



THE STAFFING AUTONOMY OF GREEK UNIVERSITIES: AN ATTEMPT AT QUANTIFICATION

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Abstract:

This study aims to assess the degree of staffing autonomy of Greek Universities, from a qualitative and quantitative perspective. The recent European University Association (EUA) research relating to University Autonomy did not include Greece since no input was provided for a series of years. Therefore, a thorough attempt to produce the necessary data (with special reference to the implementation period of Law 4009/11) will contribute to filling in the gap and providing useful country-specific outcomes. The methodology to be employed in this study complies with the one used by the EUA complemented with its own produced outcomes by studying the relevant literature together with the applicable legislation for the period in question. Thereby, the relevant outcomes produced (as numerical scores) allow for the ranking of Greek Universities as compared with their European counterparts. In specific, they level at a quite low position in terms of staffing autonomy. Having achieved that, proposals are offered for both the improvement of the EUA methodology for measuring staffing autonomy as well as for changes in the Greek legislation and Greek University practices to increase their performance and competitiveness in a continually changing and dynamic environment.

Keywords: Greek Universities, higher education, university autonomy, staffing autonomy, European university association

1. Introduction

Recruitment in the public sector is a public policy area that is among the top of the Greek public agenda, especially in the last decades. The continuous changes to the relevant regulatory framework in parallel with public dialogue accompanying them, demonstrate the importance of recruitment policy. In the context of reconstruction of the public

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administration and its interaction with the budgetary situation and economic growth, recruitment policy becomes a management tool for public spending or improving economic productivity (Kontogeorgakis, 2014).

According to scientific research, one of the most important problems of the Greek political-administrative system has always been the inability of the politicians to effectively regulate social and economic functions. These weaknesses are not irrelevant to the fragmentation and image of anarchist practices and centrifugal tendencies that resist co-ordination and coherent politics, transparency and democratic accountability. Formalism and circumvention of formal rules complement the puzzle to the extent that the political-administrative system seeks to operate without legal and procedural commitments but at the same time appears to comply (Spanou, 1996, 2001, 2018; & Makrydemetris, 1999 & 2013).

A characteristic term that describes the situation of the Greek administration is “fragmentation”. Fragmentation produces a state of opacity for both the administration and the citizens and businesses that deal with it, which fails to allow consistent compliance with procedures and obligations. Even the use of new technologies has become equally fragmented, replicating organizational fragmentation and creating additional barriers, rather than facilitating coordination and unifying themes (Spanou, 2018).

Critical administrative weaknesses that can be identified are the complexity of the legal framework, the lack of basic data, the weakness of financial and other control mechanisms and the inadequacy of human resources management and constantly changing legislation, the multiplicity of employees' employment status, the introversion of administrative structures and the lack of horizontal integration. This image of fragmentation runs across all policy areas and is rooted in how the political system operates on the basis of the impact of customer-guild logic (OECD, 2011). Unfortunately, this phenomenon is observed even in the academic place, having a negative impact on the autonomy of Greek universities.

The high degree of university autonomy is an issue that occupies Europe in the last decades as it has a positive effect on the quality of education, teaching, research and general management of the universities. Recent research shows that institutions that are characterized as modern, effective, efficient and innovative achieve a high degree of autonomy as they can freely schedule their profile and shape their mission (Kupriyanova, *et al.* 2020; Levacic, 2002; Estermann and Kupriyanova, 2019; Pruvot, *et al.* 2015). There is sufficient evidence to suggest that increasing university autonomy yields better educational outcomes and has a direct impact on labor market productivity (Salerno, 2003; Ritzen, 2016; Hoareau, *et al.* 2013; Felt, 2002, 2003). Also, autonomy has been discussed in several theoretical and practice-oriented studies as a pre-condition for the capacity of higher education institutions to be efficient and effective (Levacic 2002; Estermann and Kupriyanova 2019; Kupriyanova, *et al.* 2020).

However, the states must control the universities that achieve a high degree of autonomy so that to guarantee observance of legality and avoid possible deviations.

European University Association (EUA) is an organization that plays a key role between European Universities and national rectors' conferences to express the aspects and voices of the higher education community in Europe. In the last decades, most European Universities try to increase their degree of autonomy so that they have better achievement/quality in the field of teaching, learning and research. Also, they believe that by increasing their degree of autonomy, effectiveness and efficiency, they will have the capacity to respond to the rapidly changing needs of the society and economy (Kupriyanova, *et al.* 2020).

EUA supported and implemented two big types of research in the field of university autonomy. Autonomy was measured on the basis of four general indicators which are organizational, financial, staffing and academic autonomy (Lisbon, 2007).

The first research was published in 2009 and the last one in 2017 (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017; Estermann, *et al.* 2011; Estermann & Nokkala, 2009). In the recent research 47 European countries participate (including individual sub-national entities) (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017). Greece did not participate in that research, so EUA didn't provide results for the degree of autonomy of Greek Universities for this specific period.

