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FINAL REPORT

A European perspective on leading higher education institutions: induction and training programme

Thomas Estermann and Enora Bennetot Pruvot

November 2023

Contents

Introduction

This report offers a condensed summary of the induction and training programme delivered by EUA to Latvian university executives and council members in October-November 2023. The objective of the programme was to provide council members with more comprehensive knowledge of various aspects of university oversight, based on international experience.

The programme consisted in a series of workshops that covered on the one hand European trends in governance, regulatory frameworks, and funding models; and on the other, strategic and financial planning, leadership development and institutional transformation.

The programme has been developed on the basis of and fed by EUA's rich work in governance and funding. This report includes the various resources underpinning the key messages presented here.

The programme has also benefitted from the invaluable insights and perspectives of university leaders and board members from different higher education systems in Europe, whose core 'takeaways' are also included in this final report.

In addition to this report, which goal is to bring together the key elements of this series of workshops, the full presentations and recordings of the events also remain available upon request.

Chapter 1: Characteristics of the programme

1.1 Format

- 12 hours of onsite and online delivery
- Mix of theoretical and practical input
- Latest research and studies
- Practitioner input
- Interviews and panel discussions
- Polls providing snapshots on state of play and understanding
- Platform with a wealth of resources

1.2 Expertise

- Higher education experts with international outlook
- Experienced university leaders
- Board members / chairs
- Higher education researchers / advisors
- High-level higher education policy maker

Thomas Estermann
Director – Governance, funding and public policy development
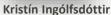European University Association

Enora Bennetot Pruvot
Deputy Director – Governance, funding and public policy development
European University Association

Friedrich Faulhammer
Rector of the University for Continuing Education Krems / Member of the Board of the University college of teacher education Vienna

Kristín Ingólfsdóttir
President emerita of the University of Iceland / Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors of the University of Luxembourg

Ada Pellert
Rector of FernUniversität in Hagen / Board member of Graz University / Vice-President of the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities

Petra Wend
Previous Principal & Vice Chancellor of Queen Margaret University Edinburgh / Chair of the Board of the University of Hamburg / Member of the Board of Governors of London Metropolitan University
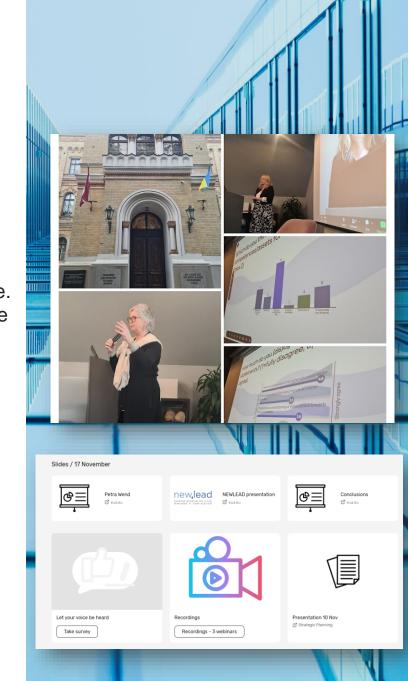
Chapter 1: Characteristics of the programme

1.3 Participation

- 62 registered participants to the kick-off event
- 84 participants to the webinars
- 26 participants attended all three webinars, 26 attended two, 32 attended one.
- Evidence that participants have also accessed the recordings on the attendee hub (20+ on-demand access).

1.4 Feedback

- 19 replies to the online feedback survey
- 68% rated the programme as excellent
- Overall appreciation for the combination of formats (presentations & interviews)
- Overall appreciation for the online format
- Different needs were catered for via the different features (sharing experiences, European trends)
- Suggestions for the future included more interviews and the possibility to survey attendees in advance to fine-tune topics.

