

## Autonomy of the Federal Organizational Units

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This article, which is based on a written survey of all organizational unit managers of the Swiss Federal Government, shows the structure and steering of all organizations on the federal level and the factors that influence autonomy. The survey indicates that the formal guidelines on autonomy, as modeled by legal form and organizational type, as well as the organization of leadership structures (e.g., appointment of a supervisory body), are congruent with actual autonomy. This finding is not surprising in a country having a clear tradition as a constitutional state (Rechtsstaatstradition), nevertheless in international comparison where the granting of autonomy is more strongly shaped by governmental preferences, it is not self-evident.

**Keywords:** Autonomy, Federal Administration, Agencies

### 1 Introduction

During the past twenty years, administrative units all over Europe have been removed from the classical ministerial or departemental hierarchies, and the steering of these units has been adjusted accordingly (Laegreid et al., 2006; Verhoest et al., 2012). Such a process has also occurred in Switzerland (Huber, 2012).

Up to now, only scant information has existed on the extent of this process on the federal level. This article will contribute to closing this gap. The article is based on a written survey of all federal organizational units in Switzerland. Those surveyed included the managements (CEOs or directors) of all legally non-autonomous and legally autonomous administrative bodies.

The article pursues the following goals:

- Review of the structure and steering of all units on the federal level from the viewpoint of management
- Identification of possible factors influencing (perceived) autonomy

### 2 Organizational Forms on the Federal Level

The starting point of the empirical survey is the classification of organizational units on the federal level. The structure used takes specifically into account the autonomy of task fulfillment and is a further development of the typology used by Tschannen et al. (2009: 44), which organizes the various organizational forms into central administrative units and agencies of the decentralized administ-

ration having legal status. A similar classification is used in the appendix to the RVOV (Governmental and Administrative Organization Regulations: 29ff).<sup>1</sup> This list, however, explicitly excludes administrative bodies that provide services in the marketplace (see Art. 7a, lit. c and d. of the RVOV, as well as the VPB [Administrative Practice of Federal Agencies] 2009: 84) and is thus inadequate for categorizing all administrative bodies on the federal level.

Table 1 lists the legal forms and organizational types of the units that are studied. It is important to note that public law – in contrast to civil law – does not recognize any *Numerus Clausus* when selecting the organizational forms for legal entities, which is why the legislature, based on its civil law jurisdiction<sup>2</sup>, can theoretically establish an endless number of organizational types (Lienhard/Tschentscher, 2011: 167). In view of this fact, the table must be understood as a snapshot in time. For the present report, the beginning of the quantitative survey in 2009 was selected as the reference point.

Umbrella-Term	Legal Form	Autonomous Legal Entity	Legal Basis	Examples
Administrative Units of the Central Federal Administration	Staff Services	no	Public law	<i>Federal Chancellery, General Secretariats</i>
	Federal offices, secretaries of state offices, directorates (FDFA), branches of the armed services (VBS)	no	Public law	<i>Federal Office for the Environment</i>
	New Public Management (NPM) offices	no	Public law	<i>MeteoSwiss (Swiss National Weather Service)</i>
Administrative Units Not Subject To Directives	Governmental commissions	no	Public law	<i>Competition Commission</i>
	Supervisory bodies and competence centers	no	Public law	<i>Swiss Federal Audit Office</i>
	Funds having their own registered offices	no	Public law	<i>Swiss Federal Social Security Funds</i>

<sup>1</sup> Governmental and Administrative Organization Regulations dated November 25, 1998 (Status as of June 1, 2011) (RVOV) (SR 172.010.1).

<sup>2</sup> See Art. 122, Para. 1 BV.

Umbrella-Term	Legal Form	Autonomous Legal Entity	Legal Basis	Examples
Public Law Bodies	Regulators	yes	Public law	<i>Swissmedic (Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products)</i>
	Educational and research facilities	yes	Public law	<i>ETH (Federal Institute of Technology) Zurich</i>
	Services with partial monopolistic character	yes	Public law	<i>Swiss Export Risk Insurance, Swiss Postal Services</i>
Non-Profit Organizations Providing Public Services and Having More than 50% Federal Financing	Public corporations	yes	Public law	<i>Swiss Tourism Board</i>
	Public foundations	yes	Public law	<i>Swiss National Park</i>
	Private foundations	yes	Private law	<i>Organization of the Swiss Abroad</i>
	Associations	yes	Private law	<i>OSEC (Business Network Switzerland)</i>
Stock Corporations	Stock corporations under special law	yes	Special law is based on public law. At least subsidiarily, however, private law applies.	<i>Swisscom AG (Swiss Telephone and Communications), SBB AG (Swiss Federal Railways)</i>
	Stock corporations under private law with right of federal government participation	yes	Private law	<i>Skyguide AG (Swiss Air Navigation Services)</i>