In Greece, Universities are State-owned (Article 16, Constitution of Greece) and mainly the status of universities employee are civil servants. This research is an attempt to evaluate qualitatively as well as quantitatively the degree of staffing autonomy of the Greek universities, during the period of implementation of Law of Greek State No 4009/11. This is the law that was implemented in Greek universities from 2011 to 2016, which is the period that coincided with the period of the respective survey by EUA (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017). As this law was a major section in Greek Tertiary Education and many of the articles have been largely in force to this day, we decided that it is important to measure the degree of autonomy in Greek universities for this period so then to identify the position of Greece in relation to other European universities. This is the third article of a series studying autonomy in Greek Universities (Stamelos, *et al.* 2020; Lambropoulos, *et al.* submitted for publication).

2. Sources

In attempting to measure and quantify the staffing autonomy of Universities in Greece, the source of this work refers to the respective EUA study which measures the four general indicators dealing with dimensions of autonomy as per the Lisbon Treaty (2007). The staffing autonomy indicators include the ability to decide on (a) recruitment procedures, (b) salaries, (c) dismissals and (d) promotions of senior academic/senior administrative staff, while the rest three general indicators are organizational autonomy, financial autonomy and autonomy in academic matters (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017; Pruvot, *et al.* 2015; Vidal, 2013; Estermann, 2012; Nokkala & Steinel, 2011; Estermann & Nokkala, 2009). The EUA study accounts for twenty-nine (29) countries (or individual sub-national entities) that participated in the respective research (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017).

In conducting our research, the methodology employed complies with the one adopted by the EUA (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017; Estermann & Nokkala, 2009) complemented with own produced outcomes by studying the relevant literature together with the applicable Greek legislation for the period in question (i.e., Law of Greek State, 4009/11).

3. Measuring the Staffing Autonomy of the Universities in Greece

The methodology to be employed in this study complies with the one used by the EUA. In researching the Greek case, the applicable EUA data will be used and in case data is not available it will be complemented with its own produced outcomes after a thorough study of the applicable legislation. In saying so, it is necessary to highlight that due to the fragmented nature of the data in question, these research outcomes contribute to forming a more comprehensive view of the Greek case despite variances in methodology.

The EUA research on staffing autonomy focuses on the dimensions given in Table 1. It is important to be mentioned that in a very recent study, four of these indicators were found to be among the top 10 autonomy indicators with the highest impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of universities (Kupriyanova, *et al.* 2020).

Table 1: The individual indicators that comprise the general indicator for staffing autonomy

Staffing Autonomy
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)

Generally, it should be mentioned that different laws apply to different employment regimes, e.g., laws for civil servants differ from that of private ones, particularly as regards the recruitment, remuneration and promotion or dismissal of employees.

It should also be clarified that the EUA's staffing survey focused only on senior academic (faculty members) or administrative (executives) staff of the institutions.

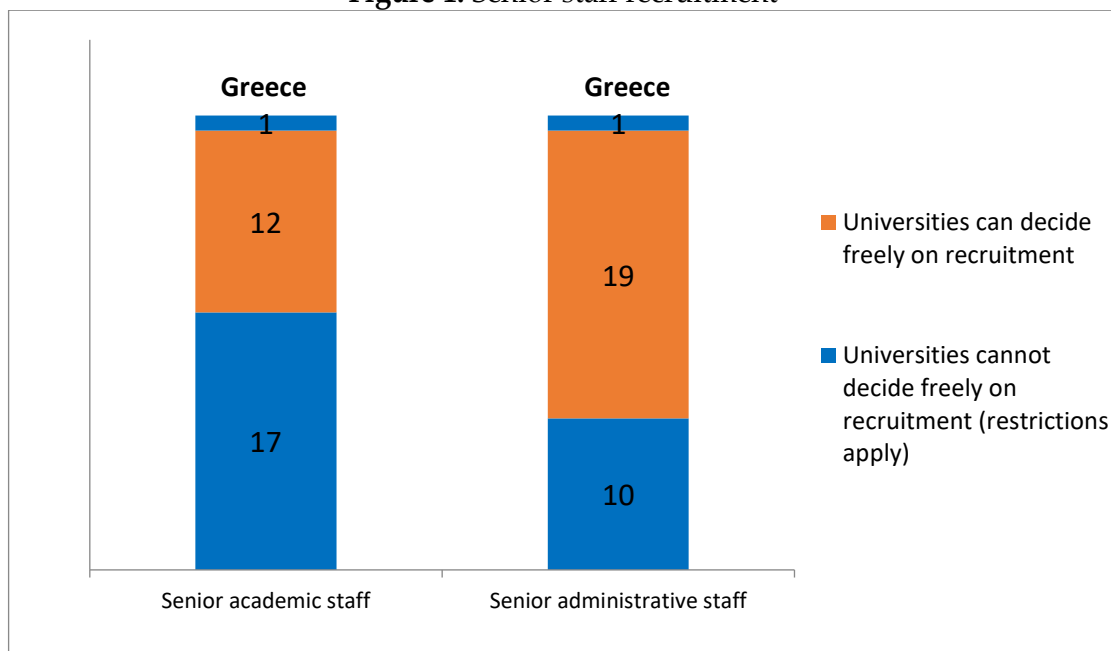
A major differentiation found during the research was the existence of universities where the majority of officials who held positions of responsibility were recruited as civil servants, while in other universities, civil servants with positions of responsibility were the minority. The percentage is almost split as 16 countries are identified as being in the first category and 13 in the second. For example, in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Sweden, and United Kingdom employees are civil servants. On the contrary, in Austria, civil servants are less than 30% of all University staff, while in Luxembourg the proportion is reduced to 10%. In Sweden and Germany, in recent years, Universities have been moving away from the model of recruiting civil servants. In some other countries (e.g., Flanders, Poland, Serbia, etc.) they don't recruit civil servants, but there is specific legislation that protects employees from dismissals.

