

# Higher Education Governance in Austria: The University of Vienna Case

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# “University” Education in Austria

- **Public** Universities (Universitäten), established by public law, basically state-funded
- **Universities of Applied Sciences** (Fachhochschulen); operate on the basis of a public law framework, with state accreditation, funded partly by the state, partly by provinces, corporations etc.
- **Private universities** (Privatuniversitäten), operated by private organizations, with state accreditation
- **University colleges of teacher education** (Pädagogische Hochschulen) maintained by the state or operated by private organizations, established by public law

# The Road to Autonomy

- for 150 years: since mid 19th century influence of Humboldtian tradition on Austrian HE; **dualism political – academic authority** characterizes university governance
  - university was a **state agency**, subject to centralized decision making concerning aspects of public interests
  - **academic oligarchy** responsible for matters of teaching & research; internally loosely organized; decisions taken by small group of full professors (“*Ordinarienuniversität*”)
- 1975: **reform of governance and internal organization** with the *University Organization Act 1975*: “democratization” of universities (“group university”); introduction of larger organizational units: “institutes”

# The Road to Autonomy II

- Since 1993: Adoption of *University Organization Act 1993*: a **first step** into real **institutional autonomy** but:
  - University still formed **part of the State Federal administration** governing all university affairs (budget, personnel, etc.)
  - University enjoyed only **limited autonomy**; Faculties and Institutes had a **certain limited autonomy** vis-à-vis the university
- Since 2004: Due to the *University Act 2002* the university is a **legal entity of its own**, distinct from the State.  
The university enjoys **full legal personality** and is responsible for her own affairs, the State only oversees the proper application of the laws by the university