Table 1: Legal Forms of Organizations on the Federal Level

During the summer of 2009, the survey was mailed to all federal organizational units. After two reminders, the survey was completed on October 31, 2009. Overall, the return rate was 71% (N=143) of all organizations surveyed.

### 3 Structure, Steering, and Setting of Goals

#### 3.1 Structure

The age of the organizational units on the federal level fluctuates between 1 and 206 years. The oldest organization is the Swiss Federal Chancellery, which was established already in 1803 and is thus 45 years older than the Swiss Confederation. The age of a large number of organizations (40.2%) is between 10 and 19 years (see Figure 1). Most of this large number of relatively young organizations can be traced back to the introduction of the New Public Management model and the

agencification<sup>3</sup> at the end of the 1990s. The mean age of organizations in today's legal form is 63 years old.

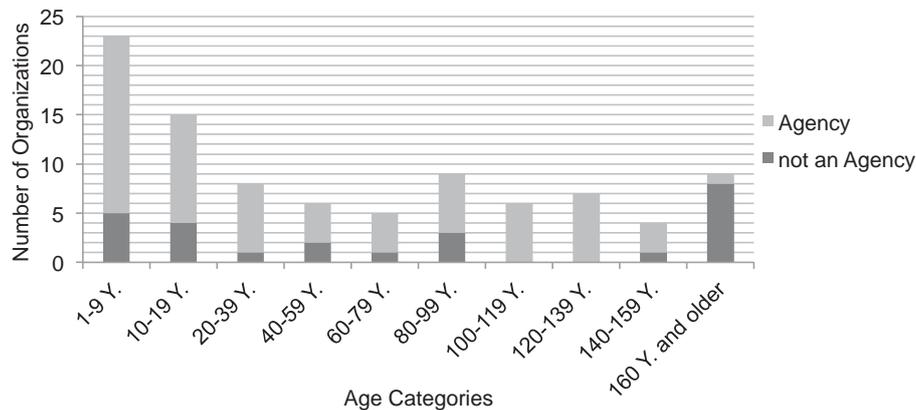


Figure 1: *Age of Organizational Units (N=92)*

With only two permanent employees, the 3R Research Foundation is the smallest organizational unit, while the Postal Services, with 44,803 employees, is the largest employer on the federal level. The SBB (Swiss Federal Railways), as the second largest employer, employs “only” 26,640 persons. The mean organizational unit employs 140 employees (median).

Figure 2 shows that a comparatively large number of the organizations (21% or, respectively, 17.2% of the sampled organizational units) have a very small workforce (1-20 employees). It also becomes clear that only a mere four (3.3%) of the sampled organizations employ more than 10,000 persons.

<sup>3</sup> In line with van Thiel (2000: 6), those organizational units on the Swiss federal level that perform public tasks, but are not part of the central or departmental administration with regard to a special autonomous relationship vis-à-vis their higher-ranking offices, can be called agencies. These are the NPM offices, those administrative units not subject to directives (governmental commissions, supervisory bodies and competence centers), the institutions based on public law, non-profit organizations providing public services and having more than 50% federal financing (public corporations, public and private foundations and associations), and the stock corporations under special law and under private law with right of federal government participation.

