

Participation in Institutional Governance

Evolving models of university governance II

By Enora Bennetot Pruvot, Thomas Estermann and Nino Popkhadze

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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

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1. Introduction

University governance can refer to two distinct but interconnected levels: the system level, where national frameworks and policies define the legal and regulatory environment for universities, and the institutional level, where governance structures shape decision-making and accountability within individual universities. While system-level governance determines the degree of university autonomy, funding mechanisms, and policy oversight, institutional governance in universities can be defined as a system of formal and informal structures, rules, and processes that determine and shape decision-making, leadership, and interactions both within the institution and with external stakeholders.

In Europe, formal governance structures of public universities are largely defined by national legal frameworks. These specify, to different degrees, the types of governing bodies, their composition, competences, and appointment processes. The relationships between these bodies, as well as their decision-making procedures are further detailed in university statutes.

One of the most frequently debated aspects of governance reforms is the process of constituting, selecting and appointing governing bodies, as this determines which groups – the academic community, students, administrative representatives, external stakeholders, and public authorities – influence key institutional decisions.

Institutional governance does not only refer to formal structures. Informal governance, shaped by unwritten norms, power dynamics, and institutional culture, also plays a significant role in decision-making processes. Additionally,

many universities establish consultative bodies that, while lacking formal power, influence decision-making through strategic advice and stakeholder engagement. Some of these bodies are governed by external regulations, while others are created internally in response to emerging challenges such as artificial intelligence, digitalisation, and sustainability. These consultative groups may be established as permanent advisory bodies or as temporary task forces with a specific remit and time frame.

Although national frameworks remain the primary regulators of institutional governance, European policies and initiatives have had an increasing influence in recent years. Reforms inspired by European-level developments have promoted greater institutional autonomy, harmonised quality assurance standards, and strengthened cross-border collaboration.

Drawing on data from the EUA Autonomy Scorecard¹ and revisiting the paper² “*University Governance: Autonomy, Structures and Inclusiveness*,” this paper provides a comparative analysis of university governance across Europe. It examines the different types and configurations of governing bodies, their composition and competencies, and recent trends in governance reform, offering insights into the evolving landscape of university governance. This descriptive, non-exhaustive analysis aims to map and present diverse governance models across systems and to provide an analytical structure for understanding governance arrangements in European higher education. It does not offer recommendations nor expresses a preference for one model over another.

¹ Bennetot Pruvot, Estermann & Popkhadze, (2023), [University Autonomy in Europe IV, The Scorecard 2023](#), European University Association.

² Bennetot Pruvot, E., Estermann, T. (2018). *University Governance: Autonomy, Structures and Inclusiveness*. In: Curaj, A., Deca, L., Pricopie, R. (eds) *European Higher Education Area: The Impact of Past and Future Policies*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77407-7_37

2. Methodology, data collection, and scope

2.1 Beyond the Autonomy Scorecard

The Autonomy Scorecard IV data collection followed the original scorecard methodology, using questionnaires, interviews, and legal documents analysis as along with several rounds of validation with National Rectors' Conferences (NRC).³ 36 NRCs across Europe participated in the data collection in 2022. The release of the main report was followed by the publication of 35 country profiles, which delved deeply into system analysis to provide better context and capture key nuances. This process also involved an additional validation step with the NRCs. Legal changes and reforms made after 2023 are not included in this study, with the exception of Spain.

Data collected to assess organisational autonomy also included data that was not used for scoring, but which provided additional context and information on the type and composition of governing bodies, their size, and the types of external members included. An additional analysis was conducted of data relating to organisational autonomy, particularly governance, with the aim of providing an in-depth picture of university governance models in Europe. [Table 1](#) below summarises the topics addressed in this paper.

Table 1 – Topics covered by this paper

Topic	Autonomy Scorecard IV	Present analysis
Executive leadership	Selection procedure	
	Appointment	
	Selection criteria	
	Term of office	
	Dismissal procedure	
Internal academic structures	Capacity to determine internal academic structures	
Separate legal entities	Capacity to create independent legal entities	
Governing bodies	Types of governance structures	Size of governing bodies
		Composition of governing bodies
		Term of office
		Inclusiveness of governing bodies
	Capacity to include external members in governing bodies	Modes of appointment of external members
	Selection of external members	Profiles of external members

³ The scorecard methodology is explained in detail in the corresponding report and methodology note.

The geographical scope of the analysis has expanded since the 2018 paper. This update includes nine additional higher education systems, bringing the number up from 22 to 31.⁴ Detailed information on university governance in each of these systems is available in the dedicated Autonomy Scorecard Country profiles.⁵

2.2 Interpretation of legal provisions

The legal provisions that define or frame participation in university governing bodies vary significantly across systems. As a result, it is challenging to chart precisely the representation of the four groups defined in this analysis.

- Participation may be explicitly regulated. In such cases, this covers different forms of participation: a simple mention of the group; a specified range; a threshold or ceiling; an exact number, or an exact proportion.
- Participation of certain groups may not be specified in the law. This covers cases where the law leaves it to the university statutes to determine composition, either in full, or partially (possibility logic); this may also mean that the law prescribes the composition of the governing body in full, thus preventing other, unmentioned groups from participating (exclusion logic).
- Another caveat is the use of the concept of “internal members,” which in certain cases does not correspond to the four groups defined for this analysis. By default, “internal members” is taken to include both academic and non-academic staff.

- The law may specify which groups may elect members to the governing body. While it is usually understood that a group will elect members from among themselves (and the law may specify as much), this may not always be the case.
- While the law may leave it to the university statutes to determine the composition of a governing body, in theory allowing the inclusion of any of the four groups, this does not mean that universities do so in practice (a case in point would be the possible, but rare, inclusion of external members in senates). In this analysis, national legislation has been carefully reviewed, and certain groups have been categorised as ‘possible’ or ‘excluded’ (explicitly or implicitly), in an effort to respect the spirit of the law, but the difference between the two is often a matter of interpretation.
- Participation may also be self-evident: for instance, the law may only include provisions on groups for which it seeks to guarantee representation, such as students or external stakeholders, but not specify rules on the participation of staff, leaving it for the university to determine.
- Participation may be ex-officio, rather than corresponding to a representational logic.

⁴ See Annex 1. This analysis includes all higher education systems that provided data through the Autonomy Scorecard survey, apart from five. These systems were not included due to context-specific factors, such as significant diversity in governance models within the country, specificities that make system-wide comparison at European level difficult, or challenges in verifying data. These countries are Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

⁵ The country profiles are available here: <https://www.eua.eu/publications/reports/university-autonomy-in-europe-iv-the-scorecard-2023.html>

Table 2 below summarises the findings of this study and proposes a categorisation of governance models together with details of the (guaranteed or possible) participation of the different constituencies in university governing bodies.

Table 2 – Systematic view of governance models and composition 2023⁶

A systematic view of governance models and composition 2023									
System	Governance model	Composition of board-type bodies				Composition of senate-type bodies			
		Academic staff	Non-academic staff	Students	External members	Academic staff	Non-academic staff	Students	External members
AT	Dual traditional				✓	✓	✓	✓	
BE-fl	Unitary – board ⁷	✓	✓	✓	✓				
BE-fr	Unitary – board ⁸	✓	✓	✓	✓				
CZ	Dual traditional				✓	✓		✓	
DE-bb	Unitary – senate					✓	✓	✓	
DE-he	Dual traditional				✓	✓	✓	✓	
DE-nrw	Dual traditional	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
DK	Unitary – board	✓	✓	✓	✓				
EE	Dual traditional	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
ES	Dual asymmetric – board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
FI	Dual asymmetric – board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
FR	Dual asymmetric – board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GE	Dual asymmetric – board	✓	✓	✓		✓			

⁶ Tickmarks in black indicate that participation is prescribed by law; tickmarks in yellow indicate that while not prescribed by law, participation is possible/usual.

⁷ This applies to the three public universities in Flanders. Both ‘free universities’ have adopted a dual governance model.

⁸ This applies to the ‘free universities’ as they enrol most students in the system. While both free and Community-governed universities have the same governance model, the latter follow regulations on the composition of the board, including all four groups.