3.1 Recruitment Procedures

Staffing recruitment differs in the countries across Europe. In some cases, there is a great degree of autonomy in the recruitment, while in others there is a strict set of rules and regulations imposed by the supervisory authority (Figure 1).

Concerning the recruitment of academic personnel, there are usually specialized criteria that are considered by a special evaluation committee. The candidate is elected after the decision of the Assembly of the Dean or by a decision-making body of electors after the evaluation of the candidates. Specific legislation defines the way in which the position is to be announced publicly, the way in which the evaluation committee is set up, the involvement of the professors, the way of assessment and individual-specific restrictions.

Figure 1: Senior staff recruitment



Source: Data obtained from Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017; Greece, own estimates.

The recruitment of academic and teaching staff usually requires the approval of Dean Assembly as well as the formal validation of the external authority. Other limitations have been also recorded but will not be discussed in detail.

The survey also found that there was higher staffing autonomy in the recruitment of university administrative staff (Figure 2). However, in these cases, restrictions through external validation are also imposed (e.g., Croatia, Denmark, Italy). In France, the recruitment of librarians and administrators is done through an open call (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017).

On the contrary, in Greek Universities, the recruitment of civil servants (academic and administrative staff) is approved by the Minister of Education and Finance. Different conditions for the recruitment of academic staff apply to those recruited through fixed-term private employment contracts, who are assigned to teach undergraduate and postgraduate courses at HEIs, as well as in other teaching and research activities. Article

16 of Law of Greek State No 4009/2011 mentions that: '4. (a) ... may be assigned, by individual fixed-term employment contracts of one to three academic years, full-time or part-time, to teaching staff, who are scientists, PhD holders, and professors ». These contracts may be renewable for up to five years. The other issues related to the recruitment, announcement, selection and employment of teaching staff are specified in the Regulative framework for Higher Education Institutions (HEI) self-government (article 16 of Law 4009/11). The recruitment of administrative staff is made "... in accordance with the provisions of Law 2190/1994 (A '28) and is subject to the Code of Greek State for Public Political Officials and Civil Servants, as ratified by its first article of Greek Law No 3528/2007..." (par. 6 of article 28 of Law 4009/11).

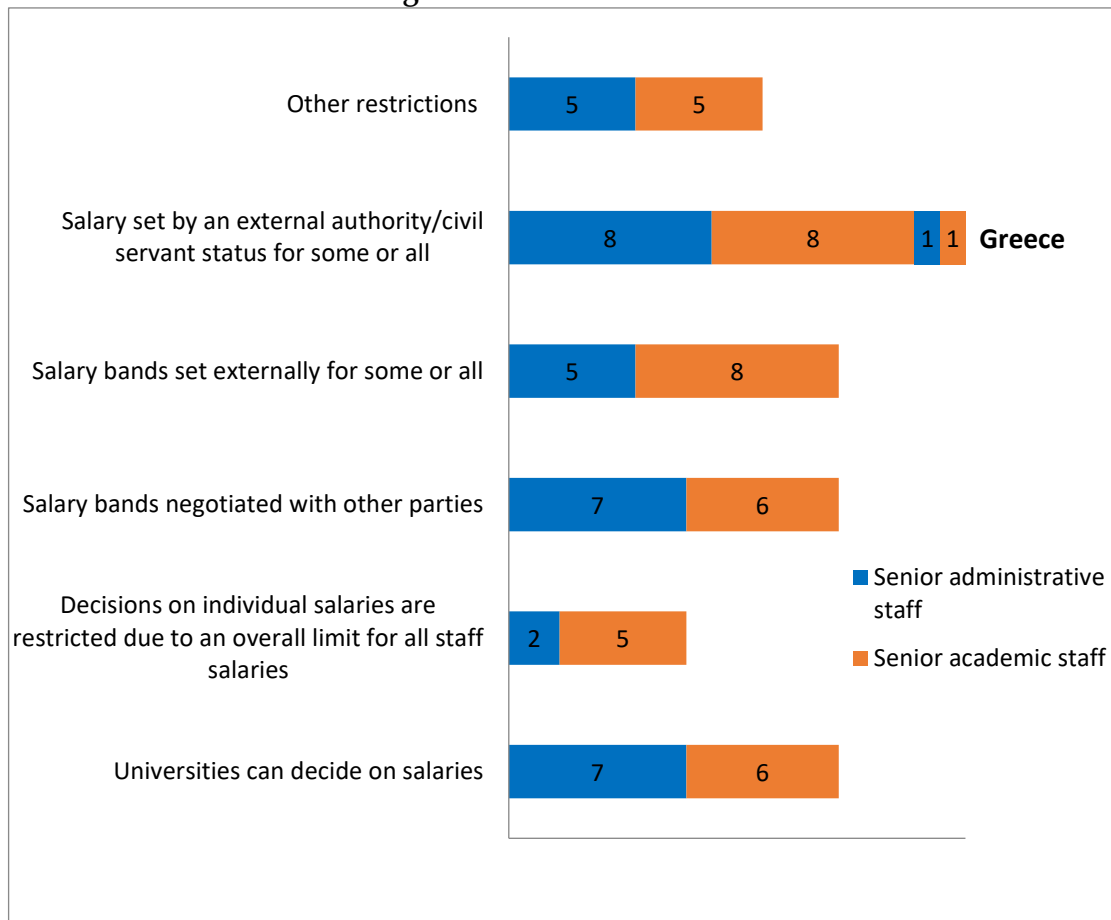
Finally, there is a high degree of autonomy in the recruitment of fixed-term public-sector administrators or outsourced work, as they are paid from the institution's budget or from the Special Account Research Fund's (SARF) reserves. These recruitments cover the requirements and needs of the institutions.

