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# University Autonomy in Europe: Exploratory Study

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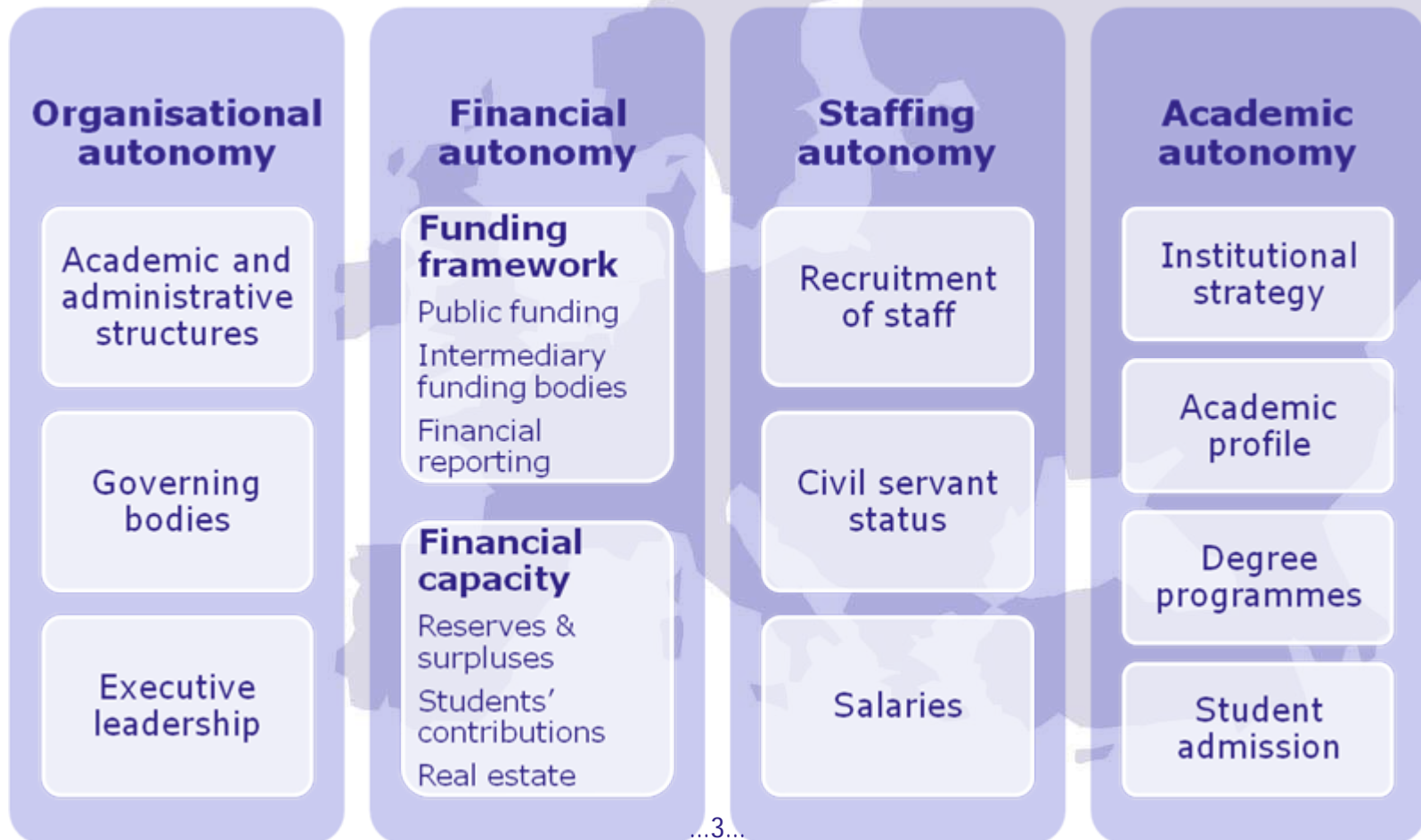
Autonomy Workshop, 16 April 2010  
University of Cyprus, Nicosia

