

Irish Universities Association

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**‘Voice of Irish Universities’ –
the representative body for the
7 universities**



Consensus based decision-making – standing groups across key functions of the universities

(Council; Finance; Academic Affairs; Research & Innovation; Human Resources; Legal & Governance; International; Equality, Diversity & Inclusion; Comms)

A photograph of a modern, multi-story building with a prominent glass facade and a covered walkway. The building is situated on a green lawn under a cloudy sky. The architecture features a series of vertical columns supporting a flat roof over a glass-enclosed walkway. To the right, there is a large, open-air structure with a flat roof supported by four thick columns. The foreground is a well-maintained green lawn, and the sky is overcast with grey clouds.

**Engagement with government
departments and state agencies**
– interface between state and
universities on sectoral matters



The Irish higher education system



7 Universities: 125,000 students

2 (new, 2019 and 2021) Technological Universities: 40,000 students

1 (new, 2019) University of Medicine and Health Sciences: 3,500 students

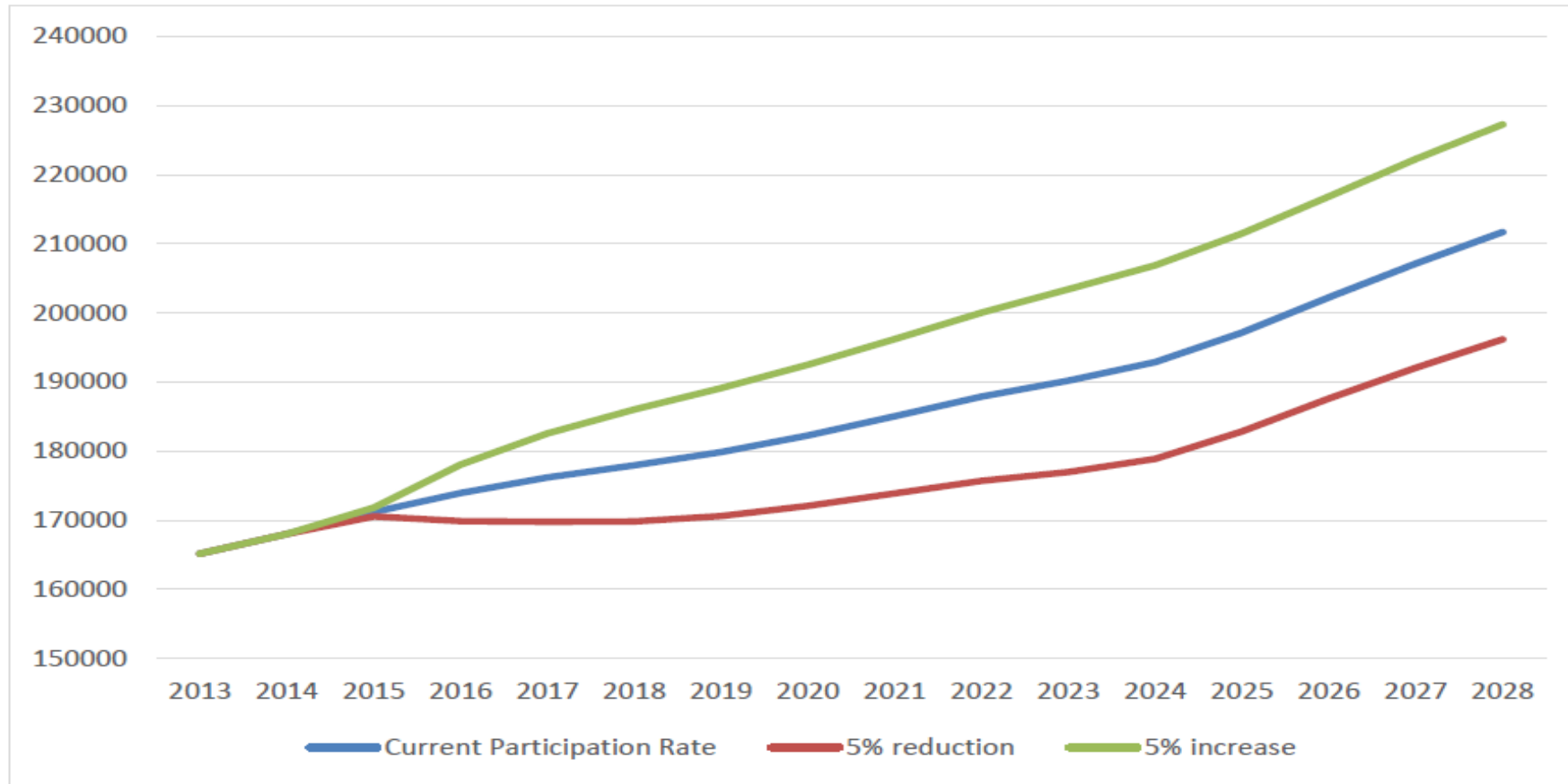
9 Institutes of Technology: 50,000 students

