

ORGANISATIONAL AUTONOMY

Rank	System	Score
1	United Kingdom	100%
2	Denmark	94%
3	Finland	93%
4	Estonia	87%
5	North Rhine-Westphalia	84%
6	Ireland	81%
7	Portugal	80%
8	Austria	78%
	Hesse	78%
	Norway	78%
11	Lithuania	75%
12	Netherlands	69%
13	Poland	67%
14	Latvia	61%
15	Brandenburg	60%
16	France	59%
	Hungary	59%
18	Italy	56%
19	Spain	55%
	Sweden	55%
	Switzerland	55%
22	Czech Republic	54%
23	Cyprus	50%
24	Iceland	49%
25	Slovakia	45%
26	Greece	43%
27	Turkey	33%
28	Luxembourg	31%

In the six systems of the top cluster – Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, North Rhine-Westphalia and the United Kingdom – universities' organisational autonomy is only marginally, if at all, constrained. Generally speaking, universities in **highly autonomous systems** may freely decide on the structure of their faculties and departments and create both for-profit and not-for-profit legal entities. In addition, all systems in the top cluster include external members in governing bodies, although there is a divide between those who can (DK, EE, FI, UK) and those who cannot (IE, NRW) appoint the external members of these bodies. Restrictions on the appointment, selection criteria, dismissal and term of office of the executive head are relatively rare in top cluster systems: in three systems (DK, EE, FI), the law contains guidelines concerning the selection criteria. In four systems (EE, FI, IE, NRW), the length of his/her term of office is legally prescribed. The United Kingdom is the only country in which higher education institutions can decide without state interference on all aspects of organisational autonomy considered by the study.

In the eight systems in the **“medium high” cluster** (AT, HE, LT, LV, NL, NO, PL, PT), restrictions generally apply only in some selected aspects of organisational autonomy. In a large majority, institutions are free to decide on academic structures and establish legal entities. All systems, except Latvia and Poland, include external members in their governing bodies, although they are significantly less free in appointing them: external members are either appointed by an external authority upon proposal by the university (NO), partly appointed by an external authority and partly by the university (AT, HE, LT) or unilaterally appointed by an external authority (NL). Only Portuguese institutions can freely select non-university representatives in their governing bodies. Regarding the executive leadership, the situation is less clear-cut: in a significant portion of “medium high” systems, universities are free to decide on the appropriate selection process and criteria for their rectors. Existing restrictions prescribe that rectors must hold a doctoral degree (LT, PL) or an academic position (LV, PL, PT). By contrast, guidelines regarding the dismissal procedure and term of office are set down by law in all “medium high” systems, except the Netherlands.

Although the specific national or regional circumstances within the **“medium low” cluster** (BB, CH, CY, CZ, ES, FR, GR, HU, IT, IS, SE, SK) are highly heterogeneous, a majority of systems faces regulatory constraints in most areas of organisational autonomy. In deciding on the appointment procedure, term of office and dismissal of the executive head, universities in “medium low” systems generally hold little freedom of action. The appointment of external representatives to university governing bodies is externally regulated in all systems in this group. Brandenburg and Greece are entirely prohibited from including non-university representatives in governing bodies, while in the remaining systems institutions are unable to select external members without state involvement. By contrast, a number of systems grant universities somewhat more flexibility in deciding on academic structures (BB, CH, ES, HU) and setting selection criteria for the executive leadership (BB, CH, CZ, IS, SK). The least heavily regulated aspect of organisational autonomy in the “medium low” group is the establishment of legal entities. While all systems may establish legal entities in theory, the ability to do so is either limited to specific types (not-for-profit) or institutions, or subject to approval by an external authority.

The fourth cluster contains those higher education systems whose level of autonomy is perceived to be **low** (LU, TR). Universities in these systems lack freedom of action in nearly all areas of organisational autonomy, only maintaining a certain degree of independence in the creation of legal entities.

FINANCIAL AUTONOMY

Rank	System	Score
1	Luxembourg	91%
2	Estonia	90%
3	United Kingdom	89%
4	Latvia	80%
5	Netherlands	77%
6	Hungary	71%
7	Italy	70%
	Portugal	70%
	Slovakia	70%
10	Denmark	69%
11	Ireland	66%
12	Switzerland	65%
13	Austria	59%
14	North Rhine-Westphalia	58%
15	Finland	56%
	Sweden	56%
17	Spain	55%
18	Poland	54%
19	Lithuania	51%
20	Norway	48%
21	Czech Republic	46%
22	France	45%
	Turkey	45%
24	Brandenburg	44%
25	Iceland	43%
26	Greece	36%
27	Hesse	35%
28	Cyprus	23%

The top cluster, which is considered to be **highly autonomous**, contains Estonia, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom. These systems score highly on nearly all the indicators that were considered in the area of financial autonomy. Remaining restrictions are a one-year (as opposed to multi-annual) funding cycle in the case of Estonia and the United Kingdom, and the inability to borrow money without external approval (LU). Universities in the United Kingdom require the consent of the Higher Education Funding Council to borrow more than a certain (rather large) amount, and are obliged to set tuition fees for national/EU students below an externally imposed (albeit high) ceiling. Finally, minor restrictions may be imposed on universities' ability to keep a surplus (LU) and sell university-owned buildings (EE, LU).

