



Interconnected Dimensions of University Autonomy in Europe

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University Autonomy: The Concept

- Many definitions
- Variation in meaning across contexts & over time
- Multi-dimensional concept
- Connections between different dimensions assumed, but not empirically investigated

EUA's Popular Measure of University Autonomy



Source: University autonomy in Europe 'hit by austerity', *Times Higher Education*, April 6, 2017, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/university-autonomy-in-europe-hit-by-austerity>

EUA Dimensions of University Autonomy

Organisational autonomy	Financial autonomy	Staffing autonomy	Academic autonomy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection procedure for the executive head • Selection criteria for the executive head • Dismissal of the executive head • Term of office of the executive head • Inclusion and selection of external members in governing bodies • Capacity to decide on academic structures • Capacity to create legal entities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length and type of public funding • Capacity to keep surplus • Capacity to borrow money • Ability to own buildings • Ability to charge tuition fees for national/EU students • Ability to charge tuition fees for non-EU students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to decide on recruitment procedures (senior academic/senior administrative staff) • Ability to decide on salaries (senior academic/senior administrative staff) • Ability to decide on dismissals (senior academic/senior administrative staff) • Ability to decide on promotions (senior academic/senior administrative staff) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to decide on overall student numbers • Ability to select students • Ability to introduce programmes • Ability to terminate programmes • Ability to choose the language of instruction • Capacity to select QA mechanisms and providers • Ability to design content of degree programmes

Source: EUA (2017) University Autonomy in Europe III. The Scorecard.

Research Question

Are there relationships between the four different dimensions of university autonomy, as defined and operationalized by the European University Association (EUA)?

DATA & ANALYSIS

University Autonomy in Europe 2016 Survey

- European University Association (EUA)
- Information on European countries and sub-national regions
- Four dimensions of university autonomy:
 - Organisational
 - Financial
 - Staffing
 - Academic

EUA Survey Methodology

- Information from questionnaires and interviews with members of rectors' conferences
- Criterion referenced ranking
- Double system of weights
 - Deductions
 - “Importance value”

List of 24 Countries Included in the Analysis

- Austria
- Croatia
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom

Descriptive Statistics of the Analytic Sample

Autonomy dimension	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum value	Maximum value
Organizational	67.458	17.141	34	100
Financial	62.458	16.626	21	91
Staffing	70.125	20.970	37	100
Academic	62.125	18.092	37	98