A systematic view of governance models and composition 2023									
System	Governance model	Composition of board-type bodies				Composition of senate-type bodies			
		Academic staff	Non-academic staff	Students	External members	Academic staff	Non-academic staff	Students	External members
HR	Dual asymmetric – senate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IE	Dual asymmetric – board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
IS	Unitary – board	✓		✓	✓				
IT	Dual traditional	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
LT	Dual traditional	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ⁹
LU	Dual asymmetric – board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
LV	Dual traditional	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
NO	Unitary – board	✓	✓	✓	✓				
PL	Dual asymmetric – senate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
PT	Unitary – board	✓		✓	✓				
RO	Dual asymmetric – senate	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
RS	Dual traditional	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SE	Unitary – board	✓		✓	✓				
SI	Dual traditional	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
SK	Dual asymmetric – board	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
TR	Unitary – senate					✓			
UK-en	Dual traditional	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UK-sc	Dual asymmetric – board	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

⁹ The senate may include scientists, teachers and established artists of other higher education and research institutions.

3. Governance models

The different types of governing bodies, and their composition, dynamics and specific competences, create diverse university governance models across Europe. These variations reflect historical traditions, cultures, legal frameworks, and the unique relationship between the state and higher education institutions. Despite this diversity, most higher education systems require universities to be governed by either one or two bodies responsible for decision-making at institutional level. They usually take the form of a senate and/or a board. The senate is traditionally responsible for academic matters, is relatively large (in comparison to the university's board) and has a predominantly academic membership. In contrast, the board is typically responsible for financial and strategic decisions. These bodies may include different sectors of the university community. For this analysis, four groups are considered: academic staff, non-academic staff, students, and external members.

In addition to the senate and board, universities may establish other consultative or advisory entities, but these do not hold decision-making authority.¹⁰ This paper does not examine decentralised governance structures, such as faculty-level bodies. The comparative analysis of the regulatory framework, the formal division of responsibilities, and power dynamics between central governing bodies resulted in a classification system identifying two main governance models:

- unitary governance models
- dual governance models.

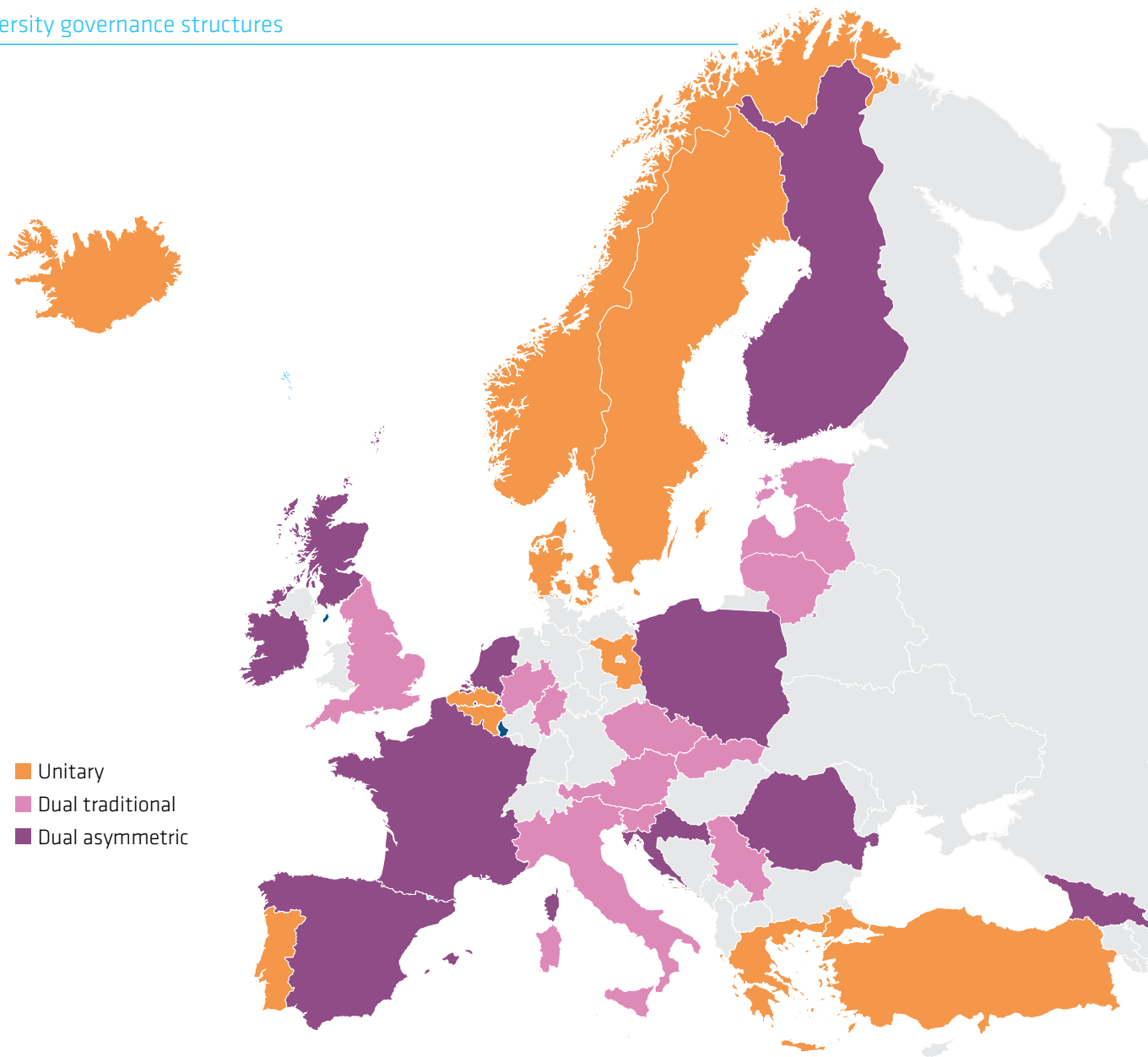
The latter is further sub-divided based on power distribution into:

- traditional model
- asymmetric model.

Map 1 shows the distribution of governance models in Europe, drawing from the Autonomy Scorecard IV data.

¹⁰ In some cases, however, these additional bodies may hold decision-making prerogatives in specific, well-defined areas.

Map 1 - University governance structures



3.1 Unitary governance model

The unitary governance model concentrates decision-making powers in one governing body. Unitary models may be senate- or board-based. This single body holds decision-making power over all matters, including academic, organisational, financial, and staffing issues.

The board-based unitary model is prevalent in the Nordic countries (with the exception of Finland), and can be found in Belgium (both systems) and Portugal. However, universities from these countries may still set up additional advisory or consultative bodies. For instance, Danish universities have a senate that functions solely in a consultative capacity, whereas at Icelandic universities, the senate serves as a democratic forum for discussing relevant issues and forming statements.

While the competences of the board are similar across these above-mentioned systems, there are variations in their composition, size and method of appointing external members. For example, the board at Norwegian universities consists of 11 members representing four different constituencies, while in Portugal, the board can have between 15 and a maximum of 35 members and include three constituencies. The extent to which external members are included varies: in Iceland and Norway,¹¹ they form a minority, whereas in Denmark and Sweden, they must form a majority.

Compared to the board-based unitary model, the senate-based unitary model has become rare in Europe. Among the systems included in this analysis, it is only found in Brandenburg (Germany) and Türkiye. They differ significantly in how their senates are structured. Universities in Brandenburg have greater flexibility to determine their senates' composition, whereas the law strictly defines both their size and makeup in Türkiye. However, they share one key characteristic: the absence of external members in university governance.

Not only was the senate-based unitary model historically found in a minority of European systems, but it has also been gradually discontinued. Estonia and Poland, where this model was previously in place, underwent governance reforms and switched to dual models. Since 2018, Estonian universities have fully implemented the dual traditional governance model, while Polish universities have introduced dual asymmetric governance. Along the same lines, university governance in Latvia shifted from senate-based unitary to dual traditional since university councils (boards) were introduced.

3.2 Dual governance model

The dual governance model involves both senate and board-type governing bodies. However, this covers different arrangements with regard to the distribution of competences. Therefore, this category is further divided into two sub-models, characterised as dual traditional or dual asymmetric. [Table 2](#) shows that in 22 out of the 31 analysed systems, universities work under a dual governance model, making it the dominant model in Europe. The dual model is evenly divided into two sub-groups.

