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Abstract

Over recent decades, 'autonomy' has become a buzz word in higher education reform and universities were thought to be empowered to determine their own destiny. This chapter examines the organisational autonomy of universities in Europe. The multidimensional analyses of autonomy show that universities in practice experience considerable decision-making space, which in many cases is even more than expected, given their formal, legal autonomy situation. At the same time, the autonomy of universities is strongly circumscribed by their lasting financial dependence on the public purse, by contractual performance agreements, multiple accountability requirements, and by working in the shadow of governmental rules and expectations. Granting universities more autonomy does not reflect a weakening influence of government but new ways of controlling and influencing organisational behaviour. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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