Chapter 2: European overview
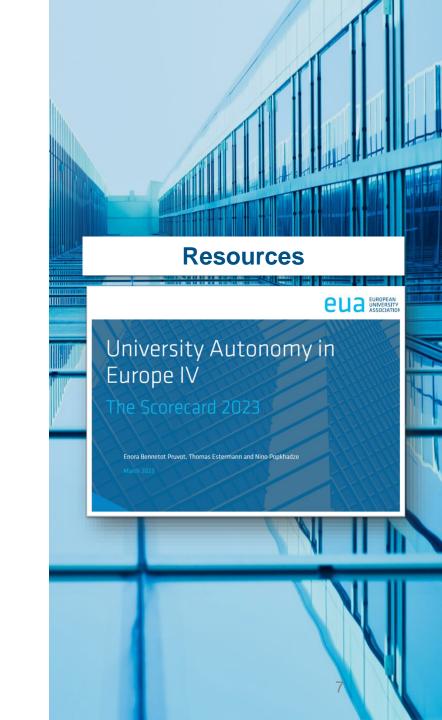
2.1 European trends in university governance

1. Diverse governance models co-exist in Europe, with three main types usually regulated at system level: unitary models; dual 'traditional' models; and dual 'asymmetric' models.

2. The role of university boards is growing (Estonia, Poland; Croatia, Czechia, Romania) and the senate-based unitary model is now an exception.

3. Including external members in university governance has become the norm across Europe. In 2/3 of systems with external members, they form a majority. Universities may decide on the selection of all, part or none of the external members in governing bodies. External members are most often found in board-type bodies.

4. Experimental approaches have led to sector-wide changes (e.g. Estonia)

5. The main narrative for governance reform promotes efficiency in decision-making and a stronger connection to societal and economic interests.

6. A growing array of instruments is used by public authorities to steer higher education.

7. There is a trend of increased ad hoc state interventions.

8. What remains paramount, from an autonomy perspective, is the mode of selection of all decision-making actors in university governance and the overall balance of competences and accountability mechanisms between the governing bodies.

Resources

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University Autonomy in Europe IV

The Scorecard 2023

Enora Bennetot Pruvot, Thomas Estermann and Nino Popkhadze

March 2023

Chapter 2: European overview

2.2 Key messages on university autonomy

1. Autonomy goes hand in hand with sound **accountability** frameworks. The notion of accountability is evolving and becoming increasingly complex, and as such, so is the interplay with institutional autonomy.

2. To reap the benefits of greater autonomy, universities must be supported to develop the right sets of **skills**, whether strategic, transversal or technical, to best exploit autonomy. Autonomous universities require strong leadership.

3. Sustainable funding, flexible governance, and sufficient autonomy help unlock **efficiency** in university operations and support them in delivering impact.

4. Regulation does not mean all needs to be in the law – see use of 'Codes' with emphasis on **principles**, notably in England or Scotland.

5. An **institutional vision** is necessary & it must be developed and shared with all governance stakeholders.

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University Autonomy in Europe IV
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March 2023

Chapter 2: European overview

2.3 European trends in university funding

1. Economic pressures have had a long-lasting effect on national reform plans.
2. Cuts to public funding have long-term negative consequences (legacy of the first half of the 2010's).
3. These have an impact on institutional autonomy, resources and staff.
4. Before the pandemic and energy crises, the situation was generally improving for universities across Europe.
5. While the pandemic has not had an immediate negative impact on public funding, enormous challenges linked to fiscal consolidation lie ahead, which will have an impact on financial autonomy.
6. The energy crisis has hit the universities to diverse extents, but many suffer from additional costs not fully covered through public funding.
7. Public authorities have shown an increasing interest for performance(-based) funding, efficiency and value for money.
8. More systems resort to multi-annual financial planning, although maintain annual allocation of funds.

9. European funding remains highly sought-after and exhibits too low success rates, challenging the efficiency of the scheme.