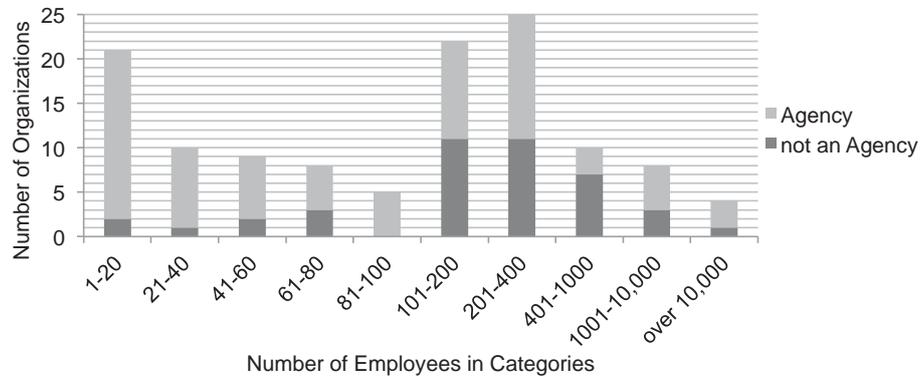


Figure 2: *Workforce of the Organizational Units (N=122)*

The majority of the organizational units perform services as monopolies and act in a sovereign capacity, as Table 2 shows. Nevertheless, the high number of units that are also involved in the administration of services (28.8%) or that provide services on the marketplace (25.8%) is striking.

Types of Services	Methods of Providing Services	Subtotal	Total Types of Services
Departmental Services	Intervention management (imposing of fees/duties and obligations vis-à-vis the citizenry)	33 (41.2%)	
	Administration of services (providing grants and subsidies, etc.)	23 (28.8%)	
	Needs management (providing internal administrative services, such as personnel, IT, etc.)	24 (30.0%)	
	<b>Total Departmental Services</b>	<b>80</b> (100%)	<b>80</b> (63.5%)
Economic Services	Services with monopolistic character	45 (68.2%)	
	Services in the marketplace	17 (25.8%)	
	Management of financial assets (e.g. retirement funds)	4 (6.0%)	
	<b>Total Economic Services</b>	<b>66</b> (100%)	<b>66</b> (52.4%)
Economic and Safety Oversight Services (e.g., regulatory functions)			44 (34.9%)
<b>N</b>			<b>126</b> (100%)

Table 2: *Types of Services*

The administrative units are primarily involved in policy implementation and policy planning (see Table 3). According to their own estimation, the definition of political problem fields is more likely left to politicians. But even here, 54.8% of the organizational units say that this belongs within their purview. Agenda setting is thus for all intents and purposes an administrative task. Evaluations are not core business.

Types of Tasks	Function of Task Fulfillment	Subtotal	Total
Definition and thematization of political and social problems	Main function	25 (43.9%)	57 (54.8%)
	Auxiliary function	32 (56.1%)	
	<b>Total Definition of Policies</b>	<b>57</b> (100%)	
Policy planning, preparation, and formulation	Main function	38 (53.5%)	71 (68.3%)
	Auxiliary function	33 (46.5%)	
	<b>Total Policy Planning</b>	<b>71</b> (100%)	
Policy implementation	Main function	13 (15.5%)	84 (80.8%)
	Auxiliary function	71 (84.5%)	
	<b>Total Policy Implementation</b>	<b>84</b> (100%)	
Policy Evaluation	Main function	32 (80.0%)	40 (38.5%)
	Auxiliary function	8 (20.0%)	
	<b>Total Policy Evaluation</b>	<b>40</b> (100%)	
<b>N</b>			<b>104</b> (100%)

Table 3: Policy Cycle

### 3.2 Steering

By a substantial margin, the operations management teams of the organizational units are most frequently appointed by the Swiss Federal Council (54.2%). The second entity that most frequently appoints the operations management (20.6%) is a supervisory body in the form of an administrative, institutional, or foundation

advisory board. Under the heading “another stakeholder”, individual organizations refer to the fact that their organizational management teams are appointed by a co-determining body, by several bodies, or, in the case of Swiss organizations abroad, by Swiss institutions in foreign countries (see Table 4).

How is the management of your organization appointed (Director, President, CEO, Board of Directors)?	Frequency	Percentage
Parliament	5	4.7%
Swiss Federal Council	58	54.2%
Head of a Department	11	10.3%
Federal Office	3	2.8%
General Meeting of the Organization	3	2.8%
Supervisory Body of the Organization	22	20.6%
General Secretary of a Department	2	1.9%
Another Stakeholder	4	2.8%
N	107	100%

*Table 4: Appointment of the Organizational Management*

Only 31.3% of the organizational units have an administrative, institutional, or foundation advisory board.

Formal meetings between the management and the supervisory body take place at least once annually in all organizations that have supervisory bodies. Most organizations (75%) indicated that they have formal meetings at least once per quarter.