The second cluster contains Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia and Switzerland. Systems with "**medium high**" financial autonomy generally offer flexible public funding modalities through the use of block grants, although universities' freedom of allocation is restricted in some cases through broad budget categories (HU, LV, PT, SK) or earmarking (IE). Although Latvia and Portugal require the approval of an external authority to do so, all systems in the second cluster allow universities to keep the surplus they generate. In all systems bar Hungary, Portugal and Switzerland, institutions are also able to borrow money, though some (IE, IT, PT, SK) may only do so up to a maximum percentage. In most systems, universities are entitled to own and sell their buildings, although the approval of an external authority is required in some cases. Hungarian universities form an exception, since, despite enjoying wide-ranging powers over their real estate, they do not officially own their buildings. With regard to tuition fees, the medium high cluster splits more or less clearly into two groups: a larger one (IE, HU, LV, NL, PT, SK) has considerable flexibility in the charging and setting of student contributions (for all or some student groups), while in a smaller one (CH, DK, IT), the ability to levy and decide on fees is more curtailed.

The third cluster contains Austria, Brandenburg, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, North Rhine-Westphalia, Poland, Spain, Sweden and Turkey. Systems with "**medium low**" financial autonomy offer fairly flexible public funding modalities: universities in 12 of 13 systems (all except Turkey) receive block grants, although their freedom to allocate them is restricted in a majority. Similarly, 12 of 13 systems (all bar Lithuania) enable their universities to keep a surplus, although in a number of cases, excess funds may only be retained up to a maximum percentage (CZ, NO, SE), for a predetermined purpose (BB, PL) or with external approval (CZ, TR). All systems, bar Norway and Turkey, allow universities to borrow money, although various limitations, such as the need for the approval of an external authority (ES, FR, LT) or to borrow from a designated bank (BB, SE), apply. Only in three systems in the "medium low" group (AT, CZ, ES) can universities own and freely sell their real estate. In four (BB, LT, NRW, SE), institutions cannot own their buildings at all. While universities in five systems (LT, NRW, PL, SE, TR) retain a moderate amount of flexibility in charging and setting student fees, they are unable to charge and set fees in the remaining eight.

The final cluster contains those higher education systems whose level of financial autonomy is perceived to be **low**, i.e. Cyprus, Greece and Hesse. This cohort is characterised by a near-complete lack of autonomy in the area of student contributions and, in two of three systems (CY, GR), highly inflexible public funding modalities. Severe constraints are generally also imposed on universities' capacity to own and sell real estate, borrow money and keep surplus funds.

STAFFING AUTONOMY

Rank	System	Score
1	Estonia	100%
2	United Kingdom	96%
3	Czech Republic	95%
	Sweden	95%
	Switzerland	95%
6	Finland	92%
	Latvia	92%
8	Luxembourg	87%
9	Denmark	86%
10	Lithuania	83%
11	Ireland	82%
12	Poland	80%
13	Austria	73%
	Netherlands	73%
15	Iceland	68%
16	Norway	67%
17	Hungary	66%
18	Portugal	62%
19	Hesse	61%
	North Rhine-Westphalia	61%
21	Turkey	60%
22	Brandenburg	55%
23	Slovakia	54%
24	Italy	49%
25	Cyprus	48%
	Spain	48%
27	France	43%
28	Greece	14%

In the area of staffing autonomy, the **highly autonomous cluster** consists of eleven higher education systems (CH, DK, CZ, EE, FI, IE, LT, LU, LV, SE, UK). In Estonia, no restrictions are imposed on universities' ability to hire, pay, dismiss and promote staff. In the remaining systems, limitations are relatively minor and do not significantly constrain institutions in their freedom of action. Generally speaking, recruitments, salaries and promotions tend to be more heavily regulated than dismissals. Though a limited number of sector-specific regulations can be observed in the top-cluster systems, these are not linked to the civil servant status of university employees.

The nine systems of the **"medium high" cluster** (AT, HE, HU, IS, NL, NO, NRW, PL, PT) face more restrictions than those in the first group, though they do retain autonomy over certain aspects of staffing. In general, recruitment procedures and promotions are less heavily regulated than salaries and dismissals. Contrary to the first cluster, some or all university personnel tend to have civil servant status. The "medium high" cluster may be split into two sub-groups. Institutions in a top-tier, which consists of Austria, Iceland, Poland and the Netherlands, retain considerable autonomy in recruiting and promoting staff. Restrictions in this upper tier relate mostly to staff salaries and dismissals. In Austria, for instance, salary levels are set for some personnel due to their civil servant status, while in Poland, salary bands are set by an external authority for senior academic and administrative staff. Apart from Poland, staff dismissals are strictly regulated due to the civil servant status held by some or all staff groups in all four systems. The lower tier of the second cluster (HE, HU, NO, NRW, PT) is also less flexible in recruiting staff: in Hungary, certain academic posts are confirmed by the ministry, while the laws in Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia and Portugal specify the procedure for hiring senior academic staff.