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Allocating core public funding to universities in Europe: state of play & principles

Enora Bennetot Pruvot and Thomas Estermann

March 2022

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Chapter 2: European overview

2.4 Multiannual financial planning: performance contracts & agreements

1. High variety: contracts can be the frame around a formula, or consist in a component of a formula.
2. Contracts/agreements are a funding instrument that is increasingly used throughout Europe.
3. Contracts may be used to set policy goals in more flexible way, as they may be individualised (selection of priority areas, setting of targets).
4. Contracts may or may not have financial implications.
5. Countries with more experience in performance contracts have found that a high number of targets is not necessarily efficient and have therefore adapted this instrument.
6. Recommendation: the contract should be connected to additional financial resources.
7. Recommendation: the contract should have few targets / indicators / goals.
8. Recommendation: the contract should not become a frame for micromanagement.

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Allocating core public
funding to universities
in Europe:
state of play & principles

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Chapter 3: Leadership & institutional development

3.1 Key messages

Leading universities today requires an increasingly diverse skill set.

Strong leadership is crucial for universities to reap the benefits of institutional autonomy and effectively address big transformative agendas.

Professional leadership development programmes play a vital role in reinforcing the institutions' capacity to tackle challenges and deliver impactful solutions.

Leadership development is an ongoing process that requires continued learning and implementation, addressing various groups within the institution.

Resources

new.lead
INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE
MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Repository

Compilation of products and results from the NEWLEAD project.

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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Chapter 3: Leadership & institutional development

3.2 Recommendations for universities

Design and implement a comprehensive leadership development strategy

Foster leadership development throughout the institution for both academic and professional service leaders

Support and diversify the range of leadership development opportunities including peer-learning, mentoring, coaching, and formal leadership development programmes.

Provide a varied portfolio of internal and external leadership development programmes

Recognise that no single leadership development programme may cover all relevant aspects

Integrate leadership development in existing career progression frameworks and incentive schemes

Resources

Chapter 3: Leadership & institutional development

3.3 Recommendations for national policy makers

RECOMMENDATIONS #1
Acknowledge and reward institutions with a diverse range of leadership development opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS #2
Provide incentives and financial support to institutions to establish leadership development programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS #3
Offer financial and other support to establish leadership development programmes at system level.

3.4 Recommendations for European policy makers

RECOMMENDATIONS #1
Provide dedicated financial support through European funding programmes for the **sustainable development** and **delivery** of European leadership development programmes for university leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS #2
Provide financial support and scholarships for participation in European leadership development programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS #3
Recognise the importance of leadership for the successful implementation of European policies in relation to education and research and **include recommendations in related policies.**

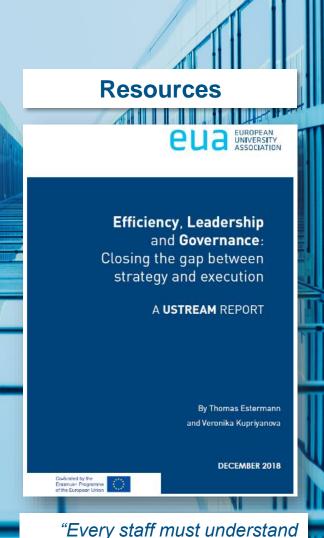**Resources**

Chapter 4: Strategic & financial planning

4.1 Strategic planning principles

The institutional strategy:

- should answer to your mission and vision: connect to long-term perspectives
- tackles the challenges identified in your environment and plays on opportunities
- sets specific objectives, goals and priorities
- should be measurable against outputs and outcomes: KPIs must be connected to strategic goals
- needs to be communicated.

Developing & delivering the institutional strategy requires:

- a well-defined process and clear responsibilities
- an inclusive process: involvement of the whole university community
- an understanding by every staff member of how they contribute towards the university's strategic goals
- leadership commitment and capacity
- clear distribution of tasks between governing bodies / leadership / committees / support units
- skilled human resources (HR) and an appropriate HR structure
- feedback loops: evaluation and review procedures.