3.2 Staff Salaries

The determination of salaries of administrative and academic staff in most cases shall be determined by the competent Ministry, with specific legislation. On the contrary, universities in Estonia, Luxembourg, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland can freely determine the salaries of their academic and administrative staff. In the United Kingdom and in Lithuania universities have the freedom to appoint only the administrative staff. It is noteworthy that even in states where staff are not civil servants, such as in Austria and Lithuania, the remuneration of officials is determined by an external authority. Some other limitations emerged from the survey, such as the determination of the minimum salary per category of employees (e.g., Germany). Also, in another case (e.g., Norway), there are negotiations between trade unions and the state every year about the redefinition of salaries, without the participation of universities in the negotiations (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017). An overview of the above is given in Figure 2.

In Greece, universities cannot freely determine the salaries of their administrative and academic staff, as all staff are civil servants. Specific legislation (Law of Greek State No 3205/03) defines in detail the salaries of the academic staff, while the administrative staff follows the provisions of Law of Greek State No 4024/2011. In this way, the degree of staffing autonomy in Greek universities is quite low in the determination of salaries for both categories (Law of Greek State No 3205/03 and No 4024/11). Some minor exceptions can be noticed in the degree of staffing autonomy in Greek universities only for the administrative staff recruited for the requirements and needs of the Special Account Research Funds (SARF). In these cases, universities administrators can freely determine the salaries of the employees.

Figure 2. Senior staff salaries



Note: The same system may appear in different categories, reflecting the complexity of the situation.

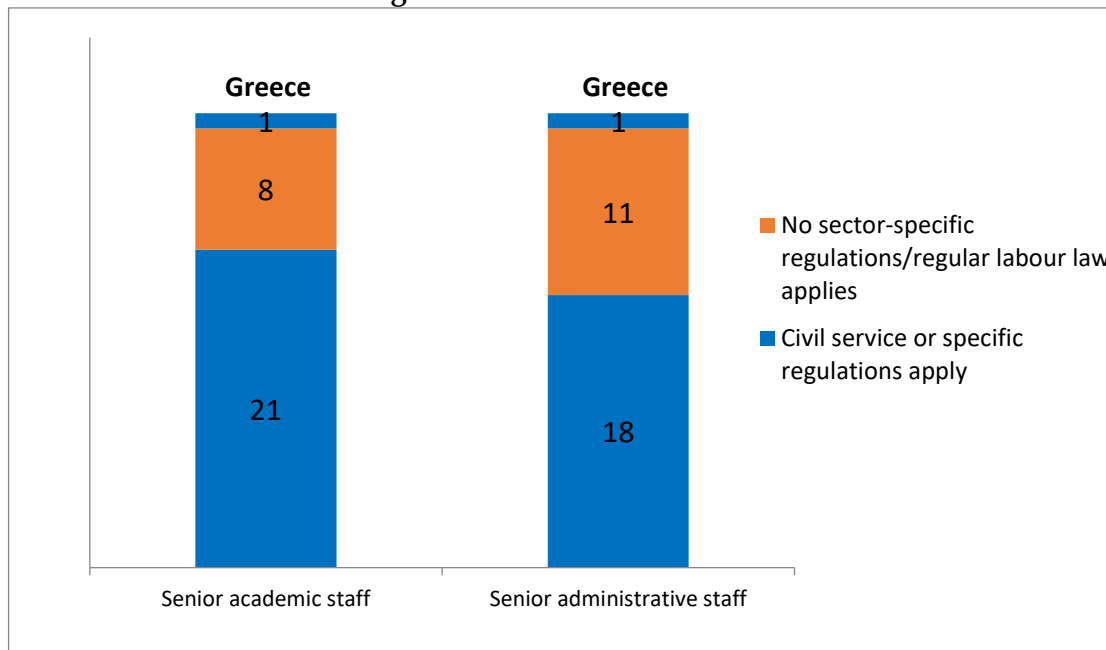
Source: Data obtained from Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017; Greece, own estimates.

3.3 Dismissal of Staff

Many differences have been identified in the area of redundancies with regard to states legislation. In some cases, it is an observed lack of regulations on dismissals, while in other cases, there are strict regulations (Figure 3). Especially, in cases where academic staff are civil servants, there is no legislation referring to the dismissal of the staff. The dismissal of academic and administrative staff is determined by law in Croatia, France, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Norway. In Dutch, there are separate negotiations between universities and the employees depending on the terms of the contract they are signing. That is the reason that there are different terms of dismissal for each employee (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017).