## Methodology

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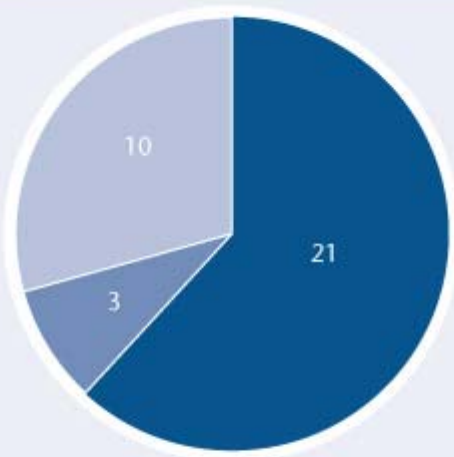
- Online questionnaire to EUA collective members: National Rectors' Conferences (2007)
- Series of telephone interviews + data from other projects (Winter 2008 – Spring 2009)
- Country profiles updated with information from other EUA work (EUDIS, Diversity study, IEP), reviewed by the NRCs (spring 2009)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

## Four dimensions of autonomy



# 1. Academic structures

## Determining academic structures



- Universities may freely decide: AT, BE nl, BE fr, HR, CZ, DK, EE, FI, GR, HU, IS, IE, IT, LV, LT, MT, NO, PL, SK, SI, UK
- Faculties listed in the law: CY, LU, TR
- Guidelines in the law: BG, FR, DE, NL, PT, RO, RS, ES, SE, CH

Universities are essentially free to determine their internal academic structures in 2/3 of the countries.

For the remaining third, the law may list possible faculties or provide guidelines; faculties may also be strongly autonomous.



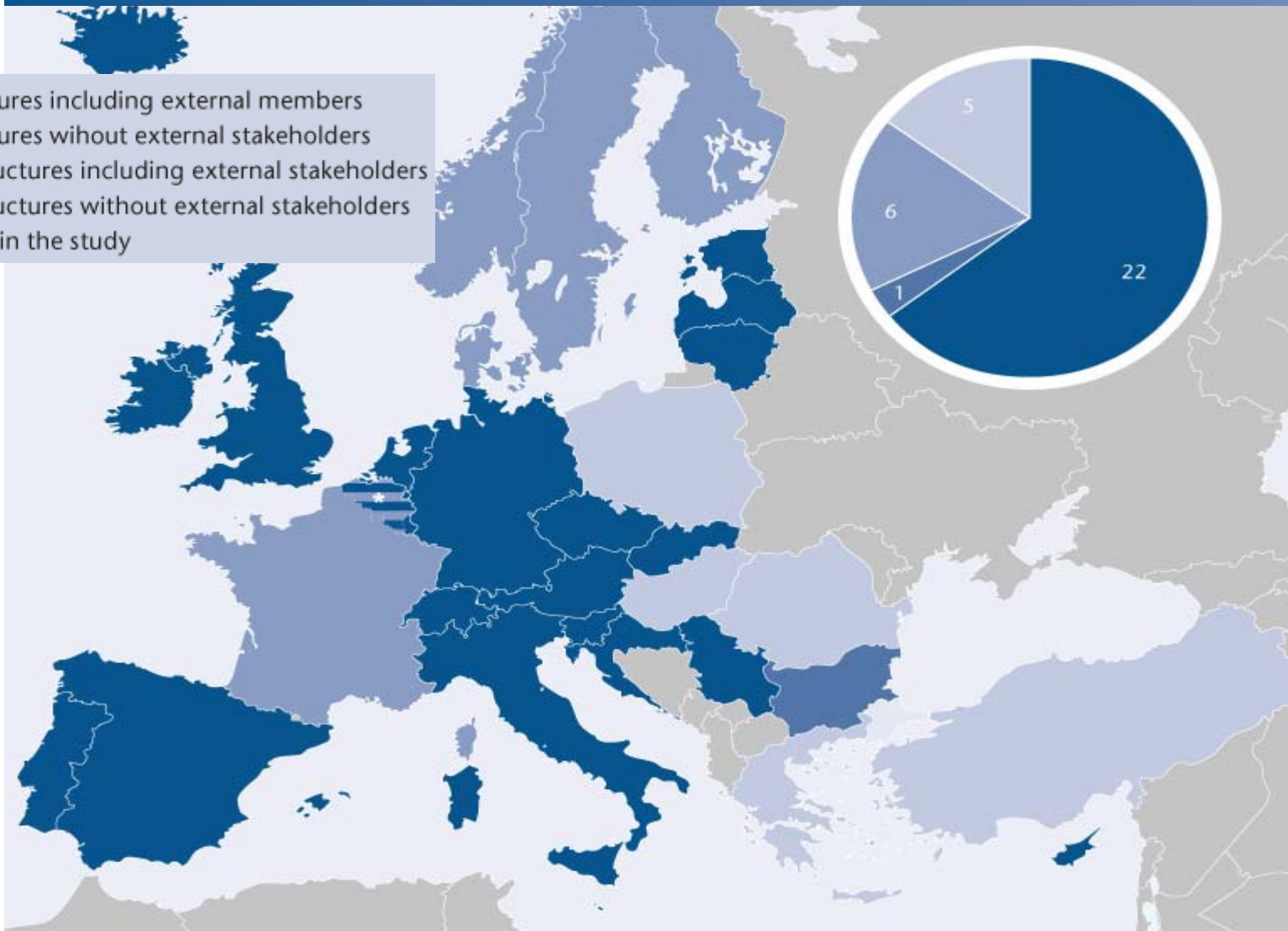
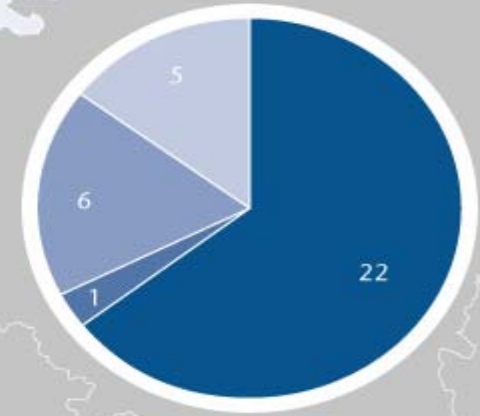
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## 2. Governance structures