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Efficiency, Leadership and **Governance:** Closing the gap between strategy and execution

A **USTREAM** REPORT

By Thomas Estermann and Veronika Kupriyanova

DECEMBER 2018

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

"Every staff must understand how they contribute towards the strategy of the institution"
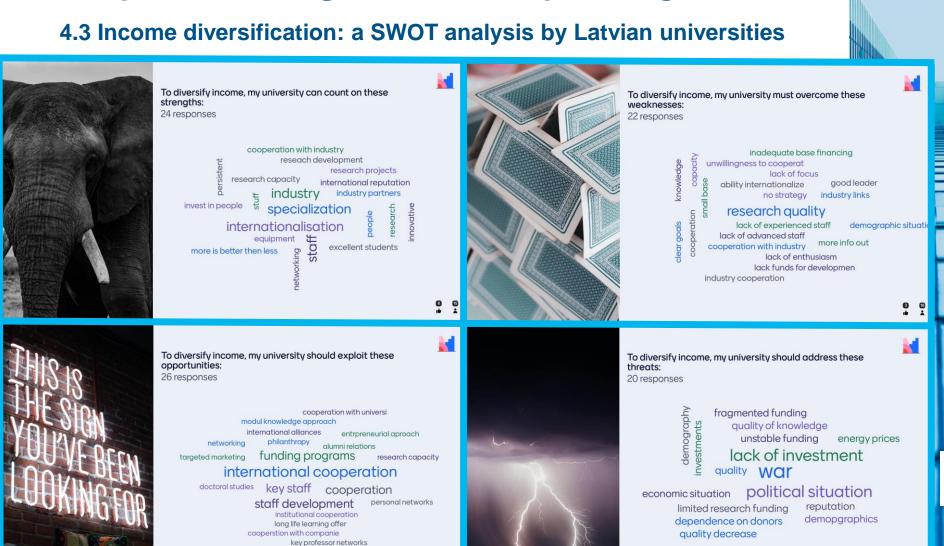*- Friedrich Faulhammer*

Chapter 4: Strategic & financial planning

4.2 Financial planning principles

Financial planning is a multifaceted process that includes the following elements:

1. Developing a resource allocation model

2. Budgeting & financial planning

3. Developing a basic costing model

4. Reviewing organisational model/responsibilities

5. Investing in Human Resources development

6. Developing an income diversification strategy

Resources

Chapter 4: Strategic & financial planning

4.3 Income diversification: a SWOT analysis by Latvian universities

Exercise carried out by Event 2 participants

Chapter 5: Key messages for modern, sustainable university governance

5.1 Enabling factors

Good governance enables enhanced performance; it requires:

1. An enabling regulatory framework
2. Adequate internal governance models
3. An appropriate balance between inclusion of diverse university community & efficient decision-making
4. Clear competences and processes
5. A productive relationship with stakeholders/public authorities
6. A productive relationship between leadership and governing bodies

5.2 Main principles

1. Holistic perspective: university governance as an ecosystem
2. Clarity of roles & tasks – what should not be done is as important as what should be done
3. Building trust: the common goal is to work towards the institution's development & missions
4. Internal transparency is crucial

"Trust is not something you write down"
- Petra Wend

Chapter 5: Key messages for modern, sustainable university governance

5.3 Fostering good governance: the role of public authorities

1. Clear legal framework with clarity on roles and processes

2. Transparent selection/appointment procedure for board members

3. Clear guidance & scope for universities to develop their own practices within a given frame

4. Clarity as to who is the interlocutor of the ministry in the university

5. Supporting leadership development

6. Supporting induction of governing board members

Chapter 5: Key messages for modern, sustainable university governance

5.4 Fostering good governance: the role of the sector

1. Supporting networking among boards or chairs of boards

2. Providing opportunities for exchange of good practice

3. Developing guidance on selection for board members

4. Developing guidance and documentation for new board members

Cases & links

Chapter 5: Key messages for modern, sustainable university governance

5.5 Fostering good governance: the role of universities

1. Clear rules about processes and interactions between governing bodies (statutes, rules of procedures, etc.)

2. Transparent and strategic appointment of board members

3. Support structures for boards

4. Onboarding process and documents

5. Opportunities for exchange

Resources

ATHENA TOOLKIT

GOVERNANCE MODELS

Chapter 5: Key messages for modern, sustainable university governance

5.6 Fostering good governance: the role of executive leaders

1. Building trust

2. Nurturing communication between governing bodies

3. Making use of expertise of board members

4. Providing opportunities for engagement and strategic exchange

5. Engaging in leadership development

Resources

Chapter 5: Key messages for modern, sustainable university governance

5.7 Fostering good governance: the role of board/council members

1. Board members should keep in mind the 'big picture': their role is to support the development of the institution and the achievement of its strategic goals.