In Greece, the law for civil servants sets the basic framework, mainly stating the reasons for the dismissal of academic and administrative staff.

Figure 3: Senior staff dismissal



Source: Data obtained from Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017; Greece, own estimates.

According to law for civil servants, especially in article 103 of Law of Greek Parliament No 3528/07, refers that: "...1. An employee shall be automatically dismissed if he has been: a) deprived of his personal liberty after a temporary detention order or a court decision, even if he has been released on bail. b) sentenced to permanent termination. The dismissal begins with the notification of the disciplinary decision and ends on the last day of the time limit for lodging an appeal before the Council of State or on the day the decision of the Council of State is published if an appeal has been lodged. c) prosecuted for any crime against sexual freedom or for any crime of economic exploitation of sexual life. 2. An employee shall automatically return to his or her job if the reason for which he or she has been dismissed has disappeared. 3. The deed of re-employment decision shall be issued by the responsible decision body for the appointment...".

More specifically, in article 152 of the above-mentioned Law says that "...The employee is dismissed only for the following reasons: a) imposition of the disciplinary penalty of permanent termination, b) physical or mental incapacity, c) abolition of the position in which he serves, d) completion of age limit and thirty-five years, ...".

Furthermore, in article 153 the law clarifies that "...An employee is not fired if his or her physical or mental disability allows him or her to perform other duties...". Also, article 154 refers that: "... 1... An employee shall be dismissed if the position in which he serves is abolished. 2. If only certain positions in the same branch are abolished, the employees who have the least substantial qualifications shall be dismissed, following a decision of the service council. An appeal against this decision may be lodged with the Council of State. 3. The above also applies in the case of abolition of positions after merger of branches or services. 4. The above provisions for dismissal of employees are entitled, at their request, to be transferred to a vacant organic position in another public service. 5. The employee is entitled to be reappointed, if the same or similar position is re-established within one (1) year from his dismissal."

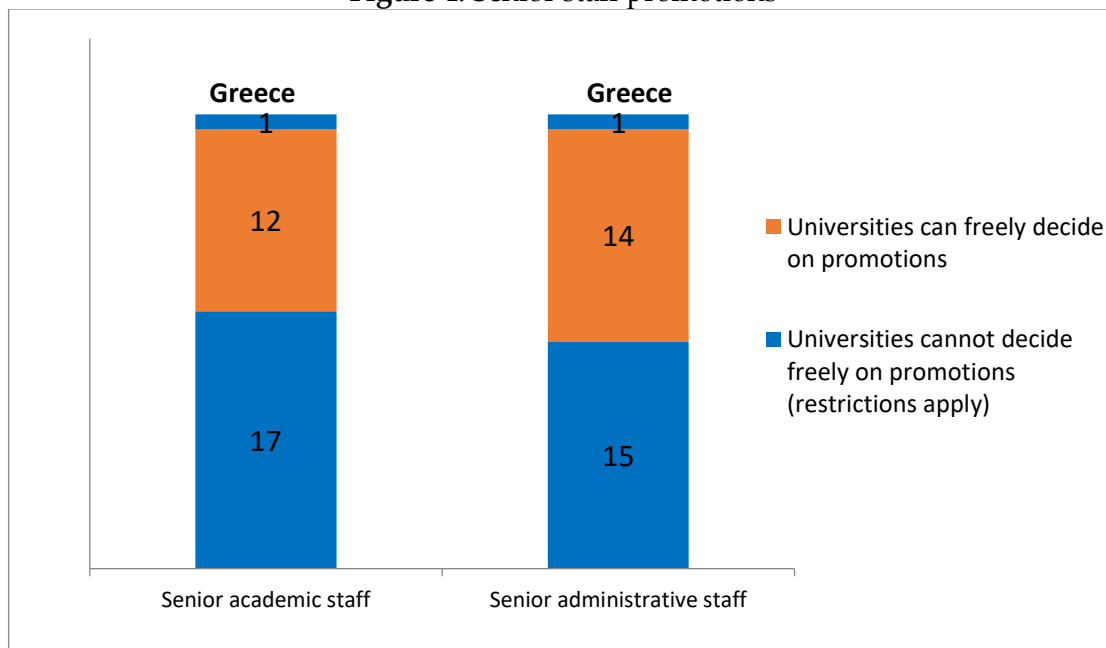
From the above articles, it can be found that the universities have the authority to take the decision if there is a serious reason for dismissal or not, judging the seriousness of the act that the employee is charged. The same legislation applies to administrative and academic staff, while the composition of the disciplinary body is different.

3.4 Promotions

A high degree of autonomy is recorded in many universities for the promotion of the academic and administrative staff (12 and 14 respectively), while in 17 and 15 respectively, the universities cannot decide freely on promotions as restrictions applied either by the State or by the law especially depending on the rules on the composition of the evaluation committees (Figure 4).

Regarding the promotions of academic staff, specific legislation referred to the way in which the nomination evaluation committee was set up (e.g., Norway, Portugal, Serbia, and Spain), while in Croatia and Spain there were no restrictions on how the electorate was constituted for promoting administrative staff.

