



Higher Education Autonomy in Europe: supranational, national, and institutional trends (HEAE-SNIT)

The project “[Higher Education Autonomy in Europe: supranational, national, and institutional trends](#)” is hosted by CIPES (Center for Research in Higher Education Policies), located in Matosinhos, Portugal, with the collaboration of CIIE (Center for Educational Research and Intervention) of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto (FPCEUP). The PI (Principal Investigator) is Professor António Magalhães (antonio@cipes.up.pt) and the Co-PI is Professor Amélia Veiga (aveiga@fpce.up.pt). This project examines the supranational trends influencing the autonomy of European higher education institutions, based on case studies in Finland, France, Poland, Portugal, and the Netherlands. It specifically focuses on how these trends are reflected at both national and institutional levels, delving into the effects of policies on education, research, and innovation within these institutions and their overarching missions.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is **voluntary**, and you may withdraw at any time without incurring in any additional risk. All responses will be kept **confidential**, survey participation is **anonymous** and interviewees are **protected with pseudonyms**. The research team in Portugal (the coordinating country) will conduct data analysis and processing for scientific research purposes and subsequent academic dissemination.

Detailed Information

Research plan and methods

The data collection techniques include desk research, an institutional survey, and in-depth interviews with academics responsible for the creation and design of education programmes in selected areas (hard pure, hard applied, soft pure and soft applied disciplines). To cover the questions related to research autonomy, the project will analyse the institutions’ strategies and will hold in-depth interviews with the PI’s on the selection of topics, and goals and objectives of the projects they led and lead in their institutions in



the selected areas. Interviews with external stakeholders represented in the HEIs boards will also be held. The interviews will be analysed utilizing “NVIVO” software for qualitative analysis.

Objectives

Four main goals are expected:

- to have a deeper understanding on how supranational trends are influencing the reconfiguration of the role of higher education (HE) in Europe and how the mediation role of the state is influencing the autonomy of HE systems and higher education institutions (HEIs);
- to identify differences in the mandates addressed by the national states to HE systems and institutions and their effects on research and education at the institutional level;
- to have a deeper understanding on how governance, management and the role of professionals reflect the changes in the relationships between education, innovation and research in defining HEIs’ autonomy and missions;
- to identify cross-institutional themes regarding the pros and cons of European and national challenges and initiatives;
- to identify explanations and meanings assigned by institutional leaderships and professionals to institutional responses, and their impact on the autonomy and missions of institutions.

The implementation of the research

The project runs from March 2023 to February 2026. The institutional survey and interview data are expected to be collected in 2024. The materials to be used in the document analysis at the national and institutional level will be compiled throughout the project's lifetime. The publication phase is expected to start in 2024.



The document analysis will rely on public materials and documents. The interviews and the institutional survey will require consent from the research participants. There are no financial rewards for the research participants.

Benefits and Risks for the Research Participant

There are no gains for the participant. As the interviewees will be pseudonymised, we do not foresee any increased risks in participating in this research project.

By understanding how higher education autonomy is being shaped by supranational trends in Europe, the project could not only amplify the discussion on academic freedom and institutional autonomy, but also generate insights that will contribute significantly to the bigger debate on the transformations in European higher education over the last decade. These insights could also be relevant for policymakers.

HEAE-SNIT's multi-level approach is pertinent because it allows for a more in-depth understanding of the specificities of each context in articulation with the different regulatory models. This contributes to a broader reaching and more focused understanding of the changes in Higher Education in Europe.

Privacy, Confidentiality, Data Management and Data Storage

All procedures for the capture, storage, protection, transfer, destruction, and reuse of personal data will be carried out in accordance with the Personal Data Regulation (GDPR EU). Only the PI, the Co-PI, and the research team members responsible for the interviews' transcription, and those who will perform said interviews on-site will have access to the non-pseudonymised version of the interviews. The data will be collected and treated in digital form: audio and text. The researcher responsible for the face-to-face interviews will hand over the audio data to the PI, who will be in charge of transcribing them or transferring them to the team members responsible for the transcription. This aims to increase the probability that all the data will be handled with responsibility throughout and after the research process. The interview guidelines will be preceded by the signature of an informed consent, in accordance with the EU GDPR.



CIPES has a set of safety procedures in place to protect personal data, namely, a data structure guaranteeing the pseudonymisation of the interviews at the beginning of the data treatment. Simultaneously, the transcription and its editing will guarantee the pseudonymity of the interviewees. All processing of personal data will be subject to registration, under the regulations in effect. Unedited personal data will be housed in a restricted access workplace, protected by a password that is only known by the person in charge of personal data and the person in charge of the host institution. Internet access at this workstation and all others within CIPES' facilities is safeguarded by a firewall managed by the computer services department of the University of Porto (UP).

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Contact Information

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