The frequency of informal meetings varies largely. One organization stated that the management and the supervisory body never meet informally. Most organizations (48%), however, stated that there are informal information exchanges between the bodies at least once a week.

On average, the supervisory bodies and the operations management meet on a formal basis at least once per quarter (mean: 3.9 on a scale of 0 = never to 6 = at least once weekly) and at least once monthly for an informal exchange of information (mean: 5.1) (see Table 5).

How frequently does your organization have contact with the supervisory body?	Never	Very Rarely	At Least 1x Annually	At Least 1x Every Six Months	At Least 1x Per Quarter	At Least 1x Monthly	At Least 1x Weekly	N
Formal Meeting with the Supervisory Body	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (11.6%)	10 (23.3%)	15 (34.9%)	10 (23.3%)	3 (6.9%)	43 (100%)
Informal Contact with the Supervisory Body	1 (2.4%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	0 (0%)	7 (16.7%)	13 (31.0%)	20 (47.6%)	42 (100%)

Table 5: Frequency and Type of Contact with the Supervisory Body

The most important topic of the formal discussions is the degree to which the organization is achieving its goals. The strategic orientation and the finances are also relevant. Organizational topics are discussed less frequently (see Table 6).

To what extent are the following topics part of the formal meetings between your organization and the supervisory body? (0=Not a topic; 6=Main topic)	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Finances	4.6	1.7	41
Organizational Issues	3.7	1.4	42
Strategic Orientation	4.9	1.3	43
Organization's Goal Achievement	5.2	0.9	42

Table 6: Topics of Formal Meetings with the Supervisory Body

Most of the managers state that their level of trust in the supervisory body is high or even very high. On a scale of 1 (very low) to 6 (very high), the mean value lies at 5.2 (standard deviation: 0.9).

Another topic that was studied is the interaction between the organizational units and the higher-ranking federal offices. Here, higher-ranking means those offices that are either higher up in the hierarchy or are assigned only administratively.

Formal contacts vary in intensity. Generally, they occur once per quarter. Weekly formal contacts are rare. The organizational units meet informally with their supervisory federal offices on a regular basis. Thus, 27.8% of the units state that such meetings take place weekly and an additional 44.4% state that the meetings occur at least once a month (see Table 7).

On average, the organizations are in contact with their administratively higher-ranking level between once per quarter and once a month.

(Scale of 0 = never to 6 = at least 1x weekly)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Formal meeting with the (administratively) higher-ranking office	3.9	1.4
Informal contact with the (administratively) higher-ranking office	4.9	1.0

Table 7: Mean Frequency of Contact with the (Administratively) Higher-Ranking Level

11.5% of the organizations state that, at least with respect to certain problem areas, they have direct contact to the Swiss Federal Council. According to their own estimation, most organizations (70%) do not have such contact, but rather always turn first to the responsible department in each instance (via the General Secretary or Federal Office) (see Table 8).

To what extent does your organization have direct access to the (entire) Swiss Federal Council?	Frequency	Percentage
Direct access for all of the organization's functions	5	4.8 %
Direct access for certain functions of the organization	7	6.7 %
The management has no direct access; the processes initially go through the responsible department (e.g., via the General Secretary or a Federal Office)	73	70.2 %
The management has no direct access, the processes initially go through the organization's supervisory body	18	17.3 %
Other type of access	1	1.0 %
N	104	100 %

Table 8: Access to the Swiss Federal Council

The difference in frequency with which the Swiss Federal Council engages with its organizational units is astonishing. 27% of the units have no formal contact with the federal government, and 20% do not even have any informal contact. On the other hand, 15% of the organizational units have a formal meeting once a week with a member of the Swiss Federal Council, and 15% also meet informally. That indicates the – understandably – very different importance that the Swiss Federal Council ascribes to the individual units.

### 3.3 Setting of Goals

An important instrument for steering organizational units is the setting of goals and controlling their achievement. It is striking that over one-third (35.6%) of all organizations state that they formulate their goals themselves only. In the other organizational units, the process is at least very iterative.

From a formal perspective, the long-term, political-strategic goals must come from the Parliament or at least from the Swiss Federal Council. Medium-term or strategic guidelines would be assigned to the departmental level, and short-term goals or the organizations' own implementation goals could be formulated by the organizations themselves.