Figure 4: Senior staff promotions



Source: Data obtained from Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017; Greece, own estimates.

There have also been recorded some additional restrictions that apply on a case-by-case basis in some countries. For example, in Lithuania, promotions take place every five years following a public announcement of all positions. A similar process is being followed in Serbia, for the promotion of the academic staff to the level of full Professor. In France, government quotas are set by the state for academic promotions. Fifty percent of the promotions of the academic staff following job announcements set by the state, with the remaining percentage being allocated to universities to decide freely on the promotions of their academic staff. The promotions of the administrative staff are not decided freely by the universities but by a special committee selected for this purpose.

Regarding the promotions of employees who are not civil servants, these are decided freely by the university (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017). In Portugal, due to budgetary austerity, staff promotions are not permitted during the period from 2011 to 2015 in order to avoid any increase in expenses in staff salaries. Promotions are only permitted where there is a need to fill posts after retirement of employees (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017).

In Greece, the promotion of academic staff is clearly defined in article 18 of Law of Greek State No 4009/2011. Specifically, *"i... 3. For their promotions, Assistant Professors and Associate Professors shall have the right to apply for the post at the next level after remaining in their position, alternates for four years, and Assistant Professors for six years. In this case, the posting shall be compulsory ..."*.

The promotions of the administrative staff are made according to the provisions of Law of Greek State No 3528/2007. According to these provisions, *"... the positions of senior administrative staff of the organizational units are filled after the announcement of the position and selection by the competent Administrative Staff Board ..."* (article 86 of Law Greek State No 3528/07). Staff hired under a fixed-term contract or work contract are not expected to make any promotion (Law of Greek State No 3528/2007).

It should be noted that although the general guidelines for the promotions of academic staff are set out in the legislation, universities have a relatively high degree of autonomy in the formation of the electorate since this is decided by the Assembly of the Department. In addition, almost fifty percent (50%) of the members of the electorate consisted of Professors from the Department (Law of Greek State No 4009/11).

The same applies to the senior administrative staff. The electorate which decides the promotions of senior administrative staff is the Senate (for the selection of the candidates for General Directorate) or the Civil Servant Council (for the selection of the candidates for Directorate) of the University. All the members of the Senate belong to the relevant university while the percentage of the members of the Civil Servant Council who do not belong to the relevant university is quite small, not more than ten - fifteen percent (10-15%).

The promotions of the academic and administrative staff are allowed only after the post (announcement) of the position and require approval from the Minister of Education and Finance.

4. An Attempt at the Quantification of the Staffing Autonomy of the Universities in Greece

So far it has been presented the picture of European Universities - including national and individual sub-national entities - in terms of staffing autonomy, in accordance with separate criteria together with the respective classification for the Greek case highlighted in a distinct way. Following, it is attempted to quantify and derive a percentage score for the degree of Staffing Autonomy of the Greek Universities as this is depicted by EUA (www.university-autonomy.eu/). To achieve that, the data of the present study have been analysed from two perspectives. That is, by (a) scoring all the individual indicators

presented above, as well as (b) weighting each one of the individual indicators of staffing autonomy, as per the corresponding EUA calculation methodology (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017). This enabled us to produce and present the percentage values in Table 2.

Based on the analysis that took place in the previous section, it is known in which of the above cases of each individual indicator Greece falls. Therefore, using the weightings as well as the autonomy score for each case, it can be calculated the total score of the general indicator of staffing autonomy. More specifically, the total score is the weighted sum (based on the weighting coefficients) of the individual autonomy scores. In Table 2, the way of quantification of the general indicator of the staffing autonomy score is shown analytically, together with the corresponding final result for Greece.

Table 2: Calculation of the degree of Staffing Autonomy of the Greek Universities

Indicator of staffing autonomy/ Weighting factor	The case in Greece	Quantification of autonomy / Score (Greece)
Ability to decide on recruitment procedures (Senior academic staff) 13%	Universities cannot decide freely on recruitment (restrictions apply)	50%
Ability to decide on recruitment procedures (Senior administrative staff) 13%	Universities cannot decide freely on recruitment (restrictions apply)	83%
Ability to decide on salaries (Senior academic staff) 12%	Salaries set by an external authority/civil servant status for some or all	0%
Ability to decide on salaries (Senior administrative staff) 12%	Salaries set by an external authority/civil servant status for some or all	0%
Ability to decide on dismissals (Senior academic staff) 12%	Civil service or specific regulations apply	0%
Ability to decide on dismissals (Senior administrative staff) 12%	Civil service or specific regulations apply	0%
Ability to decide on promotions (Senior academic staff) 13%	Universities cannot decide freely on promotions (restrictions apply)	0%
Ability to decide on promotions (Senior administrative staff) 12%	Universities cannot decide freely on promotions (restrictions apply)	0%
Final weighted score of Staffing Autonomy: $0,13 \times 50\% + 0,13 \times 83\% + 0,12 \times 0\% + 0,12 \times 0\% + 0,12 \times 0\% + 0,12 \times 0\% + 0,13 \times 0\% + 0,12 \times 0\% =$ 17%		17%

Source: Own estimates.

5. Ranking and comparison of Greece with European countries in terms of Staffing Autonomy

Table 3 shows where Greece stands in the field of the university's staffing autonomy as compared with the corresponding scores of its European counterparts according to the EUA study (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017).