2. Board members should see themselves as 'critical friends' & ambassadors of the university.

3. 'Value-based membership': board membership is often honorary (voluntary). It can be considered a way to give back to the community.

4. Board members have the responsibility to familiarise with their role, with the institutional culture, sector specificities, and main higher education trends that are relevant for the role.

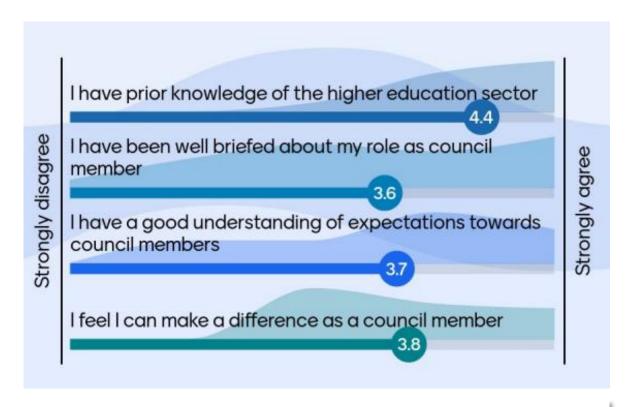5. Board members have the responsibility to prepare for board meetings.

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Chapter 6: Latvian council members' self-assessment

Competences that council members bring to university according to Event 1 participants
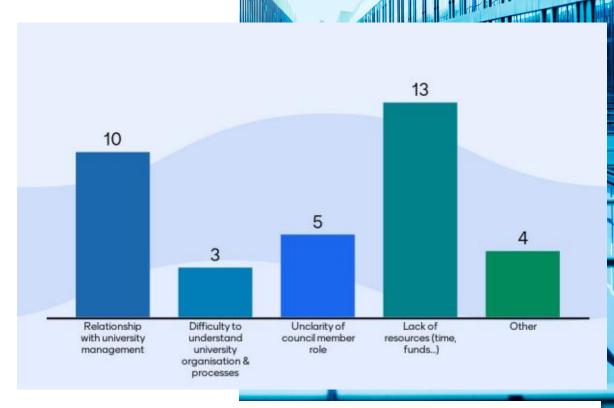

The role of council members according to Event 1 participants

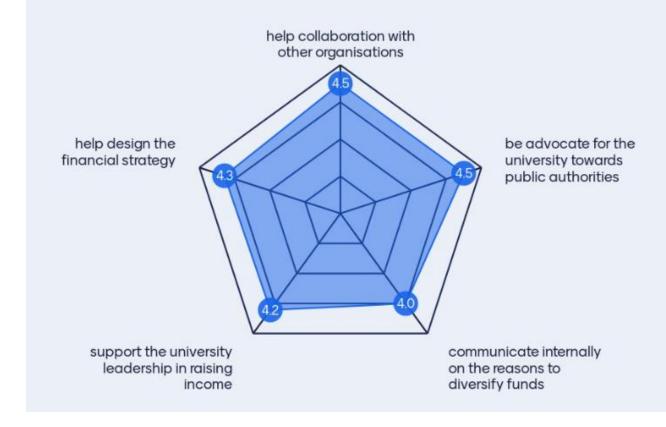# Chapter 6: Latvian council members' self-assessment