Dual traditional model

The dual traditional model, which is found in 11 of the analysed systems, refers to a classical distribution of responsibilities between the governing bodies. In this model, the senate-type body is responsible for academic affairs, while the board-type body oversees strategic and financial matters. However, both bodies may participate in the decision-making process on the same issues. For instance, at Estonian universities, the selection of the rector¹² or changes to the statutes would require the involvement of both the board and the senate.

¹¹ At Norwegian universities, the board has the power to increase the number of external members specified in law.

¹² With exception of Tallinn University, where the board-type body selects the rector.

Following a reform in 2022, governance at Slovak universities has evolved from a dual traditional model to a dual, board-based asymmetric model. The reform strengthened university boards through a larger portfolio of competences, notably in finances, property management, 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.

Dual asymmetric model

Under this model, found in a further 11 of the analysed systems, one of the governing bodies holds central decision-making power, whereas the other plays a more marginal decisional role. This results in a different dynamic than the above-described unitary model, where there is no significant final decision-making competence attributed outside of the governing body. In the dual asymmetric model, decision-making authority is explicitly divided, albeit to varying degrees. The Irish and Scottish systems illustrate the complexity of this distinction. In both systems, the board-type bodies – the ‘governing authority’ in Ireland and the ‘court’ in Scotland – hold central authority over all matters. However, in practice, the senate retains effective decision-making power over academic affairs in both cases. For the purpose of this analysis, these systems are classified as dual asymmetric governance models.

The current analysis of the data corroborates the findings published in 2018, which indicated that board-type bodies dominate in the dual asymmetric model, while the senate serves as the main centre of power in only a few cases. These are found at Croatian, Polish and Romanian universities. All the other systems categorised as dual asymmetric are centred around the board (Finland, France, Georgia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Scotland, Slovakia and Spain).

This classification naturally simplifies diverse configurations, and it is worth remembering that certain countries display special characteristics. In Austria, for example, the law defines the rectorate as a collegial governing body on an equal footing with the board/council and senate-type bodies. Spanish universities have a large, fully external ‘social council,’ a body that supervises the economic activities of universities and the performance of its services, in addition to a board and senate. In Czechia, apart from the board of trustees and the senate, which are the main decision-making bodies, the scientific board and the internal evaluation board feature as auxiliary governing structures. In Brandenburg (Germany), a Land-wide council called ‘Landeshochschulrat’ provides strategic guidance to universities.

Notwithstanding the diversity of university governance models, the analysis of recent reforms in Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia sheds light on the growing importance of boards in university governance. Systems that previously relied solely on a senate have introduced boards, while in Slovakia the board's competences have been significantly strengthened.

4. Governing bodies

The legal framework usually determines, to some extent, the size and composition of university governing bodies. There are, however, different degrees of regulations, which are explored in this section.

Three forms of regulation are considered:

- Full regulation: the law specifies the exact number or exact composition of members pertaining to the university governing body.
- Moderate regulation: public authorities establish a minimum and/or a maximum number of members or shares, or establish ratios between given groups to be represented in the governing bodies.
- No regulation: universities have autonomy to decide the size of their bodies, which they set out in the statutes.

The methodology section details caveats for determining the participation of the different groups in university governing bodies.

4.1 Size regulation

Table 3 sheds light on the regulatory differences across Europe, particularly the distinct approaches to regulating the size of the senate and the board.

Six systems fully define the size of governing body/bodies (Flanders, Iceland, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, and Türkiye). Moderate regulation applies to the complete system in 12 cases (considering both unitary and dual models). The size of the governing body/bodies is regulated in almost all cases, with only four systems allowing universities to decide on the matter (Brandenburg, England, Slovenia, Spain).

The remaining nine (dual model) systems discriminate between senate and board, regulating the latter more strictly in all cases but Hesse (Germany).

Table 3 – Regulation of the size of governing bodies

The table uses a traffic light system to represent the levels of regulation: full (red), moderate (yellow) and none (green). White indicates that the governance model does not include a senate or board.

System	Senate	Board	System	Senate	Board
AT			IT		
BE-fl			LT		
BE-fr			LU		
CZ			LV		
DE-bb			NO		
DE-he			PL		
DE-nrw			PT		
DK			RO		
EE			RS		
ES			SE		
FI			SI		
FR			SK		
GE			TR		
HR			UK-en		
IE			UK-sc		
IS					

Full regulation

Unitary governing models tend to be more regulated than dual models. Of nine unitary models, five apply full regulation. Iceland, Flanders (Belgium), Norway, Sweden, and Türkiye all feature unitary governance models where the size of the governing body is fully regulated. Iceland and Norway¹³ are similar in that the law defines the exact number of the board members (11 in both cases) and also prescribes the ratio of the groups that must be represented. In Sweden, the number of board members is set at 15, and the law similarly outlines the exact ratio.

Luxembourg, a board-based dual asymmetric system, stands out in that both governing bodies are fully regulated, with the law explicitly specifying the exact number of members for the board (13) and the council (24). The 2018 governance reform increased the board size at the University of Luxembourg from 7 to 13 members.

Estonia and Ireland both have a fully regulated board size, with fixed numbers – seven or 11 members in Estonia and 19 in Ireland. Additionally, in both systems, the size of the senate is determined internally. It is worth mentioning that the governance reform of 2022 in Ireland decreased the number of members of the governing authority from 40 to 19 in the name of greater accountability and effectiveness. Similarly, in Romania, the size and composition of the board are fully regulated, while the size of the senate is set internally.

In Hesse (Germany), the law sets the senate size at 17, while the board can have up to 10 members. Conversely, in Latvia, the law specifies an exact number of board members (11) and sets a maximum limit for the senate (50 for universities of sciences and 25 for universities of applied sciences).

Moderate regulation

In the case of moderate regulation, the law typically specifies a minimum and maximum number of members, allowing universities to decide within that set range or establish ratios between given groups to be represented in the governing bodies. Three unitary systems fall into this category: the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium), Denmark, and Portugal. In the cases of the former two, the law specifies shares for different constituencies (students, academic staff, administrative staff, etc.) or a minimum number of representatives; in Portugal, however, the law sets both a minimum and maximum number of board members.

Nine systems – Austria, Czechia, Finland, France, Georgia, Italy, Poland, Scotland, and Slovakia – apply moderate regulations for both types of governing bodies. In Austria, the board should have a minimum of five and a maximum of nine members, whereas the senate membership varies between 18 and 26. In Czechia, the law outlines a minimum board size of nine members and prescribes that the number of members must be divisible by three without specifying a maximum size. Senates of Czech universities must have a minimum of 11 members. The Slovak law stipulates that the number of the board must be odd, not smaller than five and that there must be enough members to match one quarter of the senate. It also states that the senate must have between 15 and 66 members. In Georgia, the size of the senate depends on the number of research institutes and faculties, with each unit being equally represented. Furthermore, the law specifies that the board must be at least twice the size of the senate and outlines which constituencies should be represented. In Poland, the board may have seven or nine members, while the size of the senate is determined through proportions.

13 While the law establishes the exact number of board members, it also allows the board to increase the number of external members, resulting in a change in size, if supported by two thirds of its members.

No regulation

Of 11 systems in this category (abstaining from regulating the size of either or both bodies), only three – England, Slovenia, and Spain – allow universities to decide freely the size of both governing bodies. Before the 2023 reform, Spain stood out for its exceptionally large senate and board: senates could have up to 300 members, while boards could have up to 50. The reform granted universities greater autonomy to determine these numbers independently.

The only system resorting to unitary governance in this category is Brandenburg (Germany), where statutes may define the size of the senates.

Table 3 shows that the size of boards is more heavily regulated than senates. Regulation is stricter for the board than for the senate in most systems using dual governance models; and unitary models (which are most often board-based) are more regulated than dual ones.

The size of governing bodies varies, with boards typically being smaller than senates. When the board size is specified, it is often an odd number, such as 5, 9, or 11, to foster effective decision-making. Czech law determines a minimum and maximum number of members and further specifies that the selected number must be divisible by three. Boards whose size is regulated in the law generally have fewer than 20 members, whereas senates tend to exceed 20. For instance, in Italy, university senates may have up to 35 members, while in Finland, the number can reach 50. Furthermore, it is more common for the law to define a range or set minimum and maximum limits for the senate than to specify the exact number of members. Among the smallest senates are the Czech university senates, with a regulated minimum of 11 members.