Table 3: Staffing autonomy ranking

Characterization / Percentage clusters	Rank	Staffing Autonomy	Score
		Country	
High (81 – 100%)	1	Estonia	100%
	2	Sweden	97%
	3	United Kingdom	96%
	4	Switzerland	95%
	5	Luxemburg	94%
	6	Finland	92%
	7	Latvia	89%
	8	Denmark	86%
	9	Poland	84%
	10	Lithuania	83%
Medium High (61 – 80%)	11	Flanders (BE)	76%
	12	Austria	73%
	13	The Netherlands	73%
	14	Iceland	68%
	15	Hesse (DE)	63%
	16	North Rhine - Westphalia (DE)	63%
	17	Norway	63%
	18	Portugal	62%
	19	Slovakia	61%
Medium Low (41 – 60%)	20	Brandenburg (DE)	58%
	21	Serbia	58%
	22	Hungary	50%
	23	Spain	48%
	24	French-speaking Community of Belgium	44%
	25	Italy	44%
	26	Slovenia	44%
	27	France	43%
	28	Ireland	43%
Low (< 40%)	29	Croatia	37%
	30	Greece	17%

Source: Data obtained from Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017; Greece, own estimates.

Analysing the results of the general index of "staffing autonomy", it is observed that the first 10 states belonging to the first category (high autonomy) account for more than 80% (Table 3). Remarkable is the case of Estonia, where 100% is recorded, as universities are free to decide, without restrictions, on all matters concerning teaching staff, such as recruitment, dismissals, developments, and the determination of their salaries. In the other states in the same category, 2010 was the year of redefining issues concerning

staffing autonomy. In addition, the ceilings for determining the salaries of academic staff were abolished and universities were free to decide on the amount of their staff's salary (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017).

The second category (medium-high autonomy) includes nine states. In these cases, several restrictions imposed by the state are recorded to limit the staffing autonomy in recruitment and promotions. It is also noteworthy that most of the restrictions are on issues related to the determination of payroll and redundancies. The third category (medium low autonomy) includes nine states, in which several restrictions are recorded, sometimes by external authorities (e.g., Hungary - Chancellor placed by the government), sometimes by collective agreements on wages and dismissals. Universities in these cases have a low degree of autonomy in hiring or renewing their staff.

At the same time, in the lowest category (low autonomy), two (2) countries are found, Croatia and Greece and in fact, there is a difference of 20 percentage points between these two countries, as Croatia has a percentage of 37%, while Greece only 17% (Table 3). Here it is observed that there is the imposition of strict restrictive measures by the state on the recruitment and management of staff as they are civil servants. Wages and the way they are recruited, and promotion are strictly defined by special legislation. Greek universities can neither hire nor dismiss staff without the prior approval of the Ministries of Education and Finance. Each new position requires the prior approval of the respective credit. Thus, Greece occupies the last place, with a percentage of only 17% (Table 3). Restrictions are mentioned in the legislation even on the issues of promotions of the senior academic and administrative staff.

In Greece, during the corresponding period, there is a large restriction on staffing autonomy, as it coincides with the period of the economic crisis in the country. Rising unemployment and declining Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are leading to the implementation of an economic adjustment program, with tough economic measures in place to achieve stabilization. The program was overseen by representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union (EU). The effect of economic austerity was a reduction in public operating costs, which in turn dramatically reduced staffing recruitment. For a long time, there were no recruitments of academic, administrative and other categories of staff, although a large number of civil servants retired during this period (Michopoulou, 2012, 2014).

Finally, it should be mentioned that the possible general strict economic constraints/restriction at a national level impose in turn economic constraints on universities. It has been also noted that in order to achieve higher rates of staffing autonomy, time and changes and support for changes are needed (Bennetot-Pruvot & Estermann, 2017).

6. Limitations of the Research – Proposals for further improvement

Following EUA's methodology for measuring university autonomy in Greek universities, some weaknesses emerged which should be taken into account in order for an improved

methodology to be used in the future in similar studies and more accurate results to be obtained in specific indicators of autonomy.