Statements rated by Event 1 participants

Biggest challenges faced as council members according to Event 1 participants

Chapter 6: Latvian council members' self-assessment

As far as funding is concerned, can council members…

help collaboration with
other organisations
4.5

be advocate for the
university towards
public authorities
4.5

help design the
financial strategy
4.3

communicate internally
on the reasons to
diversify funds
4.0

support the university
leadership in raising
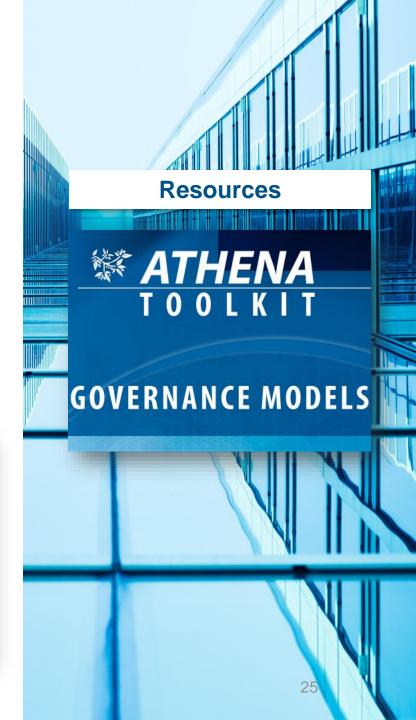income
4.2

Statements rated by Event 2 participants

Chapter 7: Recommendations

7.1 Selection of board/council members

1. **Skill-based**: ensure that the skills & expertise relevant to the board's tasks and to the university's strategic areas are included in the board.

2. **Connected**: the skills, expertise & experience of board members should reflect/be relevant to the university profile (technical, regional, specialised…)

3. **Transparent**: requirements must be advertised clearly, both regarding skills as well as regarding commitment (time)

Competence grid template

Criteria	Requested?	Priority level assigned (A, B, C)	Fulfilled by candidate? (A, B, C)
Availability			
Independence			
Knowledge of university system			
Knowledge of the socio-economic environment			
Strategic oversight			
Exploitable network			
Communication skills			
Economic/financial literacy			
…			

Resources

ATHENA TOOLKIT GOVERNANCE MODELS

Selection of board/council members:

overview of possible selection criteria to consider

KNOWLEDGE OF UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

may be a prerequisite or developed after selection

NETWORKING

to build bridges towards other sectors of society and strengthen potential for partnerships

STRATEGIC, TEAM-WORKING & COMMUNICATION COMPETENCES

to support the strategic orientation of the work of the governing bodies

AVAILABILITY/COMMITMENT

clear communication on the type of commitment expected

INDEPENDENCE

to represent a particular constituency or for their own capacities and experience?

SPECIFIC SKILLS

such as expertise in financial or economic fields to enhance financial accountability and sustainability of the institution

"Professional expertise of board members can indeed be valuable in strategy development and introduction of new initiatives."
- Kristin Ingólfsdóttir

Chapter 7: Recommendations

7.2 Induction of board/council members

1. **Knowledge base:** Guidebooks & induction seminars for board members

2. **Knowledge transfer**: Handover from outgoing to incoming boards if renewal is done in one round

3. **Knowledge of each other**: Retreats of the board together with executive management team, building trust among governance partners

4. **Knowledge sharing**: If the size of the board allows it, consider thematic portfolios / areas of responsibility to enable board members to 'champion' specific topics connected to their expertise

Chapter 7: Recommendations

7.3 Governance with board/council in practice

1. **Support**: invest in supporting function for the board (board secretary)

2. **'Experience'**: board members may be invited to attend key events of the university's life (graduation ceremonies…) and be identified by the wider university community

3. **Visibility** to the university community: special board meetings including 'guests' from the different parts of the institutions, visits of the board members to the university's components

4. **Understanding**: knowing key figures of the institution: profile, student enrolment, budget, main strengths

5. **'Ambassadors'**: in line with the defined institutional processes, board members may act as bridges towards other actors in the economy (partnerships, funding, contractual research…) and towards public authorities in certain cases.