The **third ("medium low") cluster** consists of Brandenburg, Cyprus, France, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and Turkey. Institutional independence in these systems is strongly curtailed. Universities face restrictions on a majority of staffing indicators (i.e. recruitment, salaries, dismissal and promotions) and for both staff profiles (i.e. senior academic and senior administrative staff). In a number of systems, more than one restriction applies to one indicator. Institutions in this group are least constrained in hiring staff: a number of systems still grant universities some autonomy in carrying out recruitments for senior administrative (BB, SK, TR) or both categories of staff (CY, IT). However, the civil servant status enjoyed by some or all employees in all "medium low" systems constrains institutions, particularly when deciding on staff salaries and dismissals.

Greece is the only system in which staffing autonomy is perceived to be **low**. Greek institutions are constrained by (at times multiple) restrictions imposed on all areas of higher education staffing. The number of posts is limited; appointments are confirmed by an external authority for academic posts and carried out through a centralised national system for administrative personnel. Salaries and dismissals are strictly regulated due to the civil servant status held by all staff, and the law provides detailed requirements for the promotion process. Greek universities thus have little to no say over staffing matters.

ACADEMIC AUTONOMY

Rank	System	Score
1	Ireland	100%
2	Norway	97%
3	UK	94%
4	Estonia	92%
5	Finland	90%
6	Iceland	89%
7	Cyprus	77%
8	Luxembourg	74%
9	Austria	72%
	Switzerland	72%
11	Hesse	69%
	North Rhine-Westphalia	69%
13	Brandenburg	67%
14	Sweden	66%
15	Poland	63%
16	Italy	57%
	Spain	57%
18	Denmark	56%
	Slovakia	56%
20	Latvia	55%
21	Portugal	54%
22	Czech Republic	52%
23	Netherlands	48%
24	Hungary	47%
25	Turkey	46%
26	Lithuania	42%
27	Greece	40%
28	France	37%

In the area of academic autonomy, six systems – Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Norway and the United Kingdom – are included in the **top cluster**, which is considered as **highly autonomous**. With a score of 100%, Ireland is in the lead. Irish universities can freely decide on all aspects of academic autonomy. A feature common to the top two systems, i.e. Ireland and Norway, is their institutions' ability to decide on the overall number of study places and select students. Universities' inability to decide independently on the number of students – in most cases, overall numbers are negotiated with an external authority – sets Estonia, Finland, Iceland and the UK apart from the top systems. Additional constraints exist with regards to the introduction and termination of degree programmes. In Estonia and Iceland, universities are accredited for certain study fields, while in Finland, institutions can only offer degree programmes within their previously defined educational remit. Finland also applies some limitations on the choice of instruction language.

The second "medium high" cluster consists of nine higher education systems (AT, BB, CH, CY, HE, LU, NRW, SE, PL). Universities in systems with "**medium high**" academic autonomy retain near-complete freedom in choosing the language of instruction and designing the content of degree programmes. By contrast, all (except Luxembourg and Poland) face limitations when deciding on student numbers and admission mechanisms. Overall student numbers may be negotiated with an external authority (BB, CY, HE, NRW); Austria and Switzerland practise a system of free admissions. The selection of students is often co-regulated or externally controlled, though a majority of systems in the medium high group (BB, CY, HE, LU, NRW, PL) may freely set selection criteria for Master's programmes. As regards accreditation and quality assurance, situations differ strongly. Options range from no formal accreditation requirements (CH, LU) to compulsory accreditation for Bachelor and Master's programmes (BB, HE, NRW), and from a free choice of quality assurance procedures and providers (AT, CH, CY) to the ability to select neither (LU, PL, SE).

The Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Turkey make up the **third ("medium low") cluster**. Concerning overall student numbers and admission mechanisms, the picture is a varied one, with options ranging from independent institutional decisions to the unilateral regulation by an external authority. In three countries (DK, IT, LV), universities themselves set the number of study places. In all other higher education systems, restrictions, such as the need to negotiate with an external authority (CZ, ES, PT) or a free admission scheme (NL), apply. Universities are distinctly more autonomous in setting admission criteria for Bachelor than for Master's programmes: institutions in three (CZ, IT, SK) and eight (CZ, ES, IT, LV, LT, PT, SK, TR) systems may set criteria for Bachelor and Master's students, respectively. One of the defining features of the "medium low" group is that universities are unable to select quality assurance processes and providers and that their programmes generally have to be accredited prior to being introduced or funded. However, the freedom to select teaching languages and design academic content are curtailed only in a minority of systems in the third cluster.

The fourth cluster contains France and Greece, whose level of academic autonomy is perceived to be **low**. Both countries face heavy restrictions in nearly all areas of academic autonomy. Crucially, however, they remain free to develop their own academic programmes. In addition, there remains some leeway concerning student selection: though admissions to Bachelor programmes are externally regulated, universities are free to set selection criteria for Master's degrees.