Colleges of Education & small HEIs: 7,500 students

Private HE providers: marginal numbers

Student number projections

Figure 6: Projections of Total Enrolments in Higher Education 2013-2028



IRELAND'S FUTURE TALENT

A CHARTER FOR IRISH UNIVERSITIES

1
BUILD ON THE
QUALITY OF
THE STUDENT
EXPERIENCE IN
A DIGITAL AGE



3
EXPAND STUDENT
ACCESS AND INCREASE
ENGAGEMENT WITH
COMMUNITIES
AND INDUSTRY



5
CREATE MORE
FLEXIBLE AND
ACCOUNTABLE
STRUCTURES



2
INCREASE THE
SCALE, SCOPE
AND IMPACT OF
INVESTMENT IN
RESEARCH AND
INNOVATION



4
SUPPORT A
PROGRAMME OF
STAFF DEVELOPMENT
AND INCREASED
EQUALITY AND
DIVERSITY



6
SECURE
INVESTMENT
AND RESOURCES
TO ACHIEVE OUR
AMBITIONS



1. Build on the quality of the student experience in a digital age

The student population in Irish universities will surge by 25,000 by 2030, coinciding with rapid advances in digital learning and a need to expand lifelong learning opportunities. To meet these challenges, universities commit to:

- Developing a national programme in digital learning in partnership with government;
- Increasing lifelong learning for people aged 25 to 64 from the current 6.5% to the EU average of 10.7% by 2030;
- Increasing our international reach by increasing international student numbers to 15% of the overall student population and enabling 20% of students to undertake study or placement abroad by 2025.

This requires investment to refurbish decaying infrastructure, build capacity and provide the systems needed for an increasingly digital and flexible learning environment.



4. Support a programme of staff development and increased equality and diversity

University staff numbers and pay scales are controlled by central government, which limits universities' capacity to respond flexibly to rapidly changing needs. All seven Irish universities have now been awarded Athena Swan Bronze status, a key indicator of progress on equality and diversity. To build on this, universities commit to:

- Implementing a professional development framework for university staff;
- Implementing the recommendations of the Gender Equality Taskforce on Higher Education to advance diversity, inclusion and equality.
- Securing agreement on a Researcher Career Development and Employment Framework to provide a secure basis for researchers to develop a career path.

To allow delivery of these commitments, the rigid and centralised control on university staffing should be changed to allow greater flexibility for each university to develop bespoke HR plans.



Strong collaboration

The first ever socio-economic Impact Assessment of Irish Universities was carried out by Indecon on behalf of the IUA in 2019

Most successful series of events/ webinars in 2020 and 'My Uni Life' TV series on Access



IUA Registrars Group

- Registrars/ Vice-Presidents Academic
- Quarterly formal meetings, under rotating IUA Chair
- Ad-hoc informal meetings to deal with the ongoing Covid situation
- Quality Committee, Access Steering Group (Admissions Officers, Deans of Graduate Studies, Deans of Learning & Teaching)
- Governance oversight of projects (EDTL, MC2, Campus Engage, etc.)