Chapter 7: Recommendations
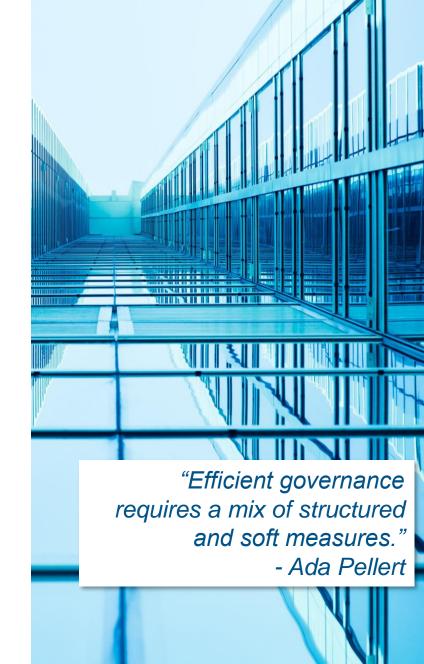
7.4 Sustainability

1. **Network:** system-level structures for university boards to meet and exchange, with the possible support of public authorities even if organised by the sector; including newsletters, events, publications for structural support & knowledge circulation

2. **Guidelines / Codes**: support guidance material at system level which can be used as a reference point for the institutions

3. **Embedded communication channels:** structured and regular dialogue opportunities with the executive leadership

4. **Self-evaluation** of the board: regular practice connected to the evaluation of the institutional strategy and on feedback analysis

Chapter 7: Recommendations

7.5 Key success factors for effective boards

1. Transparent and strategic selection process
2. Diversity of members
3. Openness to new ideas and new people
4. Clarity on the role and competencies
5. Onboarding processes
6. Understanding the university and environment
7. Regular communication channels
8. Transparency (activity reports)
9. Accountability rather than control perspective
10. Exchange on experiences and learnings

"Efficient governance requires a mix of structured and soft measures."
- Ada Pellert

Annex: Selection of participants polls

Strategic planning (Event 3)

How long has your university had an explicit, publicly available strategy? (23)

At least 5 years	74%
Less than 5 years	17%
New practice	0%
I do not know	9%

Who is involved in the strategic planning process? (multiple choice, in total 74 responses)

Central executive management	19%
University board	22%
University senate	16%
Broader academic community at the university	17%
Non-academic staff	11%
Students	12%
Others	3%

Do the university structural units (faculties...) have their own objectives, based on the institutional strategy? (24)

Yes	87%
No	13%
I do not know	0%

Do you evaluate the achievement of objectives set out in the institutional strategy? (24)

Yes	88%
No	4%
I do not know	8%

Does your university link any funding to faculties to the completion of the strategy objectives? (24)

Yes, a small part	46%
Yes, a major part	21%
No	21%
I do not know	12%

Annex: Selection of participants polls

Leadership development (Event 4)

How is leadership development supported at your institution?
(multiple choice, in total 40 responses)

via access to professional networks	28%
via participation in thematic peer groups (in Latvia)	20%
via participation to international peer groups	22%
via management programmes for leaders/senior staff	20%
via mentoring/coaching schemes	2%
Leadership development is not supported specifically	5%
other	3%

Do you feel Latvian university leaders are equipped with the necessary skills to tackle the challenges they face? (20)

Yes, this is not a cause for concern	5%
Yes, but further upskilling should be a priority	60%
Not enough, therefore training is needed	25%
Not enough, but this is not a priority	5%
Other	5%

Annex: Selection of participants polls

Institutional transformation (Event 4)

What are the big transformation topics at your institution? (multiple choice, in total 58 responses)

Digitalisation	27%
Greening / Campus	7%
Transformation of the learning offer	15%
Research, open science, innovation	28%
Career development of staff	14%
Equity, diversity, inclusion	2%
Security	7%
Other	0%

At your institution, what would you say are the main drivers for the institutional transformation?
(multiple choice, in total 41 responses)

Change in national legislation	27%
The adoption of a new or revised national strategy in higher education	17%
Financial pressures	39%
European/International trends/peer learning	15%
Other	2%

What are the main obstacles to achieve transformation objectives at your institution?
(multiple choice, in total 40 responses)

Lack of finances	45%
Lack of expertise	12%
Lack of time	5%
Resistances (internal/external)	30%
Lack of connection between transformative process with the institutional strategy	5%
Other	3%

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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.