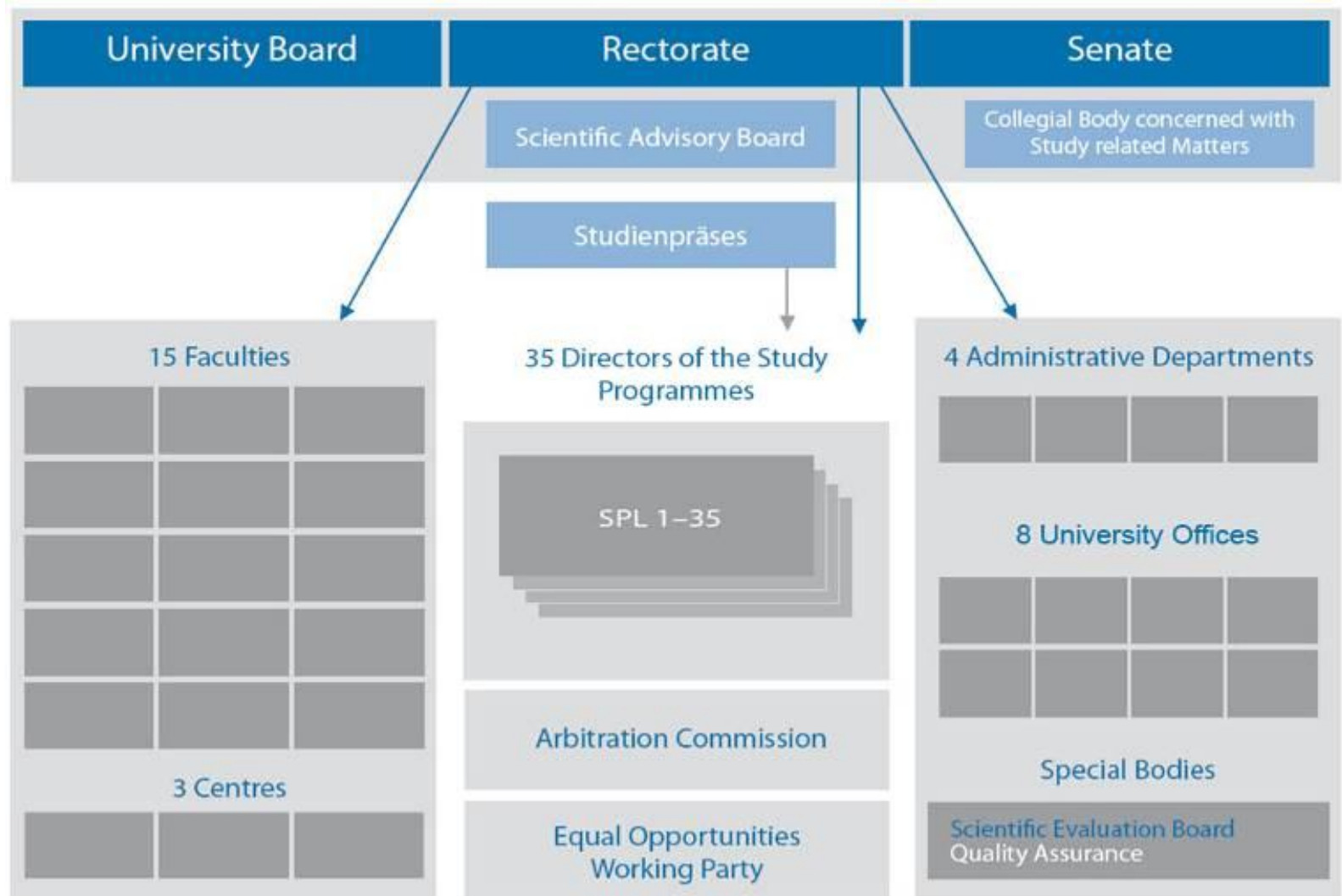
# Major changes by Univ. Act 2002

- **Special legal status** of public universities
  - full legal power
  - private employees (based on wages negotiations with trade unions)
  - 3 years' global state budget (performance-based)
- **Financial accountability** based on commercial law
- Flexibility of **internal organization**
  - legally fixed: Council – Senate – Rectorate
- Introduction of **Quality Management System(s)**
- Performance-based allocation of funds (+ „intellectual capital report“)

# Autonomy

- organizational autonomy
- financial autonomy
- personnel autonomy
- curricular autonomy
- **NOT: autonomy to select students**

# UoV: Organisation (UA + Org. plan)



# The Senate: „the internal view“

The Senate is the **highest academic body** of the University of Vienna

- **18 members (internal)**
  - 9 professors (= 50%)
  - 4 associate professors/academic staff
  - 4 students
  - 1 representative of the general university staff
- **Main fields of responsibility**
  - curricular and academic matters
  - approval of statute (detailed regulations based on University Act 2002)
  - appoint 4 (external) members for University Council
  - call for Rector's position + shortlist of 3
- **Term of office: 3 years**



# The University Council: „the external view“

- 9 members (only external)
  - 4 members elected by the Senate
  - 4 members appointed by the federal government
  - 1 member appointed by mutual agreement of the 8 other members
- Main fields of responsibility:
  - selection of the rector from the shortlist of three candidates prepared by Senate
  - approval of the vice-rectors on basis of the nominations (rector)
  - overseeing financial management of university
  - approval of organization plan, development plan, draft performance agreement with ministry, „intellectual capital report“
- Term of office: 5 years

# The Rectorate: „the (strategic+) management view“

- **Members:** Rector + 4 Vice-rectors with special portfolios

## Main duties of the Rector

- **Spokesperson** of the Rectorate
- Negotiates **performance agreement** with respective federal minister
- Professorial **appointments**
- Heads the university office
- Human resources development

## Main duties of the Rectorate

- **Manage** and **represent university**
- **Prepare** a draft **statute** for submission to the Senate, a draft **organization plan** and a **development plan**
- Award “venia legendi”
- Conduct and **manage** the **financial affairs** of the University