### External members in governing bodies

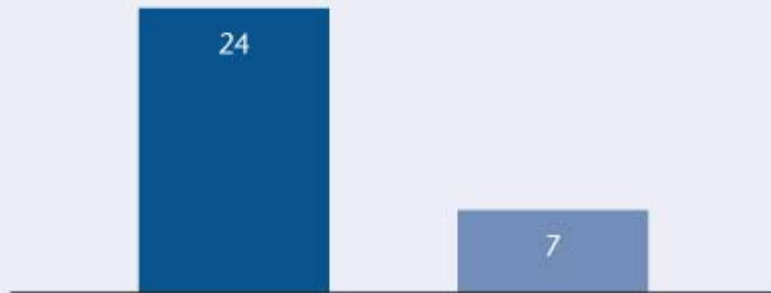
- Dual governance structures including external members
- Dual governance structures without external stakeholders
- Unitary governance structures including external stakeholders
- Unitary governance structures without external stakeholders
- Countries not included in the study





## 3. Selection of rector

### Regulatory frameworks on rector's qualifications



- Rector's qualifications stipulated in the law: AT, BE fr, BG, HR, CY, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, GR, HU, IT, LU, LV, LT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SK, ES, SE, TR
- Rectors' qualifications not stipulated in the law: CZ, IE, MT, NL, SI, CH, UK  
(missing information for Flanders and Serbia; in Iceland the situation varies.)

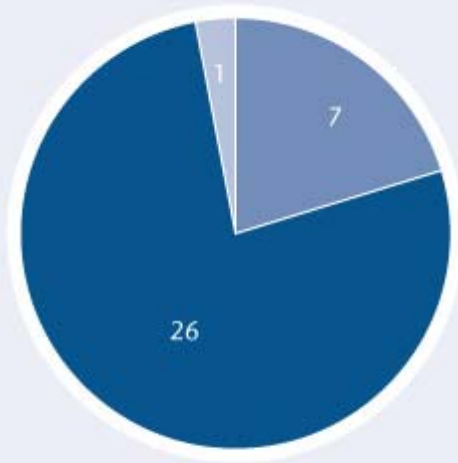
Provisions regarding the rector's required qualifications are often defined by law.