2021 PRIORITIES – ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

✓ Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning:

- Ensure continued success of IUA ECTL project
- Embed online/ remote 2020 experiences

✓ Lifelong learning:

- Commence and implement MC2
- Work with DFHERIS on Part-time/ Flexible provision position paper
- “Skills” – post-Covid

✓ Progression/ Access to HE

- NCCA Review of Senior Cycle
- HEAR review

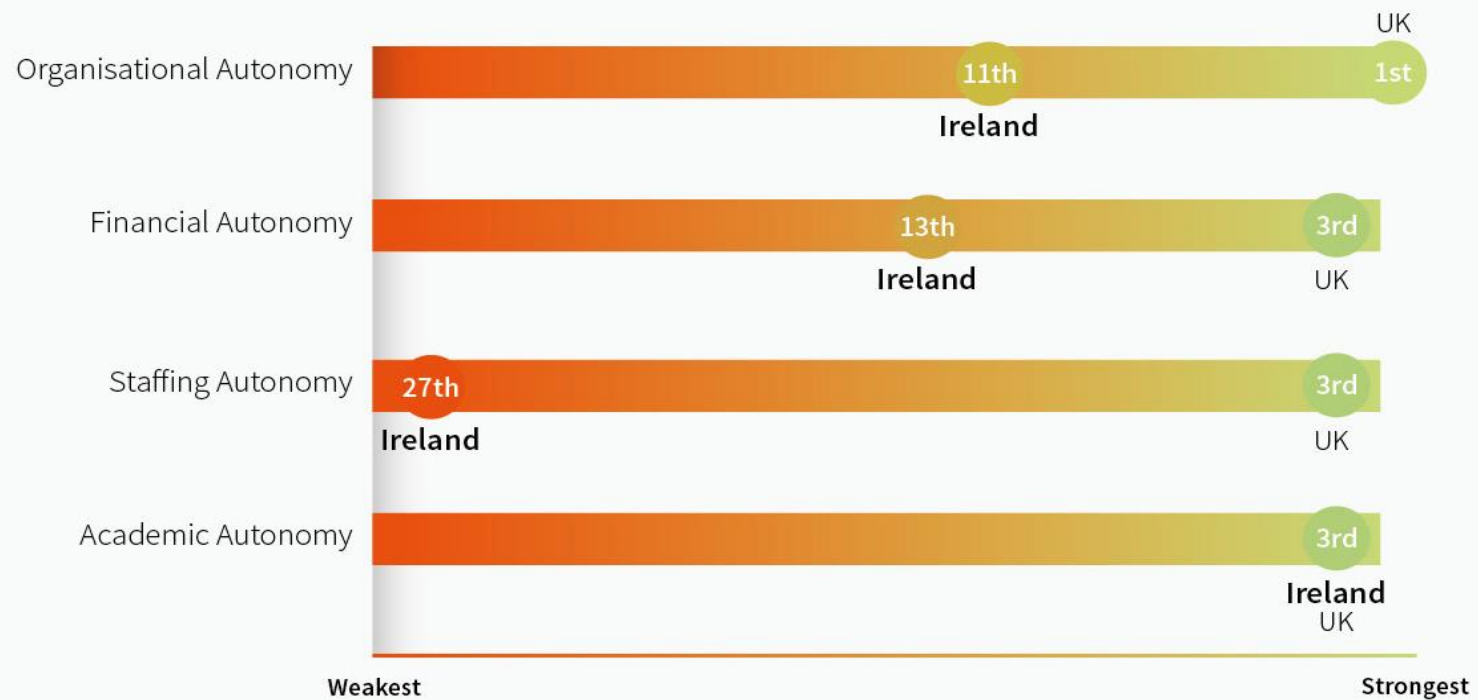
✓ European Universities Initiative

- EU post-Brexit

- ✓ **National Pay Talks – knock-on implications**
 - ✓ **Employment Control Framework**
 - ✓ **Researcher Careers Development & Employment Framework**
 - ✓ **Covid and post-Covid work practices**
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2021 PRIORITIES – HR

Figure 7. EUA university autonomy rankings



European Universities Association 2016 www.university-autonomy.eu.