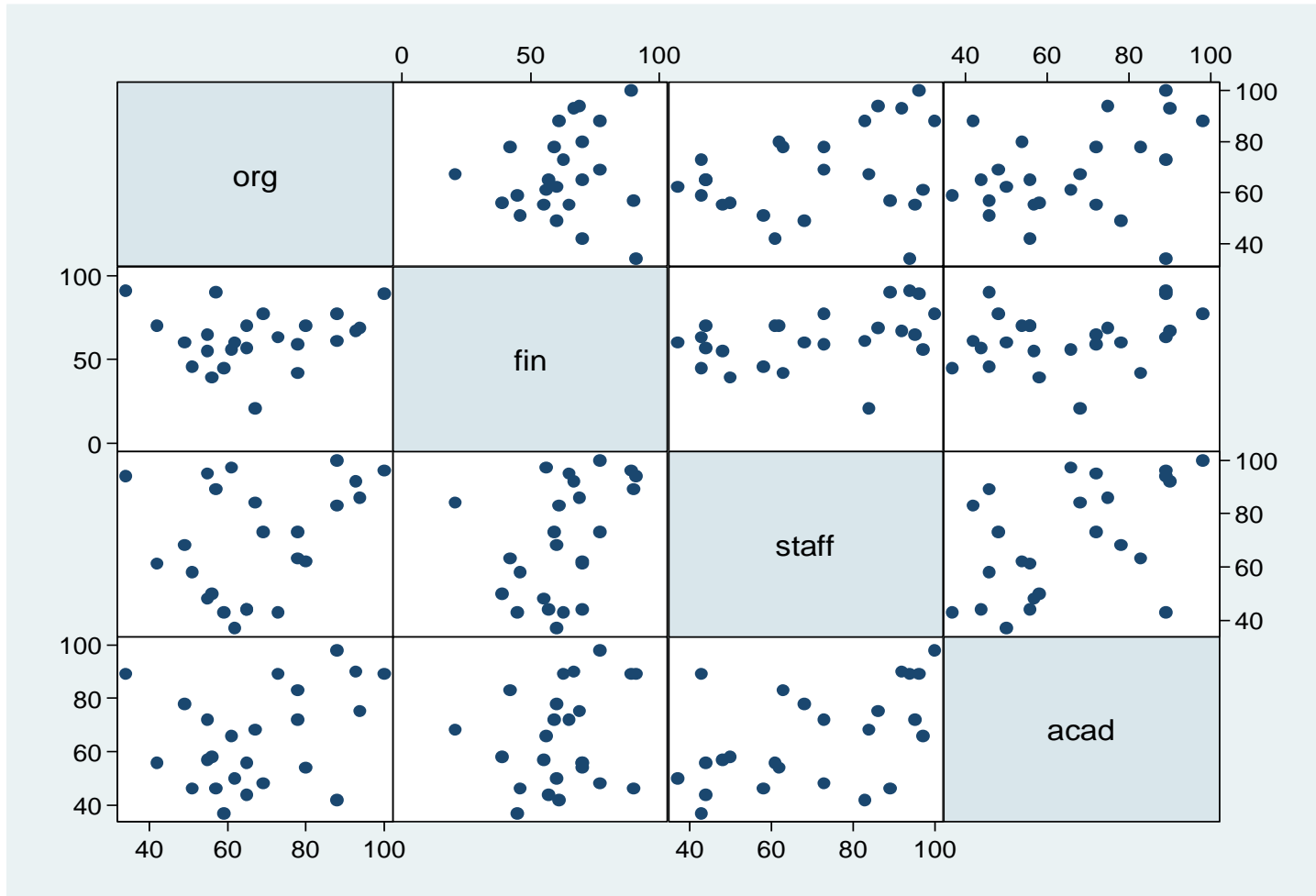
Descriptive statistics are based on the weighted autonomy scores of the 24 countries in each dimension. Data source: EUA (2017).

Analyses

- Plotting of autonomy scores & bivariate correlation coefficients
- Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression
- Fisher's exact tests

FINDINGS

Pairwise Scatterplots of Autonomy Scores



Scatterplots are based on the weighted autonomy scores of the 24 countries in each dimension. Data source: EUA (2017).

Predicting a Country's Autonomy Score in One Dimension with Autonomy Scores in Other Dimensions

Model 1: Predicting staffing autonomy

F	0.0308*
Adjusted R-squared	0.2549
Coefficients (p>t)	
Organizational a.	.168 (0.477)
Financial a.	.364 (0.135)
Academic a.	.451 (0.059)

Model 2: Predicting academic autonomy

F	0.0723
Adjusted R-squared	0.1825
Coefficients (p>t)	
Organizational a.	.201 (0.346)
Financial a.	.056 (0.806)
Staffing a.	.369 (0.059)

Model 3: Predicting financial autonomy

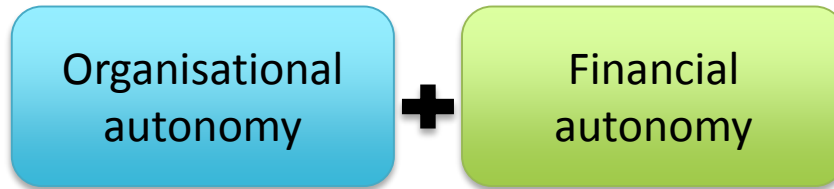
F	0.3068
Adjusted R-squared	0.0358
Coefficients (p>t)	
Organizational a.	-.019 (0.927)
Academic a.	.055 (0.806)
Staffing a.	.296 (0.135)

Model 4: Predicting organizational autonomy

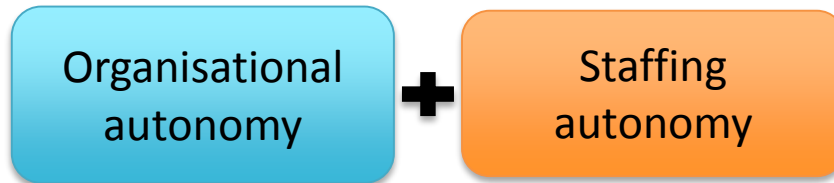
F	0.4239
Adjusted R-squared	-0.0032
Coefficients (p>t)	
Financial a.	-.0217 (0.927)
Academic a.	.221 (0.346)
Staffing a.	.151 (0.477)

Regression results are based on the weighted autonomy scores of the 24 countries in each dimension. Data source: EUA (2017).