Table 9 shows that this formal breakdown applies to many organizations. However, there are quite a few organizations that also state that they themselves set their own strategic goals and even their own political-strategical guidelines. Conversely, there are individual organizations that state that the Swiss Federal Council or the respective department chair sets goals for individual departments. One organization even stated that the Parliament sets its operational (short-term) goals.

Who ultimately sets the following goals for your organization?	We Ourselves	The Administrative or Institutional Board	The Administratively Higher-Ranking Department	The Department Chair	The Entire Swiss Federal Council	The Parliament	N
Political-Strategic Goals (long-term planning, long-term goals, general guidelines)	10 (9.5%)	18 (17.1%)	14 (13.3%)	19 (18.1%)	13 (12.4%)	31 (29.5%)	105 (100%)

Who ultimately sets the following goals for your organization?	We Ourselves	The Administrative or Institutional Board	The Administratively Higher-Ranking Department	The Department Chair	The Entire Swiss Federal Council	The Parliament	N
Strategic goals (medium-term planning, company-related guidelines, task-related guidelines)	21 (20.0%)	29 (27.6%)	14 (13.3%)	24 (22.9%)	13 (12.4%)	4 (3.8%)	105 (100%)
Operational goals (short-term goals, performance goals, annual planning)	72 (68.6%)	11 (10.5%)	9 (8.6%)	11 (10.5%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	105 (100%)
Goals of individual departments, implementation goals (tactical goals)	100 (95.2%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	2 (1.9%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0%)	105 (100%)

Table 9: *Goal-Setting and Hierarchical Levels in the Government*

Of interest is the process of performance measurement. On this issue, the surveyed organizations were first asked to distinguish between financial goals, performance goals, and outcome goals. The survey showed (see Table 10) that in most cases (79%), financial goal indicators are established. In almost 60% of the cases, output goal indicators are also established. Only in the area of outcome goals are indicators stipulated for a mere 42% of the surveyed organizations.

Is the achievement of goals measured by using indicators?	No	Partially	Yes	N
Financial Goals	10 (11.1%)	9 (10.0%)	71 (78.9%)	90 (100%)
Output Goals	9 (9.9%)	28 (30.8%)	54 (59.3%)	91 (100%)
Outcome Goals	18 (20.5%)	33 (37.5%)	37 (42.0%)	88 (100%)

Table 10: *Goal Indicators*

As the analyses in Table 11 show, the surveyed organizations assess the precision of indicators for financial goals as accurate to extremely accurate. Conversely, the precision of indicators for outcome goals is rated as only moderately accurate.

How precisely do these indicators provide information on the achievement of goals? (1 = very inaccurately; 6 = extremely accurately)	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Financial Goals	5.2	1.1	80
Output Goals	4.2	1.1	83
Outcome Goals	3.4	1.3	77

Table 11: Precision of Measurement Using Indicators

Table 12 provides indications of how reliable the establishment of indicators can be from the viewpoint of the organizations. Financial goals can be determined the most reliably. While this is also the case with performance goals, in the opinion of those surveyed, it is difficult to be completely consistent when determining and preparing outcome goals.

How reliably could these data be collected for the indicators? (0= no data collection; 1 = completely unreliable; 6 = very reliable)	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Financial Goals	5.2	1.6	84
Output Goals	4.3	1.4	86
Outcome Goals	3.3	1.6	81

Table 12: Reliability of Data Collection for the Indicators

Finally, the organizations were asked how they assessed their own goal achievement and how the provision of services had changed over the past five years. Table 13 provides the average self-assessment of this by the organizations. It is striking that on average (and with a relatively small standard deviation), on a scale of 1 (0% of goals achieved) to 6 (100% of goals achieved), the organizations specified a very high value of 5.5 for financial objectives. Furthermore, no organization specified a value less than three. It is understandable that organizational units assess their own performance positively. Nevertheless, it is surprising that the values are so high. Either the organizations have actually performed well or, during the process of agreeing on goals, they ensured that the higher-ranking authority sets no ambitious goals.

Were the goals achieved? (1 = 0% achieved; 6 = 100% achieved)	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Financial Goals	5.5	0.7	89
Output Goals	5.1	0.8	90
Outcome Goals	4.7	0.9	81

Table 13: Goal Achievement

#### 4 Factors Influencing the Autonomy of Organizational Units

The following chapter analyzes possible factors that influence the autonomy of the organizational units. The factors include the task areas, the (legal) organizational types, the existence of a supervisory body, the number of employees, the proportion of the organization's own revenues from fees and prices, and the trust in the higher-ranking entity.

