positions will be reserved for accredited researchers (those in research positions with temporary contracts and who have been officially accredited).

The dismissal of all senior academic and some senior administrative staff is strictly regulated, in connection to civil servant status.

Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

Universities in Spain negotiate with an external authority to decide on overall student numbers. Admission to bachelor's degree programmes is co-regulated by the universities and the external authority, while at master's degree level, admission criteria are set by the universities.

Degree programmes

There are two types of degree programmes: those leading to state-recognised diplomas (*'titulos oficiales'*) and programmes leading to university diplomas (*'titulos propios'*). The former requires prior accreditation to be funded at bachelor's and master's degree levels by ANECA; the latter, which often relate to professional fields, do not go through external accreditation. All doctoral programmes need to be accredited to be introduced. Accredited programmes feature in a national registry.

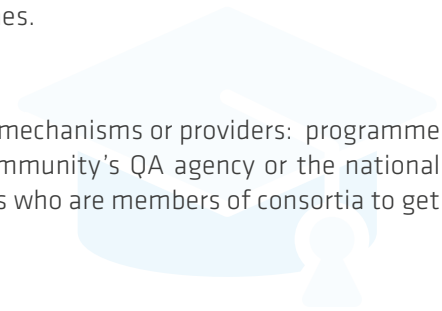
Universities may terminate programmes independently.

Universities can design the content of their degree programmes without constraints.

Universities can choose the language of instruction for all programmes.

External quality assurance

Universities are not able to choose either external quality assurance mechanisms or providers: programme accreditation is mandatory and carried out by the Autonomous Community's QA agency or the national agency (ANECA). Nevertheless, there is the possibility for universities who are members of consortia to get accreditation for joint programmes from EQAR-registered agencies.



Recent developments

The process leading to the higher education reform brought about by the 2023 law required an extended period of discussions and drafting (with a preliminary draft already released mid-2021). At the time of writing, the sector was waiting for the regulatory provisions that will derive from the new law and that will be developed both by the central government and the Autonomous Communities.

In terms of organisational autonomy, however, the impact of the law could be considered as mixed. Setting fixed terms of office for rectors provides less autonomy than previously; however, one may also note the more flexible regulation around the size of governing bodies.

Financial sustainability remains a major challenge for Spanish universities. The Autonomous Communities have had different funding models, which typically included an element of performance (for up to 20% of the model). These were all suspended following the economic crisis of 2009 and replaced by a historical allocation logic in the context of budget cuts. Investment in higher education continues to be below than it was in 2009, thus the system has not recovered since the crisis. The new law establishes for the first time a commitment to increase public funding to at least 1% of GDP by 2023, although without specifying how this will be achieved. The 2023 law also stipulates that multiannual funding instruments should be developed by all Autonomous Communities.

Views from the sector

Representatives of the sector underline that the new law reinforces university organisational autonomy by transferring various decisions regarding the size and composition of governing bodies to the institutions' statutes. The sector had also called for more autonomy to decide on the process and requirements for the rector's election and had argued for a greater role of the university in selecting external members.

The sector highlights that although public and private universities all operate within the same legal framework and are all assigned with the same key missions (teaching, research, and knowledge transfer), public universities are constrained by more regulations. This makes the development of a talent attraction and retention model for researchers and managers difficult for public universities. Academic staff career development should be designed in such a way that it enables stabilisation and promotion.

In this context, the new law notably focuses on careers, with the sector welcoming the commitment to the reduction of temporary and precarious employment but stressing the need to accompany this evolution with a change in the funding formula to compensate the associated costs. Indeed, in terms of teaching and research staff, the application of the provisions of the new law entails an extra direct cost for public universities of at least €844 million, according to a report commissioned by the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE).⁹ The sector points out that these induced costs must be financed directly by the General State Budget and generally deplores the lack of specificity of the financial responsibility for the implementation of the new law.¹⁰

The management of NextGenerationEU funds channelled to universities as per the Spanish recovery and resilience national plan has also been a bone of contention, with the sector calling for greater flexibility and reduced bureaucracy for the initiatives carried out in collaboration between universities and companies.

Another demand put forward by CRUE is the transition from a programme-based and external accreditation system to a model of institutional accreditation. This will require a change from a culture of external control to a culture of university autonomy, transparency, accountability and trust. Institutional accreditation should become a basic pillar in the future university model, understood as an ecosystem of learning and teaching, research, and knowledge transfer where university centres become the basic units of evaluation.