2021 PRIORITIES – FUNDING

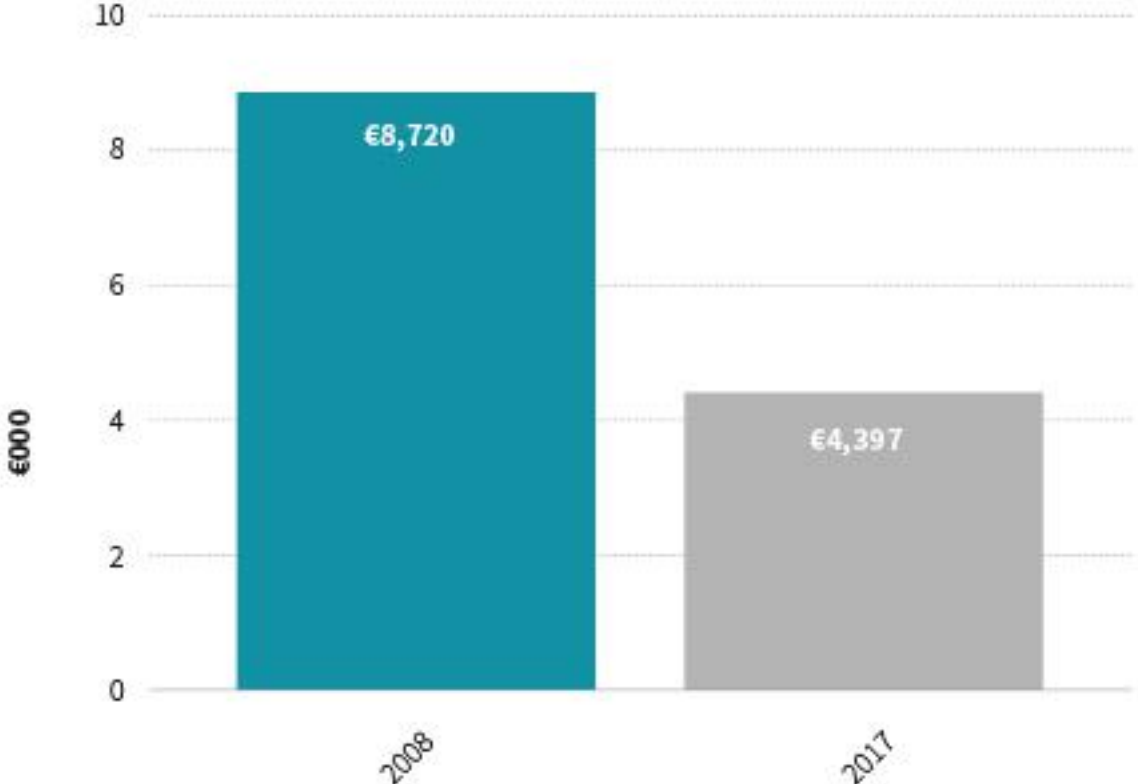
- ✓ **Financial Sustainability & Funding**
 - Long-term funding model
 - Short-term: Covid support, Digital & Research