There are some outliers at both ends. While boards are generally smaller, in principle, their size can reach 35 in Portugal and 36 in France. While there may be a greater need to ensure representation of different constituencies in unitary governance models, boards that act as single decision-making bodies are not typically larger than boards sharing powers with senates. A distinction can be made between the Nordic unitary models (Iceland, Norway, Sweden), where boards do not usually exceed 15 members, and unitary models in Belgium or Portugal, where boards have 20 to 40 members. Georgia stands out as the only country where the board must be twice the size of the senate, as outlined above.

Size regulation may reflect the academic culture of a particular higher education system. It should also be considered in relation to an institution's overall decision-making structure, which includes governing bodies at different levels.

However, the role of the governing bodies has evolved, gaining importance in the context of enhanced autonomy and a greater need to develop the strategic profile of higher education institutions. The capacity to determine the size of the governing bodies can be an asset for institutions in this context, particularly when it comes to promoting inclusiveness and bringing on board members whose diverse profiles bring added value to the institution.

4.2 Composition

This section explores who populates these bodies, how they are composed, and which groups are most represented in university governance across Europe. For this purpose, four constituencies are identified: academic staff, non-academic staff, students and external members.

Table 2 records participation taking into account the caveats detailed in the methodological section (explicit regulation, exclusion by default, possible but not guaranteed participation...). It does not seek to establish the significance of each group's participation. In the following section, however, illustrations are provided to give a sense of the scale of participation.

Composition rules of senate-type bodies

Table 2 indicates that academic staff naturally form the group most often represented in university senates, traditionally the main academic body of the university, followed by students and non-academic staff. It is rare for external members to be included on the senate. It is allowed in several systems but is only mandated by law in France.

Academic staff tend to make up at least half of the senate membership (Czechia, Ireland, Poland, Spain). In Italy, tenured professors must account for two thirds of the senate membership; in Austria, academic staff must make up 72%, in Romania, maximum 75%, while in Latvia, no less than 75%. Finland offers an interesting exception, ruling that no university group may hold more than half of the seats. Legal provisions thus vary between guaranteeing a certain level of representation for academic staff, and limiting representation to guarantee the participation of other groups, chiefly students.

Where university senates exist, there are nearly always legal provisions guaranteeing student representation. When this is possible but not guaranteed, university statutes usually cater for it. In systems that quantify student participation, students typically account for 20% of the senate, though there are notable variations. Croatia and Italy guarantee relatively low shares (10% and 15% respectively). The law may establish that students represent 20% (Serbia, Slovenia), or at least 20% (Latvia, Lithuania, Poland), of the senate. In Estonia, Romania and Spain, the threshold stands at 25%. In Slovakia, students are required to make up at least one third of the senate, while in Czechia, the law provides for a range of 33% to 50%, among the largest shares recorded in this analysis.

Among the systems that feature senates, Georgia and Türkiye form an exception. Neither includes students in this governing body, although in the case of Georgia, they make up one third of the board-type body. Türkiye stands out as a unitary model, excluding students from university governance.

After academic staff and students, non-academic staff make up the third most frequently represented group on senates (guaranteed representation in 11 systems, and possible in an additional four), generally making up a minority of the membership. For instance, at universities in Hesse (Germany), non-academic staff hold two out of 17 seats on the senate.

Composition rules of board-type bodies

As shown in [Table 2](#), external members are the most frequently represented group (with guaranteed or possible participation) in university boards (27 cases out of 29). The exceptions are Georgia and Romania, both featuring dual asymmetric models, where governing bodies are fully internal by law.

This analysis differentiates between three levels of external member inclusion: minority; half, or a majority; and the entirety of the board. [Table 4](#) provides an overview of the systems according to these categories. It is worth noting that there are different approaches to establishing shares of external members on the board, ranging from exact numbers/shares to both threshold and ceiling logics. As an example, Italy applies a threshold (minimum three out of 11 members, or two if the total number of members is less than 11), which has led to some Italian university boards to feature a majority of external members. Thus, in the “minority” category there may be systems where university boards feature a majority of external members, but where the law does not require it. In Portugal, external members should make up at least 30% of the board, but no more than 35%.

Of the 27 systems analysed, 12 have a minority of external members on the board. This group includes countries like Finland, France, Italy, and Serbia. External members make up 30% of the council at Serbian universities; however, it should be noted that their share has increased since the 2017 reform.

A further 12 out of 27 have boards whose external members make up half or a majority, such as Denmark, Ireland and Poland.

Only in Austria, Czechia and Hesse (Germany) is the board entirely composed of external members. This is possible because these systems are dual traditional governance models which include a senate, thereby guaranteeing representation for other constituencies. In Slovakia, the board is almost entirely external, as board members may not be part of the institution’s academic community, with the exception of the member(s) elected by students.

Table 4 – External members in board-type bodies

System	Less than 50% external members	50% and above	100%
AT			✓
BE-fl	✓		
BE-fr	✓		
CZ			✓
DE-he			✓
DE-nrw		✓	
DK		✓	
EE		✓	
ES	✓		
FI	✓		
FR	✓		
GE	Not allowed		
HR		✓	
IE		✓	
IS	✓		
IT	✓		
LT	✓		
LU		✓	
LV		✓	
NO	✓		
PL		✓	
PT	✓		
RO	Not allowed		
RS	✓		
SE		✓	
SI	✓		
SK		✓	
UK-en		✓	
UK-sc		✓	

Following governance reforms, the composition of the board changed in both Luxembourg and Ireland. Until 2018, the board of governors at the University of Luxembourg consisted of seven external voting members and four non-voting observers (the rector, a student, an academic staff representative, and the government commissioner as an external member). Since the reform, the board comprises 13 voting members, including nine external and four internal members representing all constituencies. In addition, a government commissioner continues to participate without voting rights. In Ireland, under the Higher Education Act 2022, the governing authority now includes nine internal and 11 external members.

Similarly to Luxembourg, a government commissioner sits on boards at Flemish universities. These commissioners have no voting rights but perform an advisory role and ensure that university governance and management align with the regulatory framework and preserve the university's financial sustainability.

After external members, academic staff and students are the most frequently represented groups (with guaranteed representation) on university boards, followed by non-academic staff, as shown in [Table 2](#). These groups are either guaranteed representation through shares, exact numbers, or ceilings and thresholds. They may also be considered overall as 'internal members,' with the universities deciding internally about further rules. For example, the law stipulates that 50% of board members of Croatian universities must be internal and the other 50% external. In such cases, there is no guaranteed representation for any of the internal groups, in particular non-academic staff and students.¹⁴

Apart from fully external boards, there are a few systems where academic staff have possible, but not guaranteed, representation on the board. This is the case in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium), in North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany), and in England (UK), although in practice university statutes guarantee representation of academic staff. Slovakia stands out, as the board is meant to be populated with external members, but the law specifies that at least one member, who is elected by the student community, may be part of the academic community.

Several systems regulate the composition of their university boards in a way that explicitly excludes non-academic staff (Iceland, Lithuania, Portugal, Sweden).

[Table 2](#) shows that boards tend to be more inclusive than senates, more frequently including three to four of the defined constituencies. The biggest difference lies in the representation of external members, who are not typically included on senates. While the section below will take a closer look at the inclusiveness of governance models, it can already be concluded that dual asymmetric models appear to be rather inclusive, by accommodating the different groups across governing bodies with different competences.

Gender parity on university boards

In various countries, university boards are subject to regulations ensuring a certain level of gender diversity among membership – whether as part of rules targeted to higher education or cross-sectoral legal provisions. It is worth mentioning that the German-speaking systems considered in the analysis all apply gender quotas. Both in Hesse and North Rhine-Westphalia, 40% of the board members must be women, while in Brandenburg, women and men must each constitute at least one third of the voting members. In Austria, a minimum of 50% female participation is mandatory in all collegial bodies of universities.

In France, university boards are required to guarantee gender parity. Irish university boards must also respect gender balance requirements – ensuring at least 40% male and female representation – while also reflecting the diversity of Irish society. Gender equality is also required by law when selecting external members at Serbian universities.