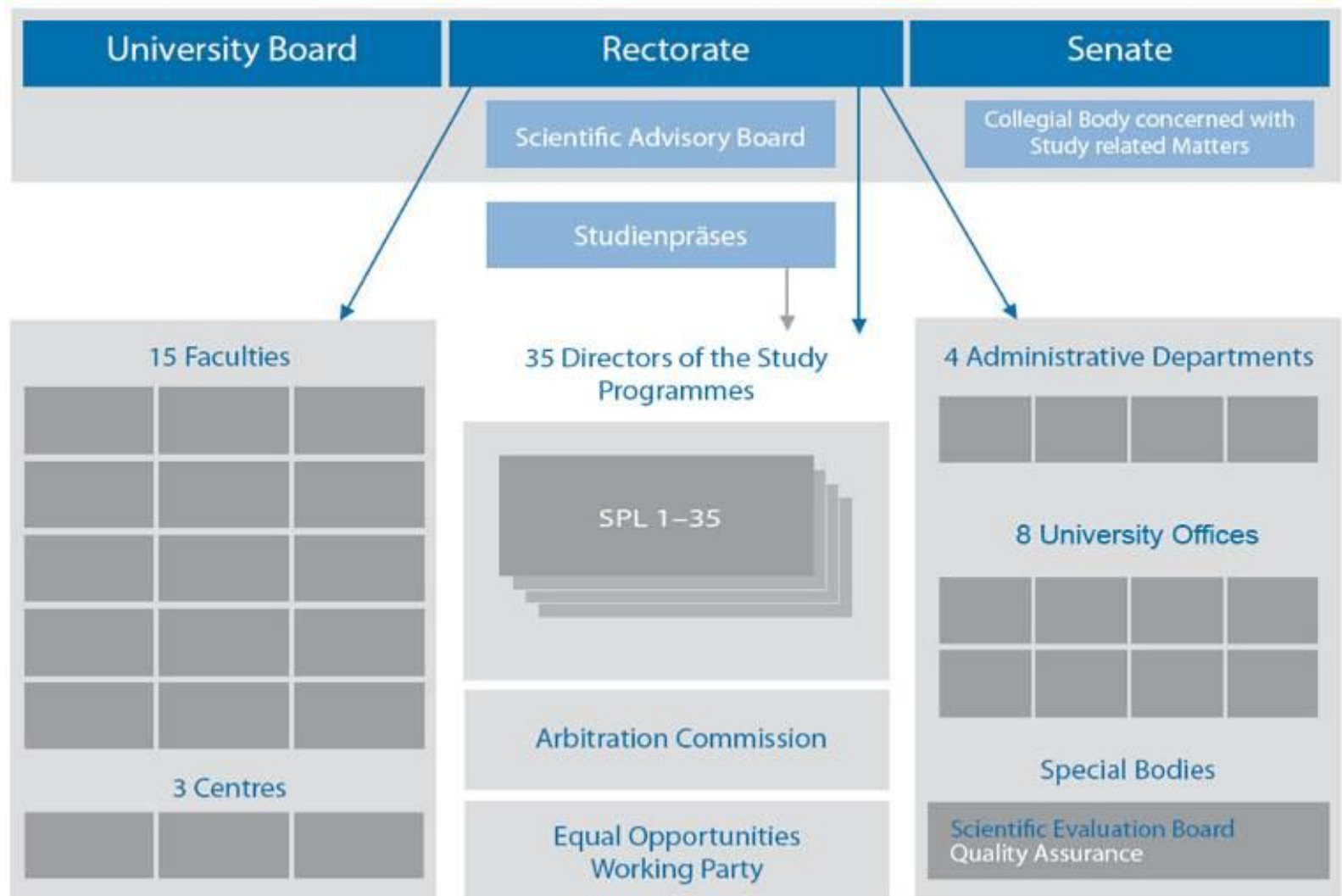
- Term of office: 4 years

# The „A studiis praeses“

(“Studienpräses” – Director of Studies)

- Supreme (executive) organ for all legal regulations concerning educational programs
- Awarding all degrees on behalf of the University

# UoV: Internal organisation



# Internal Organization I: Research

## Faculties and Centers (15 + 4)

- Heads: 15 Deans and 4 Heads of the Centres
- Tasks: research (and teaching)
- Faculties and centers can be divided into **sub-units** (e.g. institutes, departments, working groups; can be changed!)
- Advisory boards:
  - Faculty conferences (min. nine people) - obligatory
  - Scientific advisory boards (external academics)


# Internal Organization II: Education

## Directors of the Studies Programs

- 35 directors of the studies programs at Bachelor/Master level  
+ 12 directors of PhD programmes
- responsible for several (related) academic programs, organize the courses and supervise issues arising from the university law and the organization of courses; act as the interface between students, teachers, and the university administration
- Duties in the fields of **study law** and **organizational matters** related to studies
- **Quality assurance** (together with special unit for QA)
- Advisory board:
  - Studies conferences (50% teachers, 50% students) - obligatory

# Major instruments + „players“

- **Organization plan**
  - proposed by Rectorate
  - commented by Senate
  - approved by Council
- **Strategic development plan**
  - proposed by Rectorate
  - commented by Senate
  - approved by Council
- **Performance agreement with Ministry**
  - proposed by Rectorate
  - commented by Senate
  - approved by Council
  - negotiated by Rector

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- **Statute** (internal regulations, mainly academic matters and QM)
    - proposed by Rectorate
    - approved by Senate
  - **Curricula**
    - based on Strategic Development Plan
    - worked out by working groups (profs – ass. – stud.)
    - supervised by Curriculum Committee of Senate
    - commented by Rectorate (finances!) and Council
    - approved by Senate



# Performance agreements: „Cascading“ of power

- PA between Ministry and Rector
- PA between Council and Rector + Vice Rectors
- PA between Rector and Vice Rectors
- PA between Rectorate and organisational units (faculties, centres, research platforms, service units)
- PA between heads of units with employees

# Accountability I: Performance Agreement

- Performance agreements are **contracts** under public law concluded **between the university and the Federal Government** for a period of three years. They contain:
  - services to be provided by the university covering:
    - strategic objectives, human resources development
    - research and teaching
    - social goals
    - increase of internationality and mobility
    - inter-university cooperation
- allocation of the basic budget (80 % of the university's publicly funded budget)
- content extent and scope of objectives plus timetable
- reporting and accounting

# Accountability II: Instruments of Reporting

- Based on the performance agreement the university annually submits a **performance report** to the respective Federal Minister
- Additionally to this performance report the rectorate annually has to submit **financial statements** and together with an **auditor's report**
- Annually the **intellectual capital report** (knowledge survey) is submitted to the Federal Minister via the University Board. It should contain in itemized form:
  - the sphere of action, social goals and self-imposed objectives and strategies
  - its intellectual capital, broken down into human, structural and relationship capital
  - the performance processes set out in the performance agreement, including their outputs and impacts

# A first (impressionistic) evaluation

- **Advantages**

- more efficient use of funds
- improved investment policy
- increased diversification of funding
- increased possibilities of strategic development
- improved „performance“ of members of UoV
- clear responsibilities
- possibility to compete globally

- **Challenges**

- slow change of „mental frames“
- increased „negotiation time“
- need for new communication and „participation“ models



**Thank you for your  
attention!**