⁹ https://www.crue.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Monografia_Financiacion_Publica_web.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.crue.org/2023/12/la-presidenta-de-la-crue-advierte-ante-el-consejo-de-universia-del-escenario-de-indefinicion-en-el-que-se-encuentran-las-universidades-con-la-losu/>

Autonomy of public universities in Türkiye

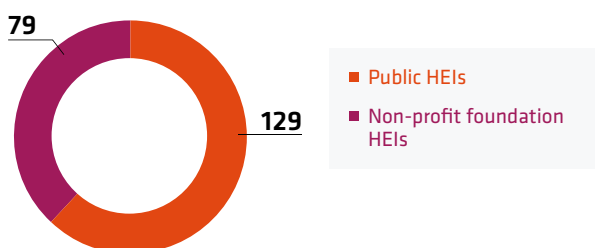
Higher education landscape

The Turkish higher education system comprises different types of institutions providing higher education, including public universities, non-profit foundation universities, and non-profit foundation vocational schools. Public universities are primarily funded by the government, while non-profit foundation universities do not receive state funding. Both public and non-profit foundation universities are financially audited by the Court of Accounts and the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), respectively. The establishment of private universities is not possible in Türkiye.

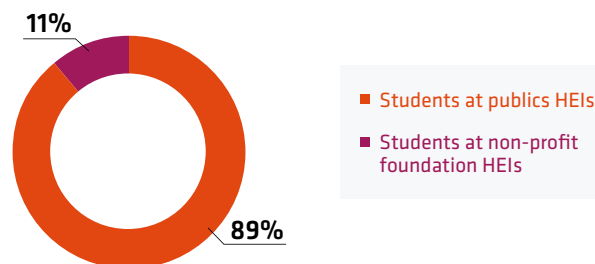
The [Law on Higher Education](#) applies to both public and non-profit foundation higher education institutions. However, there are specific provisions that apply to foundation universities on financial and administrative matters, granting them more autonomy than their public counterparts. Staff employed at public universities have civil servant status, while staff at foundation universities are employed under private contracts. Governance structures also differ, with the highest decision-making body at foundation universities being the board of trustees, rather than the senate in the case of public universities.

In total, there are 208 higher education institutions, two-thirds of which are public universities; the rest are non-profit foundation higher education institutions. The Turkish higher education system currently accommodates about seven million students, with the overwhelming majority attending public universities, and approximately 11% enrolled in non-profit foundation higher education institutions.

Graph 1. Composition of the higher education sector in Türkiye¹



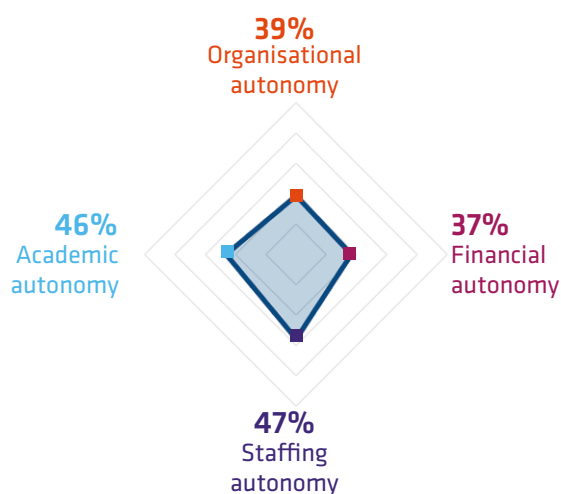
Graph 2. Distribution of student population in Türkiye



The following description pertains exclusively to the public higher education sector unless otherwise specified.

¹ Data for 2022/2023 provided by the Council of Higher Education.

Factsheet



Autonomy dimension ²	2010	2022	2022 Cluster	Rank
Organisational autonomy	39%	39% →	Low	35
Financial autonomy	45%	37% ↘	Low	31
Staffing autonomy ³	47%	47% →	Medium low	30
Academic autonomy	46%	46% →	Medium low	29

Timeline

2012 Abolition of tuition fees for national students

2015-2017 Quality assurance reform

2018 Amendment to the Law on Higher Education (2547), generating changes in organisational matters such as the rector's appointment

2020 Additional financial requirements for non-profit foundation universities
THECQ becomes member of ENQA

² Türkiye did not participate in the second edition of the Autonomy Scorecard (2017). The reference period for comparison is therefore 2010 to 2022. Methodological adjustments that were carried out for other systems in the second edition are therefore implemented in the third edition, leading to a correction of the 2010 organisational autonomy score (from 33% to 39%).

³ Staffing autonomy scores were corrected after the release of the Autonomy Scorecard 2023 report to reflect the regulations applying to the recruitment of senior administrative staff.