¹⁴ In such cases academic staff representation is considered guaranteed, as the selection of internal members is done through the senate.

5. Term of office

The term of office for governing bodies is a key aspect of university governance. Term limits aim to balance the need for continuity and informed contribution to long-term strategy with the importance of periodic renewal to maintain accountability and openness to change. Most of the time, university statutes regulate the term of office of the governing bodies, but the law may also prescribe exact mandates. In all cases, the conditions (duration, renewability) are fixed in some manner.

The term of office of both senates and boards usually varies from three to six years, and membership is typically renewable once. Different practices exist however, such as scaled renewal and fixed or maximum terms. One of the shortest terms of office for boards can be found in Scotland, where the Code of Governance recommends the use of set terms of office no longer than three years (renewable twice) or four years (renewable once). In Italy, the statutes specify that the board mandate may not exceed four years, can be repeated once and can also be scaled in several phases to ensure gradual renewal.

In Slovakia, Luxembourg and Estonia, board members have a five-year mandate, while in Norway and Latvia, board members are elected for four years. In Lithuania, the council members' term of office is five years, with a maximum of two consecutive terms.

Czech boards have among the longest terms of office: members serve for six years (as in Croatia), but one third of the positions are made available again every two years.

In some systems, there may be specific provisions regarding the term of office for external members. In Denmark, for instance, the law states that external members may serve on the board for a maximum of eight years over at least two terms of office, while leaving universities to establish the term of office of internal members.

6. Appointment of external members

External members bring outside perspectives and can be a valuable asset to universities when they help fill gaps in specific fields. The process of selecting and appointing external members is a strategic matter that deserves attention and is therefore explored in this section. The paper focuses on board-type bodies, where external members typically serve.

The legal framework usually specifies the processes used to appoint the different internal communities to the governing bodies, or leaves it to university statutes to specify. The capacity to select and appoint external members to the board is typically vested either in the institution and/or an external authority, or, in some cases, in other external organisations.

The Autonomy Scorecard differentiates between five types of procedures to select the external members in university governance:

- universities are free to appoint external members;
- candidates for external members may be put forward by the institution but appointed by an external authority;
- some of the members may be appointed by the university and some by an external authority ('shared appointment');
- an external authority decides on the appointment of external members;
- other appointment processes.

Table 5 below compares the processes used to appoint external members in systems with dual or board-based unitary governance models, excluding Georgia and Romania, where external members do not feature in the governance model.

Table 5 – Regulating external members' appointment to the board

Appointment of external members to the board				
Internal appointment	Proposal by university	Shared appointment	External appointment	Other appointment process
England (UK)	Czechia	Austria	Estonia	Denmark
Finland	Norway	Croatia	Latvia	Flanders (Belgium)
Italy	Sweden	France	Serbia	Ireland
Lithuania		Hesse (Germany)		Luxembourg
Poland		Iceland		North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany)
Portugal		Slovenia		Spain ¹⁵
Scotland (UK)		Slovakia		
		Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium)		

Appointment by the university

Around one quarter of the systems (7 out of 27) allow universities to freely select external members for the board. The law may stipulate the procedures to be followed or leave it up to the university to define its own process. The senate may be responsible for appointing external members to the board (as in Finland); they may also be co-opted by the internal members of the board (as in Portugal).

English universities, which are typically characterised by a comparatively high degree of autonomy across all dimensions of the Scorecard, have the freedom to determine all aspects relating to their governing bodies, including appointments. Rather than operating through legal provisions, the sector has established a Code of Governance. This reference document, produced by the Committee of University Chairs, provides a framework and outlines key values and principles that form the foundation of sound governance. This code-based system also exists in Scotland, where it complements the legal framework.

Proposal by the university

Only three systems – in Czechia, Norway, and Sweden – fall into this category. At Czech universities, the board (Board of Trustees) is fully composed of external members, identified by the institution and appointed by the ministry. The Norwegian unitary governance model follows the same process, though in this case, external members are a minority in the board (unless the board itself decides to increase their number).

In Sweden, the university selects six internal members while the government appoints the other eight members (including the chair), who must not be employed at the institution. Their appointment is based on the proposal of a two-person nomination committee (of which one member is proposed by the institution).

¹⁵ Spain appears in a different category than in the 2023 edition of the Autonomy Scorecard due to legal changes implemented in 2023.

Shared appointment

Roughly one third of the systems follow a model in which the power to appoint external members is distributed between the university and the external authority, offering a different perspective on shared accountability.

In Austria, the council (board-type body) is exclusively made up of external members. An equal number of candidates is proposed by the senate and the ministry, with the final candidate chosen by the members already nominated. The governance reform in Slovakia was partly inspired by the Austrian model, to the extent that one half of the board members are elected and dismissed by the senate, and the other half are appointed and dismissed by the Ministry of Education. Since the number of board members must be odd, the one remaining member is elected by the other members (if they fail to do so, the ministry appoints this member at the proposal of the Slovak Academy of Sciences). The law requires that members be selected outside of the academic community, with the exception of the member(s) elected by the student section of the senate, resulting in a board that is composed almost entirely of external members.

In Hesse (Germany), the boards comprise only external members, with half appointed by universities and half by an external authority. In Iceland, out of five external members of the council, two are appointed by the minister and the rest are nominated by the governing council itself. France follows a somewhat similar model, as external members of the board are partly nominated by external organisations (up to 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.

In Croatia, the senate appoints half of the members, who can be external, while the founder (public authorities) selects the remainder. Together, the members elect a president through a public call.

External appointment

This category comprises Estonia, Latvia, and Serbia. In Estonia, external members form the majority and are nominated by the public authorities (and the Estonian Academy of Science). At Serbian universities, the external authority selects the external members. In Latvia, research universities have 11 council members, five of whom are nominated by the senate (typically internal, but can also be external members), five are selected by the ministry and one is selected by the president of the republic (all are external).

Other appointment processes

This last category includes cases where other procedures exist. For example, in Denmark, the university may freely nominate external members; however, since 2017, the nomination of the chair of the board (who must be external) requires ministerial approval. Along the same lines, even though all members of university boards in North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) are selected through an internal procedure, the ministry must validate their appointment.

In Flanders, the government proposes the external members of the board for public universities, who are formally appointed by the university. In Luxembourg, of 11 external members, two are proposed by the university council (a senate-type body). In Ireland, the board ('governing body') appoints all 10 external members, of whom three are nominated by the minister. The procedure for appointing these external members must be approved by the minister.

Following the implementation of the 2023 law, Spanish universities must include members of the 'social council' on their board; the rules on the composition of this externally populated body are established by each Autonomous Community (regional public authorities).

7. Profiles of the external members

Data collected through the Autonomy Scorecard indicates varying practices regarding the profiles of external members, ranging from developing dedicated competence matrices, recruitment that strengthens the strategic positioning of the institution, to representational logics reflecting the university's socio-economic environment.

External board members may come from business, art and culture, academia, and the public sector. They may also be alumni of the institution.

At Czech universities, external members are expected to represent diverse areas of public life, and include civil servants, graduates, and business representatives, provided they are not employed by the university. Austria also has fully external boards, and members generally represent sectors such as arts and culture, academia, business, and non-governmental organisations. National and local public authorities are never included. The ministry must provide justification for the candidates it puts forward, although no control mechanism has been established.

In Iceland, external board members are expected to have relevant knowledge and experience to support the university sector. They usually come from the business sector, often from start-ups or other knowledge-driven companies. Denmark also requires external members to show expertise in finances and strategy.

The law sometimes specifies that external members may not be employed by public authorities. Conversely, their presence may be requested, as in Sweden, where external members typically include representatives from national and local public authorities, among many other profiles. Swedish law further specifies that union representatives may attend board meetings without voting rights. In 2023, a major debate erupted in Sweden concerning the profile of external members after the government abruptly shortened their mandate. This decision was predicated on the rationale that institutions need expertise to address new security threats. This move undermined universities' established collaborative approach to selecting board members jointly with public authorities.¹⁶

In Flanders, external board members are drawn from the social partners of the university (employer associations, trade unions) and representatives of public authorities. In Portugal, they usually come from the business/private sector, with a smaller number coming from local government (e.g. former officials with relevant expertise).