- ✓ **Pension Funding**

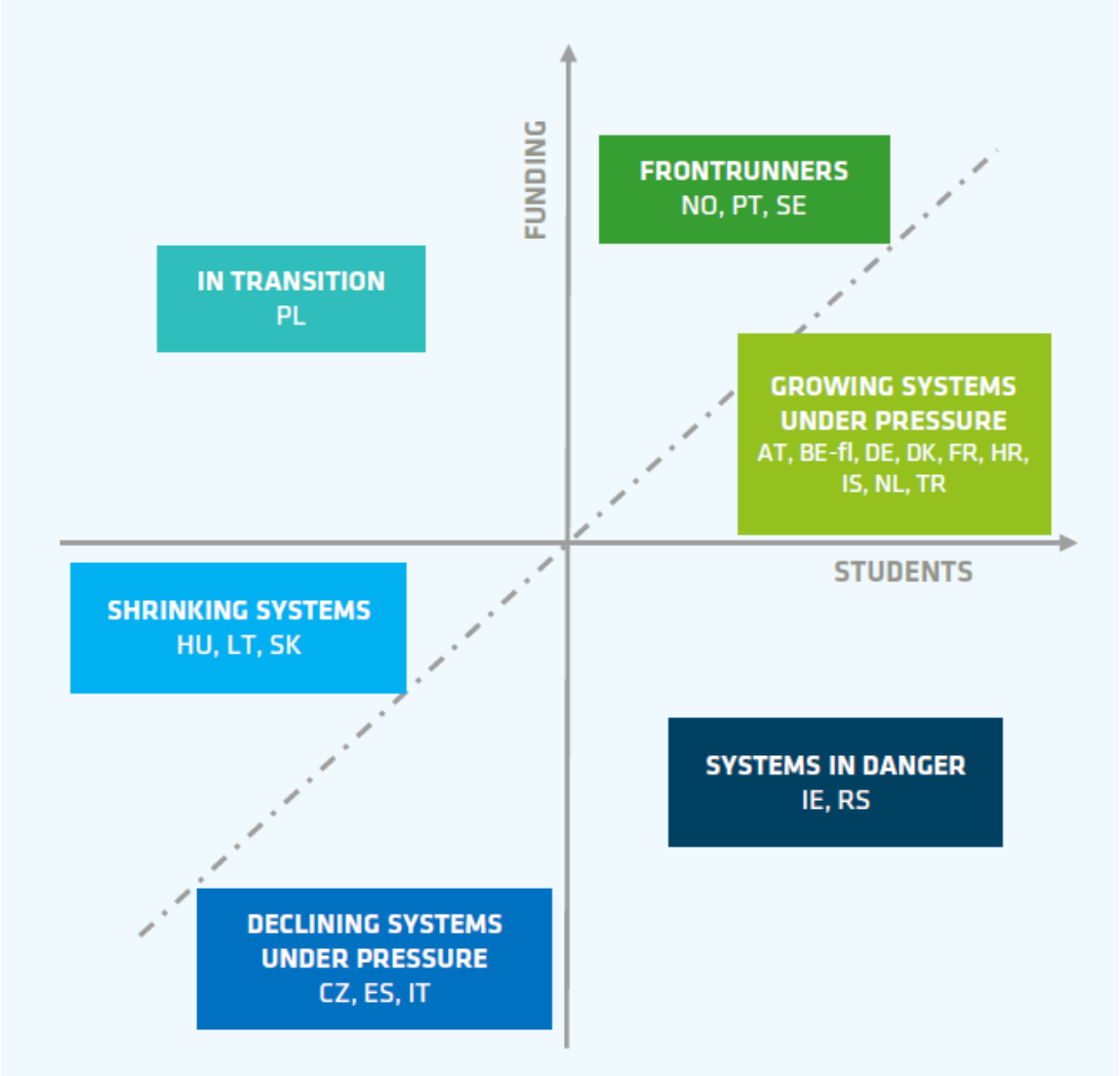
- ✓ **Systems Performance Framework/ Funding**
 - Reform of 'ring-fenced'/ specific purpose funding approach

- ✓ **Other Finance Related Matters**
 - HEA Financial Reporting

Public funding per university student



EUA Public Funding Observatory 2018



Engagement with government and state

- New Minister
- New Department
- Higher Education Authority
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland



Basis for engagement

- National Higher Education Strategy 2012-2030 and many “sub-strategies”: e.g. Access, International Education, National Skills Strategy, ICT, Foreign Languages, etc.; also, new Research Strategy
- Higher Education System Performance Framework 2016-2018, 2018-2020 and individual HEI Performance Compacts
- Better national and institutional data systems
- Better evidence base (StudentSurvey.ie, HEA Graduate Outcomes Survey, CSO Higher Education Outcomes data, etc.)



Basis for engagement

- Well functioning National Framework of Qualifications, new (2020) Irish Register of Qualifications
- External institutional quality assurance reviews cycle ongoing; autonomous internal quality assurance, annual reports
- Quality enhancement initiatives, e.g. Academic Integrity, Principles for Professional Accreditation



Covid Covid Covid...

IUA with key role on government interface:

- Steering Group & other WGs, e.g. Connectivity
- Public health guidelines
- July funding package - €169m
- Greet & Transfer service and other supports (visa service, etc.) for international students





Thank-you!

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