Notwithstanding significant stability in scoring, it is important to mention that the impact of certain developments, including possible legal amendments, cannot be captured by the Scorecard, as they may fall beyond its scope. Therefore, stability with respect to scoring must not necessarily be interpreted as absence of system-level change.

In addition, in the case of Türkiye, some legal changes fall beyond the scope of the Scorecard methodology. Indeed, since 2018, the President of Türkiye has the right to select and appoint the rector of all universities nationwide and to dismiss a rector against whom a legal investigation is carried out.

This practice does not exist in any other higher education system analysed by the Autonomy Scorecard. European practice limits the involvement of external authorities in this matter to formal validation of the choice made internally by the university.

The current rules governing the appointment of university rectors are beyond what the European university community considers in line with the general principles of institutional autonomy. Therefore, the scoring of Türkiye should be analysed in this context, and caution should be exercised when considering the position of the system in the Autonomy Scorecard.

Organisational autonomy

Statutes

University statutes can be changed without requiring external validation; however, the enforcement of these changes is contingent on their publication in the official journal.

Executive leadership

Previously, the rector was appointed by the country's president after a selection process carried out by the academic community. The vote was carried out by secret ballot, and the participation of at least half of the teaching staff was required to reach quorum. After the vote, the CoHE selected three out of the six highest-voted candidates, and proposed them for the final decision. Since 2018, the President of Türkiye has been solely responsible for selecting and appointing rectors, thus making the process fully externally driven. The CoHE initiates the process by collecting, evaluating and forwarding applications from candidates holding the title of professor for the final appointment decision.

In the case of foundation universities, the board of trustees submits its candidate to the CoHE to be proposed to the president for appointment.

The law stipulates that the candidate must hold an academic position and must not be older than 67 years. The term of office is four years and can be extended once.

Rectors can be dismissed on grounds of criminal charges or discipline. The rector and other university administrators may be dismissed by the same authorities that appoint them. Therefore, in both types of universities, the appointment as well as the dismissal of the rector rest solely with the President of Türkiye. This approach stands out as an exception among the systems analysed by the Autonomy Scorecard.

Governance bodies

Public universities have a unitary governance model, in which the senate concentrates decision-making powers. The membership of the senate is prescribed by law, and comprises the rector, vice-rectors, deans, heads of other academic units, and faculty representatives selected by each faculty board. On some occasions, students and external members may attend without voting rights. The executive board, composed of the rector, deans, and three representatives from different faculties selected by each faculty board, is an auxiliary body that supports the rectorship in day-to-day management.

In a recent change, the president and vice-president of the council (board-type body) must now be selected from external members. They are appointed by the Council of Ministers after consultation of the university senate.

Structures

Opening faculties or other structural units requires approval from the CoHE. Universities may create non-profit legal entities.



Financial autonomy

Public funding allocation

Türkiye is one of the few systems where public funding is allocated annually through a line-item budget, which leaves universities with no margin for manoeuvre for internal funding allocation.

Financial management

Financial management is constrained due to regulations applying to public universities. Universities may not keep a surplus on public funding without the approval of the external authority, which also authorises its allocation. Borrowing money from the financial market continues to be prohibited. Public property allocated to public universities cannot be sold.

While non-profit foundation universities have more leeway in this regard, they must comply with new requirements since 2020. For example, they must educate 15% of their top-performing students free of charge without governmental subsidy compensating for the loss. They must also transfer 2% of the total student income to a public bank as a guarantee.

Tuition fees

Since 2012, there have been no tuition fees for students during their normal study period. Students who fail to graduate must pay a fee determined by presidential decree. Universities have the flexibility to set fees for foreign/international students. However, the fees must amount to a minimum of 1.5 times the programme costs, which are fixed by universities in line with the presidential decree.

The change in the tuition fee policy has not led to a major financial shift in the system since, before 2012, students' financial contribution was fixed at 10% of the actual costs.

Staffing autonomy

Recruitment

Senior academic and administrative staff have civil servant status. Other staff categories may be hired on limited term contracts.

The recruitment processes of administrative staff are run centrally by the government. The CoHE determines the vacancies for academic positions at universities. However, their recruitment processes are carried out entirely by their universities.

Non-profit foundation universities sign contracts with their academic and administrative staff.