In England, the Code of Governance recommends that the governing bodies include members who represent diverse views, attitudes and experiences. In Scotland, a similar Code of Governance suggests that the board (known as the court) should comply with legal requirements while ensuring a balanced representation of skills and stakeholder involvement.

Following the 2022 governance reform in Ireland, all board members must be appointed based on a competency matrix to ensure they make a substantial contribution to the effective and efficient performance of the board. Another example of prescriptive legal provisions for selecting external members according to specific profiles is found at the University of Luxembourg. Of the nine external members appointed by the government, at least five must be university professors with no contractual ties to the university itself.

In Italy, the law also specifies the general competences of members of governing bodies, who must have professional standing. Universities are required to appoint persons with specific expertise, such as business and financial experience, and may include academics from other universities, representatives from public authorities, and individuals from the arts and culture sector. Similarly, in France, the types of external members (representatives of regional authorities, business representatives, etc.) are defined by law.

It is unusual for foreign external members to serve in the governing bodies. In Latvia, for instance, only a small fraction of all higher education council members are foreign/international. Luxembourg is a counter-example: university boards there typically include several foreign members, mostly academics affiliated to other, foreign universities.

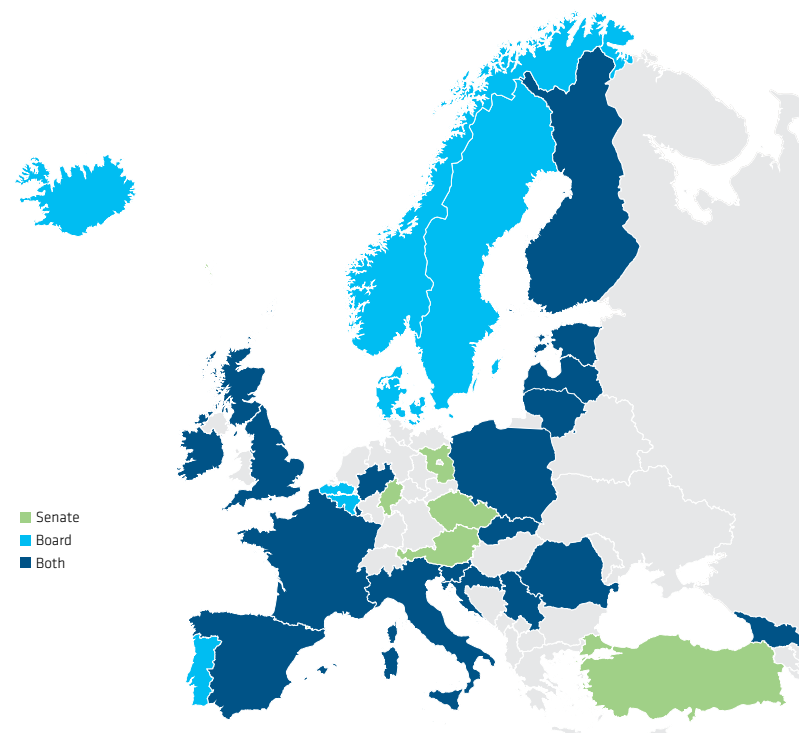
¹⁶ EUA's response to this initiative can be consulted [here](#).

8. Inclusiveness of university governance models

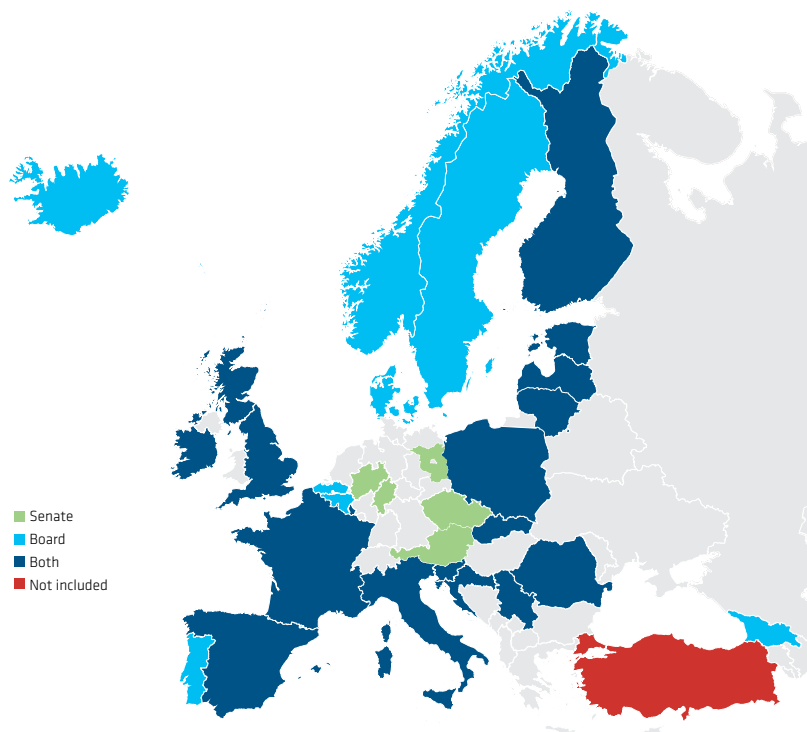
This section focuses on the composition of governing bodies and examines whether certain governance models could be considered more inclusive than others. This analysis provides an update on the conclusions of the original paper and aims to compare findings and incorporate new sources of information. The maps below show guaranteed or possible participation per group and per body, based on the data captured in [Table 2](#).

[Map 2](#) shows that academic community participation is a sine qua non for university governance, whether academic staff representatives sit on the senate, the board, or both. In most cases (18), academic staff are included in both governance structures. As outlined previously, academic staff are not only represented in all senates, but they also typically make up the majority of the senate membership. Academic staff are guaranteed representation on nearly all boards. Apart from fully external boards (Austria, Czechia, Hesse), Slovakia stands out, explicitly requiring that the board members must not be part of the academic community of the institution. However, students elect one member who may be part of the academic community (in practice, a student representative or an academic staff member). Both the university senate and the Slovak government may select academics from other institutions (in the country or abroad) to serve on the board. Academic staff participation is also possible (rather than guaranteed) in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium), England (UK), and North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany).

Map 2 – Academic staff participation in governance structures

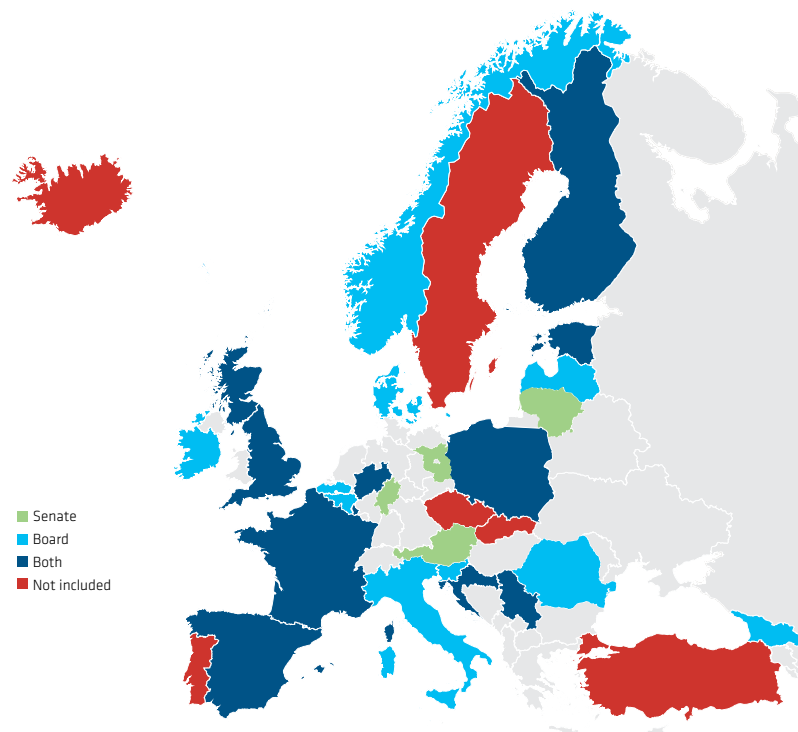


Map 3 – Student participation in governance structures



Students have guaranteed representation in university governance¹⁷ in all systems except for Türkiye, where they may still attend senate sessions on some occasions but without voting rights. Most systems include (or make it possible to include) students in both governing bodies, and the rest incorporate them in at least one. Where university senates exist, they nearly always include student representatives, often through thresholds or exact shares, except for Georgia and Türkiye. Students have guaranteed or possible representation on the boards of 25 systems out of the 29 that have boards (Austria, Czechia and Hesse have fully external boards).