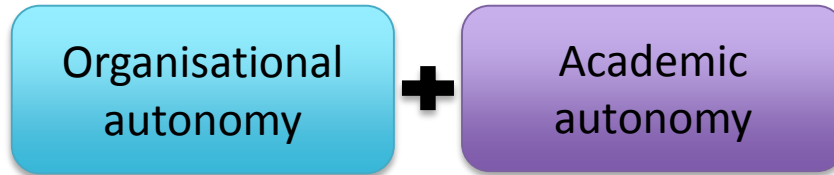
Fisher's exact test results



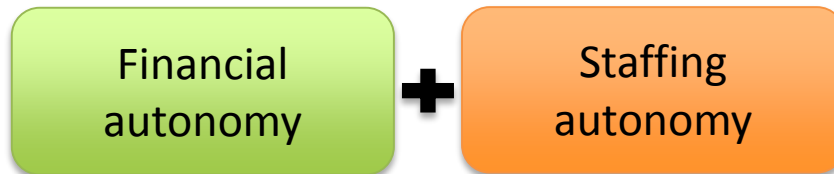
$p = 0.675$



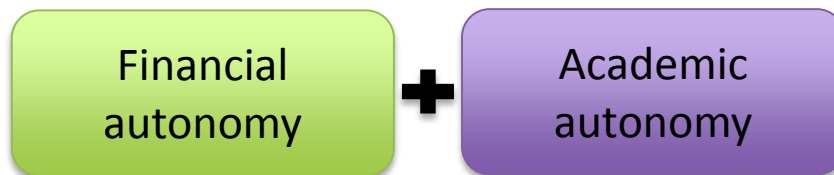
$p = 0.412$



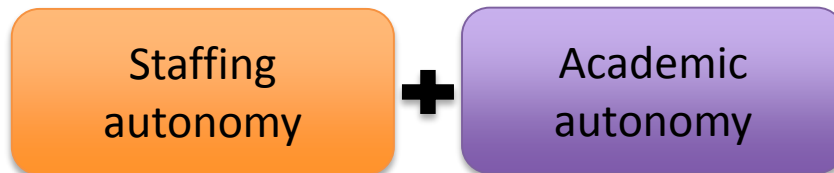
$p = 0.400$



$p = 0.082$



$p = 1.000$



$p = 0.027$

DISCUSSION

Discussion

- No systematic relationships between **financial, organizational, and academic autonomy**, as measured by EUA
 - Consistent with evidence on how higher education reform happens
- Moderately, but significantly positive relationship between levels of **staffing autonomy & academic autonomy**, as measured by EUA
 - Possible explanation: indicators measure conceptually related items

Indicators of “input” and “process”

- Higher education production functions
 - Input: students
 - Process: faculty & staff, facilities & equipment, curriculum

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Conclusion

- Little evidence that dimensions of university autonomy are linked in European higher education
- Link between academic & staffing autonomy: likely the artefact of EUA measurement methodology

Avenues for further research:

- EUA scorecard measures “procedural” autonomy, not “substantive” autonomy
- Different configurations of “substantive” autonomy may have implications for the “procedural” autonomy of European universities

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Comparing the distribution of academic & staffing autonomy

Academic Staffing	High	Low	Total
High	11	5	16
Low	1	7	8
Total	12	12	24

Fisher's exact test result: $p = 0.027$

European countries, by levels of staffing and academic autonomy

	HIGH staffing autonomy	LOW staffing autonomy
HIGH academic autonomy	Austria Switzerland Denmark Estonia Finland Iceland Luxembourg Norway Poland Sweden UK	Ireland
LOW academic autonomy	Lithuania Latvia Netherlands Portugal Slovakia	Spain France Croatia Hungary Italy Serbia Slovenia