- 1) In the case of measuring university autonomy in Greece, the results of this research did not consider the financial, organizational and staffing issues of the Special Research Funds Accounts (SRFD) and the Legal Entities under Private Law (LEPW) founded in the Universities for the exploitation of the property of the institutions. These units have separate budgets and the money they manage is not part of a government grant. If these data had been included in our research, the results would have been different and would have increased the autonomy rates of Greek universities, as these units have a relatively higher degree of autonomy in managing and administering them. It is worth pointing out that most of the financial resources for research carried out in European universities come from sources other than the institution and the state. That is why research is not a central issue in the discussion and measurement of university autonomy. That is why new university laws rarely touch this field extensively. However, through surveys conducted to study the autonomy of research, it has been observed that the funding environment - to which the university belongs - its operation and a variety of financial processes may have an indirect effect on the institution's active position in the economic, social and intellectual life (Felt, 2003).
- 2) The percentage of the overall 'staffing autonomy' ratio for the case of Greece is too low, as our country achieves a score of 17%, ranking 30th out of 30 countries surveyed. It is worth noting that this result would have been much higher if the EUA's research not only focused on senior staff but had considered staff of all categories in the Universities. In such a case, the recruitment, development, payroll, and layoffs of staff recruited by SRFD of universities with Fixed-Term Private Law (FTPL) contracts as well as staff recruited by the University Property Management Company would be also included in the study. In these cases, there is a higher degree of autonomy in the management of the universities themselves. Consequently, the percentage of 'staffing autonomy' recorded in this research is too low and reflects the data of senior staff paid for by public funding.
- 3) The above-mentioned state control of staffing autonomy is mainly portrayed as a quantitative check, that is, a check on the number of recruitments and promotions, as these processes, reflect on financial data. However, there is no corresponding state control over the quality of staff recruitment and management. Here the restrictions and control are either non-existent or flexible. The achievement of institutional goals—i.e., effectiveness—largely depends on the competence and motivation of people engaged in the university's core missions and supporting tasks (Kupriyanova, *et al.* 2020).
- 4) As mentioned above, it is observed that the percentages recorded by Greece in the field of "staffing autonomy" are too low. However, we believe that some scores are the result of a relatively superficial approach. Some indicators do not reflect the reality, as by studying in depth the legislation, it is observed that the universities have the freedom to manage the staff in some way. Unfortunately, the

last is not reflected with the indicators given by the EUA. For example, there is a moderate degree of autonomy in electorates for the promotions of academic and administrative staff, but the universities don't have the ability to promote staff without the approval of the announcement of the respective positions by the competent ministers. Thus, the score for this indicator should not be zero but a higher value. An analogous situation is observed in the indicator "Ability to decide on dismissals".

- 5) Generally, in most of the indicators only two options are given in EUA's methodology. At the first one, a zero-autonomy value is attributed and at the second one, a 100% value of autonomy. However, these two options are often extreme cases and do not correspond to the real situation which is better characterized by an intermediate value. Thus, the matching of a certain case with one of these two options may overestimate or underestimate staffing autonomy. An improved methodology in the future should present indicators with more cases, in order for the scoring to have various values in the range 0-100%.

7. General Trends – Conclusions from the results of the study

Concerning the issue of staffing autonomy, there are several restrictions and rules regarding the recruitment and remuneration of staff, as in most countries, university staff are recruited under the law of civil servants. Significant progress has been made in increasing staffing autonomy in three countries, Luxembourg, Poland and Sweden, where universities were able to freely recruit staff and set their salaries. A small majority of states give universities some freedom to set salaries or negotiate salaries with other partners outside the university.

The issue of layoffs has been a subject of much debate in European countries in recent years. As most university staff are civil servants, they are protected by law on special terms. As far as academic staff is concerned, the terms of dismissal are detailed in specific legislation. Also, the promotion of administrative and academic staff in most countries is a matter of the university, while some countries continue to control the total number of publicly funded positions.

In Greece, during the period under investigation, there was an impressively low score in the measurement of staffing autonomy. Governments want to use legislative interventions to address issues concerning civil servants so that the parties in power can benefit from the privileges granted to civil servants, most often pre-election.

Also, it should be noticed that the policy of the state is to control the recruitment and promotions of civil servants (academic and administrative) aiming to control indirect financial autonomy. For example, in Greece, recruitment systems are a privileged field of political confrontation among the political forces as they relate to articulating customer practices and favourable actions. In particular, empirical data show that governments often intervene in the selection process by confronting the recruitment of employees as a transaction product. For example, in the past, it has been observed the phenomenon of exceptional selection and recruitment of officials for the satisfaction of various

government's customer networks. The period under investigation, which coincides with the economic crisis in Greece, even these recruitments are determined by the adoption of an Act of the Council of Ministers of Greek Parliament (ACMGP). Currently, ACMGP No 33/2006 achieves partial control of the public administration, by imposing restrictions on recruitments and thus providing valuable resources to the state to be used for other purposes (Spanou, 1996). It should be mentioned that this phenomenon of exceptional recruitment is linked with social and economic factors in Greek society as a big part of the Greek population wishes to work as civil servants (Samatas, 2009; Tsoukalas, 1987).

On the contrary, European governments focus more on controlling the direct financial autonomy of universities. The results of the research reveal that, although governments in Greece in recent years appear to have significantly increased the degree of financial autonomy of universities (Lambropoulos, Stamelos, Bousiou, submitted for publication), they have maintained staffing autonomy at too low levels. Unfortunately, the last has a negative impact on the Greek universities, in the light of a very recent study which revealed that staffing autonomy and especially the ability of universities to decide on recruitment of senior administrative staff is very important for efficiency and the ability of universities to decide on recruitment of senior academic staff is very important for effectiveness (Kupriyanova, *et al.* 2020).

Finally, it should be mentioned that very recently in Greece, on the occasion of the restructuring of higher education (merger of HEI's and TEI's), the enactment of new laws gave the universities a higher degree of autonomy in managing their staff (e.g., Laws of Greek State, N. 4521/18, 4610/19). However, there have been several times when phenomena of a legal violation or fair way of selection, promotion and management of staff by university authorities have been observed. This points out that a high degree of staffing autonomy should be always accompanied by the occurrence of control mechanisms, for the state to both guarantee observance of legality and protect the employees from unfair procedures in the matters of recruitment, promotion, or dismissal.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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