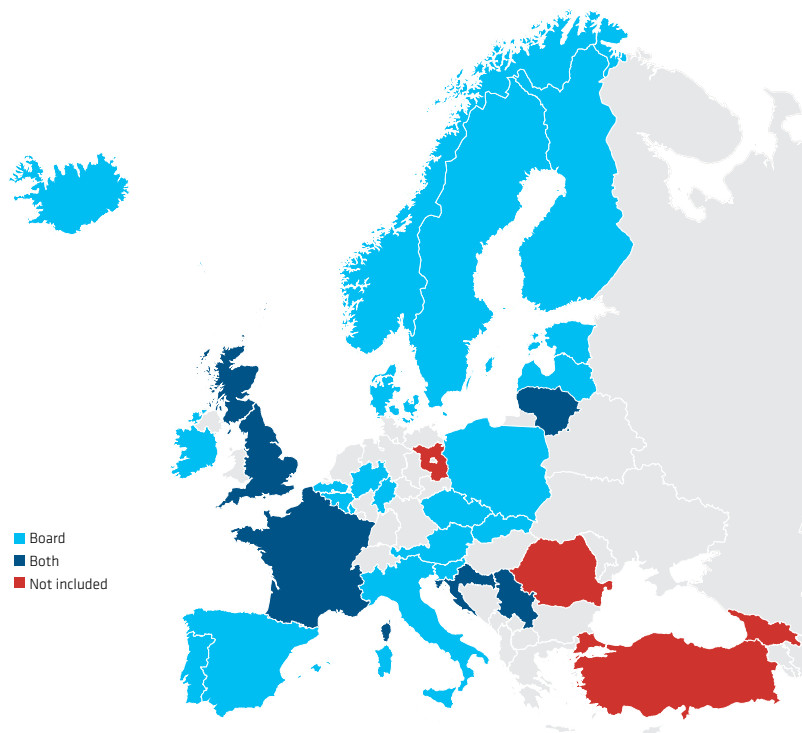
Map 4 – Non-academic staff participation in governance structures



The picture differs for non-academic staff, whose inclusion in governing bodies is less common. As shown in [Map 4](#), non-academic staff have either guaranteed or possible participation in at least one governing body in 25 systems, while six do not include non-academic personnel at all. The analysis further indicates that non-academic staff are more frequently represented (either through guaranteed or possible participation) on boards (21) than on senates (15).

¹⁷ In England, this participation is 'possible,' in the absence of regulation on the composition of governing bodies, just as it is for the other constituencies. This analysis also disregards the role and competences of student councils, which are often included in the law.

Map 5 – External members participation in governance structures

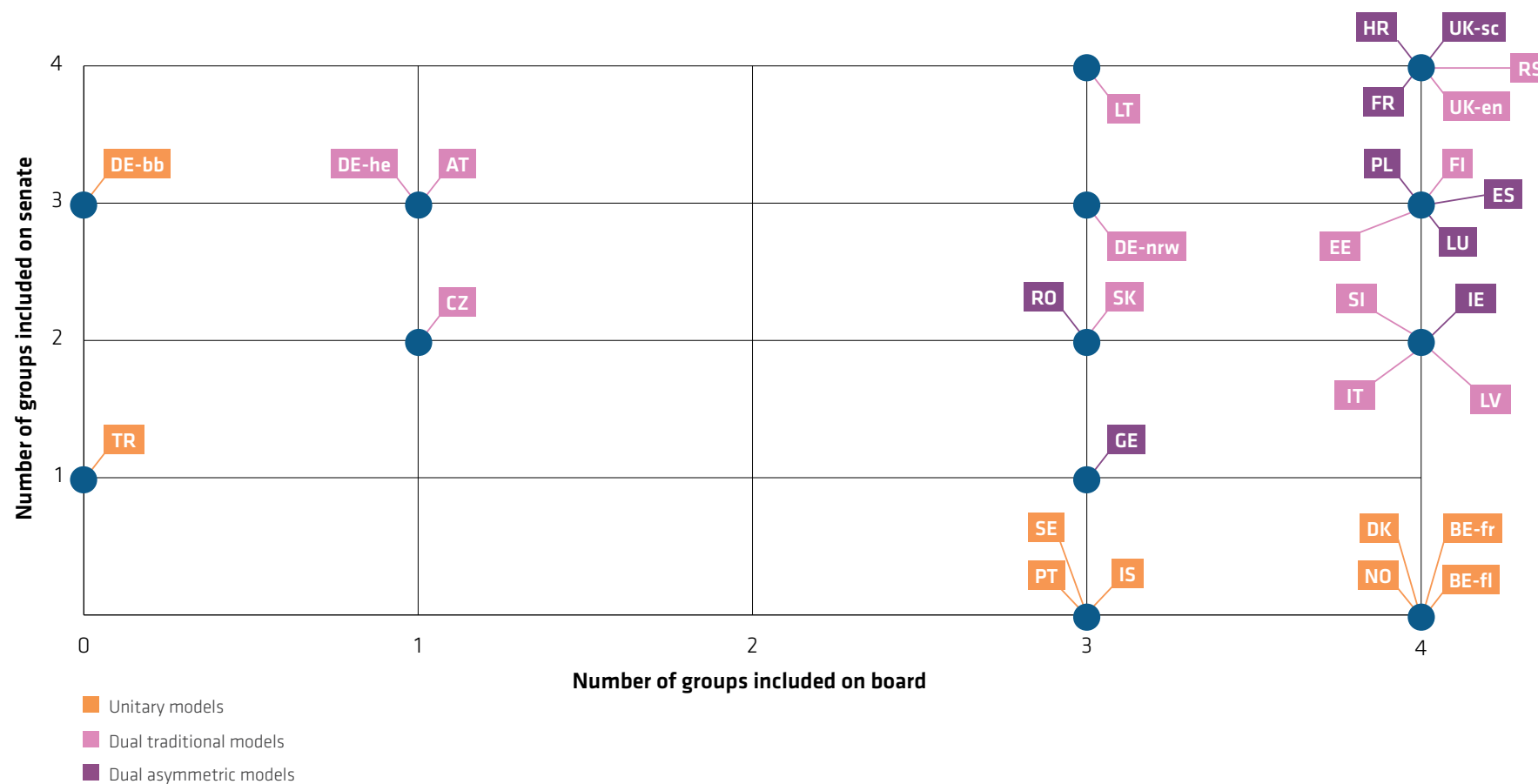


As detailed in the previous section, it is very common to include external members in university governance across Europe (27 out of 29 analysed systems). All systems featuring a board include external members (either mandated by law, or made possible, as in England), with the exception of Georgia and Romania. It is much rarer for senates to accommodate external members. Often, while not explicitly forbidden, the participation of external members is not considered necessary or relevant, given that the senate is predominantly academic. Thus, some senates may include academics from other institutions, as in Lithuania. However, the French ‘academic councils,’ which combine two committees into a senate-type body, do include a prescribed minimum of 10% of external representatives. External members are fully excluded from university governance in four systems (Brandenburg, Georgia, Romania, Türkiye).

The chart below brings together unitary, dual traditional and asymmetric models and shows the number of different groups included (either through guaranteed or possible participation) in each governing body, differentiating between academic staff, non-academic staff, students and external members.¹⁸

Unitary systems are given a zero score for the absent governing body, which makes it possible to compare both unitary and dual governance structures simultaneously.

Chart 1 – Inclusiveness of the governance structures



¹⁸ The chart does not differentiate between overlap and complementarity between governing bodies, in terms of group representation. Refer to Table 2 for an overview of which group is involved in which governing body.