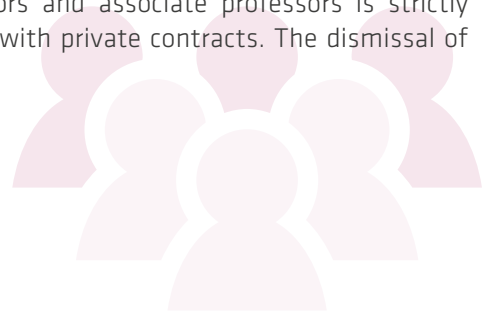
Salaries

The salaries for academic and administrative staff in public universities are determined by the central government owing to their civil servant statutes. Academic staff with the same academic title in public universities receive the same salary. However, they receive additional payments based on their academic performance. Non-profit foundation universities may not set salaries lower than those of public universities. Their salaries are specified in their contracts.

Careers

Promotion is only possible if there is a post available at a higher level. A change in the academic title requires the announcement of the vacant position. All positions and advertisements of vacancies are announced in the official gazette after the approval of CoHE and anyone eligible for the position can apply.

In line with civil servant status, the dismissal of full professors and associate professors is strictly regulated. The regulations do not apply to other academic staff with private contracts. The dismissal of senior administrative staff is also strictly regulated.



Academic autonomy

Student enrolment

The CoHE plays a fundamental role in setting overall student numbers, although a more participatory approach has been introduced since 2017 to determine quotas. The Higher Education Advisory Board, which consists of various ministry representatives and private organisations such as the union of chambers, gives an opinion on quotas at the national level. The CoHE discusses the quotas separately with universities but has the final decisive power. The criteria considered when deciding on the quotas include student/teacher ratio, staff qualifications, physical and technical infrastructure, among other factors.

Student admission to associate's⁴ and bachelor's degree programmes is organised through a central exam conducted by the ÖSYM, the Measurement, Selection, and Placement Centre. Admission at the associate and bachelor's degree levels is co-regulated between the university and the external authority. Upon the proposal of the university senate, the CoHE decides on the examination procedure, as well as admission criteria. In some programmes such as fine arts, music, and sports, the evaluation of applicants is in the hands of the university.

Admission at the master's and doctorate degree levels is organised by the universities themselves.

Degree programmes

The introduction or termination of academic programmes at all levels, including bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree levels, requires the approval of the CoHE based on a proposal by the university senate. Termination can be initiated by the university or by the CoHE due to insufficient student enrolment.

While the university senate can decide on the language of instruction for all programmes at all degree levels, prior negotiation with CoHE is required to ensure that the institution has the necessary capacities in this regard.

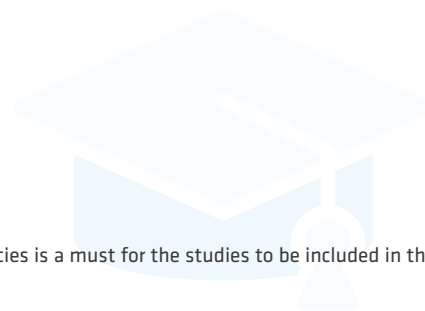
External quality assurance

The Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) was founded as part of the 'Higher Education Quality Assurance Regulation' in 2015. The Council was reorganised according to the Additional Article No. 35 added to Law No. 2547 on Higher Education in 2017 and gained the status of a public legal entity with administrative and financial autonomy. Since 2020, THEQC is a full member of ENQA and in 2022 THEQC acquired EQAR-registered agency status.

By law, THEQC is responsible for performing external evaluation of higher education institutions, coordinating the authorisation and recognition processes of accreditation agencies, and ensuring the internalisation and dissemination of quality assurance culture in higher education institutions in Türkiye. Currently, THEQC conducts two main external evaluation programmes, namely the Institutional External Evaluation Programme (IEEP) and the Institutional Accreditation Programme (IAP), and their follow-ups. All universities, irrespective of their status, are required to submit annual self-evaluation reports to THEQC to be included in these programmes. Additionally, HEIs are free to select other QA agencies for voluntary programme and institutional evaluations.⁵

⁴ Short-cycle higher education

⁵ Evaluation by THEQC-authorised local QA agencies or recognised international QA agencies is a must for the studies to be included in the Turkish Qualifications Framework.



Views from the sector

According to the CoHE, the Turkish higher education system is currently undergoing a transition after a significant massification phase, with nearly half of the existing universities having been established within the past two decades. This transitional phase brings about a range of both positive and negative consequences for the Turkish higher education system. It can be observed that public universities have relatively low levels of organisational and financial autonomy compared to non-profit foundation universities. A recent reform on quality assurance represents a positive development in the area of academic autonomy.

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 48 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations, EUA ensures that the voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact their activities.

The Association provides unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, websites and publications.

www.eua.eu