The rector is widely expected to be an academic, often from the same University.

Only in 6 countries can the rector come from outside academia.

## 1. State funding

Budget type



- Line-item budget: BG, CY, GR, LV, LT, RS, TR
- Block-grant budget: AT, BE nl, BE fr, HR, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, HU, IS, IE, IT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, CH, UK
- Varies between states: DE

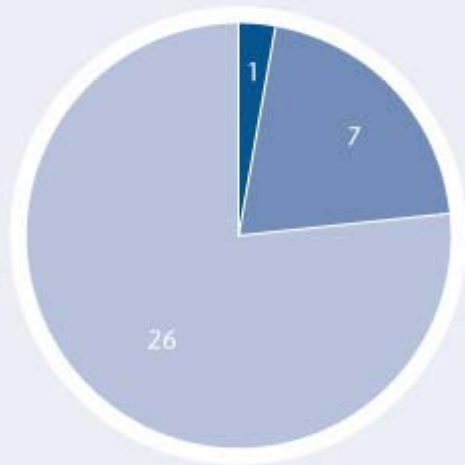
Most universities receive their core funding from the State as a block grant, **numerous restrictions apply.**

*Eg. Transfer between broad budget categories may be impossible (SE, SI).*

Only 8 countries reported that universities do not encounter restrictions in the use of their funding.

## 2. Financial capacity

### Keeping surplus from state funding



- Varies between States: DE
- Universities may not keep surplus on state funding: CY, LV, LT, PT, RO, RS, TR
- Universities may keep surplus on state funding: AT, BE, nl, BE, fr, BG, HR, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, GR, HU, IS, IE, IT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PL, SK, SI, ES, SE, CH, UK

Surplus on state funding may be kept but common restrictions include:

- maximum percentage of total funding
- limited re-allocation possibilities
- required approval of public authorities
- exclusion of surplus generated from earmarked funding

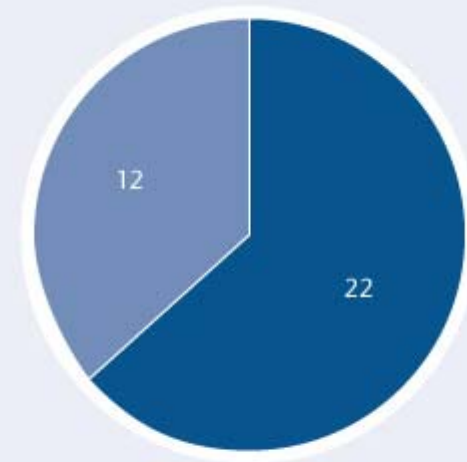


## 2. Financial capacity

The university's borrowing capacity may equally be curtailed by the requirement to secure the public authorities' approval.

Swedish HEIs can only borrow from the National Bank and only up to a limited amount.

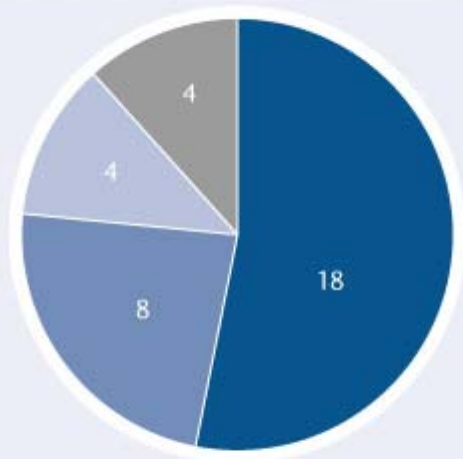
Ability to borrow money



- Universities are able to borrow money: AT, BE nl, BE fr, HR, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FR, IE, IT, LV, LU, NL, NO, PL, RO, RS, SK, ES, SE, UK
- Universities are not able to borrow money: BG, FI, DE, GR, HU, IS, LT, MT, PT, SI, CH, TR