The chart shows that most of the systems demonstrate high inclusiveness, insofar as they feature at least three of the four groups in one of their governing bodies. Dual asymmetric systems (in purple) cluster in the top right section of the chart. Among these, France, Croatia, and Scotland guarantee or allow for participation of all four groups in both governing bodies. Luxembourg, Poland, and Spain also demonstrate high diversity, only excluding external members from their senates. Ireland and Romania show high heterogeneity on their boards, though their senates are slightly less diverse. In dual asymmetric systems, Georgia is an exception, with a single-group senate composition.

Dual traditional models (in pink) show significant diversity in the composition of their boards, which may include one (as in Austria) to potentially four of the groups (as seen in England). Those with boards made up entirely of external members achieve greater balance with more inclusive senates.

Board-based unitary models are grouped in the bottom right section of the chart, showing that all four groups are included on the board in Belgium, Denmark, and Norway, and all but non-academic staff are included in Iceland, Portugal and Sweden. In the lower left section, Türkiye, as a senate-based unitary model, stands out as an exception, featuring a very homogeneous senate composed solely of academic staff. In contrast, Brandenburg (Germany), another senate-based unitary model, shows more diversity, including all constituencies except external members. In the analysed cases, board-based unitary models tend to be highly inclusive, with a minimum of three constituencies.

Since the first analysis was published in 2018, some systems underwent governance reforms that affected the setup and composition of their governing structures. In such cases (Estonia, Poland, Latvia, Slovakia), the model evolved towards more heterogeneity, signalling a move towards inclusivity. In Slovakia, a previously fully external board now includes a member elected by the student part of the senate (typically, an academic or a student representative). The introduction of boards in Estonia, Latvia and Poland sparked or formalised the inclusion of external members in university governance.

9. Conclusions

This paper has explored the evolving landscape of university governance in Europe, drawing on data from the EUA University Autonomy Scorecard IV and building on previous analyses. It offers a comprehensive picture of the development and current models of governance, their structures, legal provisions, and levels of inclusiveness. While differences between higher education systems persist – reflecting diverse traditions, political cultures, and regulatory environments – several common trends can be identified.

Over the past decade, the dual governance model has become the dominant structure in Europe. Although the division of responsibilities between the two core bodies varies, recent regulatory reforms in Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia have either introduced dual models or strengthened and broadened the portfolios of competences given to boards.

Often in connection with such reforms, external representation in governing bodies has also been introduced or reinforced. These changes are commonly framed by broader discourses on accountability, public engagement, and the societal relevance of universities. Though there are various ways to include external members – for instance in unitary, board-based models (as in most Nordic countries) – these reforms have integrated external members through dual governance models. This model then makes a clear separation between academic self-governance – typically vested in the senate – and strategic oversight, assigned to a board that also includes external members.

This approach allows academic communities to retain authority over core academic matters, while boards contribute to strategic direction and financial accountability. Even as external representation has increased, the analysis shows that more inclusive and balanced representation within governing bodies is now the norm. Academic staff, students, and, in many cases, administrative staff continue to have core decision-making responsibilities in academic matters, or have gained more autonomy to decide on issues previously under the authority of public bodies – particularly matters with financial implications.

The findings of this analysis do not support concerns expressed in discussions at European level about external members gaining excessive influence over academic decision-making. In most countries, reforms have not resulted in purely external boards or the exclusion of internal university constituencies. Instead, internal representation has been preserved, often in both governing bodies, including those with external involvement. This development enables institutions to integrate diverse perspectives and expertise into decision-making processes. However, these dual models with increased external participation also demand new forms of cooperation, trust-building, and shared understanding between academic communities and external members. Effective governance increasingly relies on the ability of all actors to work together constructively, while respecting their distinct roles and contributing to a common institutional vision.

The issue of who appoints members to governing bodies is of particular relevance to national governance debates. While public universities in many systems have gained greater formal autonomy, governments often maintain an influence through the appointment of board members. These representatives serve a dual role: enhancing public accountability and bringing in perspectives from other sectors such as business and public administration, but also society at large. The analysis shows that only a quarter of systems¹⁹ allow universities to independently select their external members. Among recent reforms, there is no single dominant approach: for example, Poland has opted for internal selection of external board members, Estonia and Latvia favour appointments by public authorities, while Slovakia has introduced a shared appointment process. Regardless of the approach taken, governance reforms must seek an appropriate balance between public oversight and institutional interests.

Legal provisions for the selection of external members tend to focus on types of representation but seldomly underline the competences and skills required of them. While universities can design requirements for those external members that they nominate, the law should ensure that externally selected members also are chosen for the expertise they contribute to the institution's strategic development.

Legal frameworks continue to shape governance structures, particularly with regard to the size, composition, and appointment processes of governing bodies. While some systems grant institutions flexibility, others impose strict regulations – especially for board-type bodies. In unitary systems, where boards hold full decision-making power, regulatory constraints tend to be more pronounced.

Beyond the institutional level, other forms of governance are emerging. Universities are increasingly engaging in new forms of transnational cooperation, such as European University Alliances, which are developing governance frameworks of their own. These models may diverge from institutional structures and present new challenges with regard to coordination, accountability, and inclusiveness across institutional and national boundaries. EUA's analysis of alliance governance structures reveals some discrepancies with institutional models, such as the involvement of external stakeholders. While alliance governance bodies typically include representatives of the academic community, staff, and student representatives, the contribution of external members seems to be limited to an advisory role rather than any formal decision-making.²⁰ Moreover, the representation of members of institutional governing bodies within alliance governance structures does not appear to be a common or formalised practice. At institutional level, where universities are allowed to include external members in governing bodies, they may now choose academic leaders from among their alliance partners. It may be valuable to explore these aspects further in future analyses and discussions on university alliance governance.

Looking ahead, university governance will need to respond to an increasingly complex environment. Major transformations – such as digitalisation, the green transition, artificial intelligence, knowledge security, shifting societal expectations, and geopolitical uncertainty – are reshaping the demands on institutional leadership and governance. Today, governance is not only about stakeholder representation or regulatory compliance; it is also a critical enabler of institutional transformation and societal impact.

¹⁹ Among those systems that include external members in university boards.

²⁰ It is worth noting, however, that alliances may have associate members (including higher education institutions as well as other types of organisations).



This requires a shift of focus beyond formal structures such as the composition of governing bodies or stakeholder representation. While these aspects remain important, governance frameworks must enable universities to respond to change and attract the right competences in governing body members while also preserving core academic values.

There should be clarity on the roles and expectations of governing body members. External members in particular should have a clear understanding of their strategic responsibilities – whether related to oversight, accountability, or external engagement – as well as a sound knowledge of the specificities of the higher education culture and ecosystem.

Beyond formal structures, informal advisory groups and bodies can also play a valuable role, offering flexibility and additional expertise. Their relationship to formal governance should also be carefully considered.

While the analysis includes some examples of systems that have implemented measures to ensure gender diversity, the inclusion of diversity and equity as guiding principles in governance could be further reinforced. Rather than relying solely on formal quotas, these principles should guide selection and election practices more broadly even when not prescribed by law.

Strengthening governance capacity will become increasingly important and require a new skill set for governance actors. Fostering the skills and competences of governing board members requires targeted development support, structured peer learning, and a culture of collaboration that respects clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

EUA's recent work on leadership has highlighted the interplay between university leadership and governance bodies. The Association has also supported governance reforms in several systems, including Latvia, helping internal and external members to better understand their roles and the broader trends in higher education. EUA's Leadership Development Programme likewise addresses how governance actors and institutional leadership can work together to enable institutional transformation.

Ultimately, governance is more than just an issue of frameworks and of who is represented in a governing body. It has concrete implications for autonomy, accountability, and the ability of universities to fulfil their missions and respond to emerging challenges. As European higher education continues to evolve, appropriate governance will become a key instrument for institutional resilience, societal engagement, and responsiveness to major transformations. Continued dialogue, peer learning, and policy reflection will be essential to ensure that governance structures remain fit for purpose and aligned with the evolving missions of Europe's universities.

Annex 1. Higher education systems analysed

AT	Austria
BE-fl	Flanders (Belgium)
BE-fr	Wallonia-Brussels Federation (Belgium)
CZ	Czechia
DE-bb	Brandenburg (Germany)
DE-he	Hesse (Germany)
DE-nrw	North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany)
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
ES	Spain
FI	Finland

FR	France
GE	Georgia
HR	Croatia
IE	Ireland
IS	Iceland
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
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)

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.

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