
Recent shifts in university governance have relied on increased autonomy. Within this context, the enhanced role attributed to governance boards at the expense of academic bodies and the role of external stakeholders has gained momentum. With the aim of understanding the extent of the influence of external stakeholders at the institutional level, the perceptions of Rectors and Senate members from 26 European higher education institutions were analysed. Their views saw external members of boards as representing the interests of the society at large and bringing outside beliefs and pressures to the university. However, Rectors would prefer to see them as allies, avoiding interfering strongly in the private lives of institutions.