

Attention: news desks/science and education correspondents

For immediate release

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University autonomy in Europe: EUA releases comparative analysis

Within 10 years, the Autonomy Scorecard from the European University Association (EUA) has become the reference in discussions and analysis of institutional autonomy in, and beyond, Europe. The “[University Autonomy in Europe III](#)” report reveals there is no uniform trend towards university autonomy in Europe. The present update uncovers the diversity of settings in which universities evolve.

While some countries have achieved a relatively high degree of university autonomy in all or most of the four dimensions considered, the Scorecard helps to recognise that there is no unique model to foster autonomy. Countries scoring high in at least three dimensions include models as diverse as that of Finland, Luxembourg, Estonia or the UK (England).

“In a tense political international political environment, promoting university autonomy as a core principle continues to be highly relevant and important, as attempts to limit or undermine it can take many forms,” says Rolf Tarrach, EUA President.

The report also reveals, predominantly, a persisting lack of a global view on university autonomy when designing and implementing reforms. In addition, the challenging economic context impacts autonomy in different ways, beyond financial matters. Finally, public authorities are found to exert stronger steering through funding mechanisms, while concentration processes, like mergers, raise new questions for university autonomy.

Autonomy in the higher education sector was discussed in length in April 2017 during the EUA Annual Conference dedicated to “Autonomy and freedom: The future sustainability of universities”. Lesley Wilson, EUA Secretary General, underlines that “universities are essential in civil society as independent and open communities of scholars and we witness with great concerns the increasing tendency of national governments to interfere in university autonomy and academic freedom”.

The EUA Autonomy Scorecard will continue to serve as basis for EUA and its members to support a structured, fact-based dialogue, in partnership with the sector and public authorities in the years to come.

Background information:

The report covers university autonomy in organisational, financial, staffing and academic matters, and compares data for all indicators that constitute EUA’s Autonomy Scorecard. It allows readers to get a full overview of the state of play and of the recent developments for each of these fields – assessing the capacity of universities to decide on issues as diverse as tuition fees, governance structures, recruitments and salaries or language of instruction and student numbers. The report ranks systems for each autonomy dimension in a special Scorecard. It also uncovers trends for each area, highlighting improvements and causes for concern.

The report is complemented by:

- a “[country profiles compendium](#)” of 29 higher education systems in Europe (published in April)
- an [online tool](#) presenting data for each system considered
- a [summary presentation](#)



Further information:

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The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of more than 800 universities in 47 European countries and 33 national rectors' conferences (NRCs). EUA works closely with its members to ensure that the voice of European universities is heard.