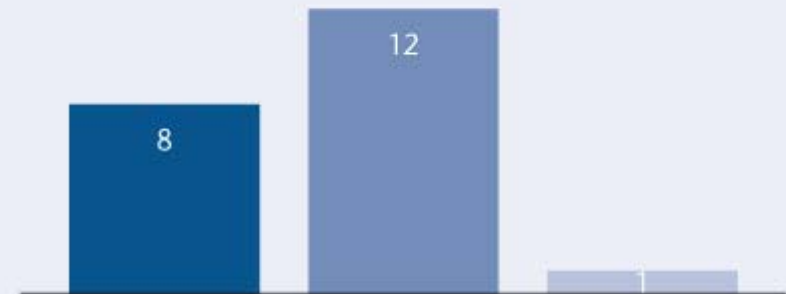
### 3. Ownership of property

Ownership of university buildings



- University: BE fr, HR, CY, CZ, EE, GR, IE, IT, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI, ES, UK
- Public authorities: BE nl, BG, DK, HU, LT, LU, RS, TR
- Public real estate companies: AT, FI, DE, SE
- Variations: FR, IS, SK, CH

Sale of university-owned real estate



- Universities may freely sell real estate they own: BE fr, CZ, EE, IT, NL, ES, CH, UK
- Sale of real estate requires permission of public authorities: HR, CY, IS, IE, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI
- Universities may not sell real estate they own: GR

# 1. Salaries

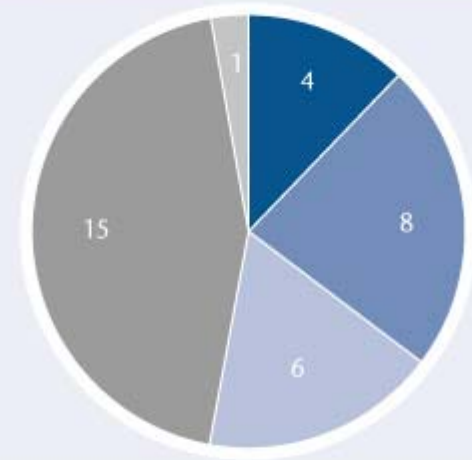
Overall salary costs are mostly controlled by the universities

However, individual salary levels tend to be strongly regulated.

Universities may be able to determine the salary levels of some categories of staff, or set them within fixed salary bands defined by the state

There may be exceptions related to the recruitment of international academics.

## Individual salary levels



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

# 1. Admission mechanisms

## Admission mechanisms

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

Free admission

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

Admission based on  
grades in general exam

Cyprus  
Denmark  
Germany  
Greece  
Hungary  
Latvia  
Lithuania  
Poland  
Turkey

Admission criteria  
set by universities

Bulgaria  
Croatia  
Czech Republic  
Estonia  
Finland  
Iceland  
Ireland  
Luxembourg

Norway  
Portugal  
Romania  
Serbia  
Slovakia  
Slovenia  
Sweden  
England

## Perceptions: main challenges

### Financial issues

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

### Student-related issues

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

### Institutional capacity and relationship with authorities

- Lack of support to implement governance reforms (autonomy & accountability)
- Lack of long term vision of policy
- Inexperience with new steering mechanisms





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## Trends

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### Organisational autonomy

- Balancing the role of the external members
- CEO-type rectorship found in north western Europe, traditional “primus inter pares” more common in eastern and Mediterranean countries
- Development of dual governance structures

### Financial autonomy

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

### Staffing autonomy

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

### Academic autonomy

- More freedom to determine academic profiles
- Opening of academic programmes often tied to resource negotiations & accreditation processes

## Next steps

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

## Concluding remarks

- Governments to provide the strategic long-term vision
- Clear rules and regulations – stability
- Smaller governing bodies to act more efficiently
- Appropriate selection mechanisms for external members
- Support for leadership development and professional development
- Sustainable funding mechanisms





**Thank you for your attention!  
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