In order to determine the areas of autonomy of organizational units on the federal level, Weihrich/Koontz's classical "five-part canon" of management functions (1993: 10ff.; Schreyögg/Koch, 2010) is adapted to the management in the public administration. *Planning* is the logical starting point of the management process for government organizations. *Financing* as an independent management function must be included in second place for the specific examination of public organizations. While financing is to be understood as part of strategic planning in private companies, in public task units the allocation of financial means is basically assigned according to the task definition. Only after the financing is secured can the planning be implemented using the management functions of *organization*, *staffing*, *leading*, and *controlling*. By using the management functions, one can specify five areas of autonomy for governmental organizational units. They are policy autonomy, financial autonomy, organizational autonomy, human resources (HR) autonomy<sup>4</sup>, and leadership autonomy. The type of autonomy that corresponds to planning is policy autonomy, i.e., the competence to plan (policies) strategically and to set basic operational conditions. There is no equivalent area of autonomy for the management function of *controlling*. Controlling can be understood as an aspect of the autonomy level of the individual management functions<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> We differentiate between strategic and operational HR autonomy. One understands strategic HR autonomy to be long-term staff planning, as well as the selection of salary and performance assessment systems; operational HR autonomy encompasses decision-making competencies having to do with the daily handling of HR questions.

<sup>5</sup> The operationalization of the five dimensions of autonomy is being explained in Steiner/Huber 2012.

The task areas are considered as the first possible factor influencing the autonomy of organizations. Argued normatively, it would primarily have to be the *task type* that influences the autonomy of an organizational unit. Thus, one must assume that an administrative organization that has predominantly sovereign functions would require closer governmental supervision and is thus less autonomous. Conversely, an organization with predominantly economic functions will likely enjoy considerable leeway, in order to be able to be flexible when dealing on the market.

In order to test this hypothesis, an analysis is made of whether organizations with different task types have significantly different autonomy ratings.

The first thing that is noticeable is that the task types “Economic Tasks“ and “Economic and Safety Oversight Tasks“ (regulatory functions) have no significant effect on autonomy. This means that the organizations performing economic or regulatory tasks do not basically characterize themselves as being more or less autonomous than organizations that are not performing such tasks. On the other hand, one sees that the task type “Departmental Functions“ has a significantly negative effect on four of the five dimensions of autonomy (see Table 14). This means that organizations having departmental functions assess their *policy, financial, organizational, and human resources (strategic and operational) autonomy* lower than do organizations not having departmental functions.

Dimensions of Autonomy	F	Significance	$\omega^2$	Effect Magnitude
Policy Autonomy	F(1, 94)=13.069	p < 0.001	0.11	Large
Financial Autonomy	F(1, 97)=29.290	p < 0.001	0.22	Large
Organizational Autonomy	F(1, 97)=18.209	p < 0.001	0.15	Large
Strategic Human Resources Autonomy	F(1, 101)=17.715	p < 0.001	0.14	Large
Operational Human Resources Autonomy	F(1, 100)=7.152	p < 0.001	0.06	Moderate
Leadership Autonomy	–	–	–	–

Table 14: Influence of the Distinguishing Feature „Departmental Functions“

As the variance analysis in Table 15 confirms, significant differences for all dimensions of autonomy exist among the individual **organizational types**. From this, one can conclude that the organizational typology utilized represents a very appropriate classification grid for determining the autonomy of organizations on the federal level.

Dimensions of Autonomy	F	Significance	$\omega^2$	Effect Magnitude
Policy Autonomy	F(12, 85) = 2.34	p < 0.05	0.14	Large
Financial Autonomy	F(12, 88) = 17.19	p < 0.001	0.66	Large
Organizational Autonomy	F(13, 87) = 4.34	p < 0.001	0.30	Large
Strategic Human Resources Autonomy	F(12, 92) = 4.98	p < 0.001	0.30	Large
Operational Human Resources Autonomy	F(12, 91) = 4.05	p < 0.001	0.26	Large
Leadership Autonomy	F(13, 99) = 2.47	p < 0.05	0.17	Large

Table 15: *Influence of the Distinguishing Feature „Organizational Typology“*

Organizations having **supervisory bodies** basically rate themselves as being more autonomous than organizations not having them, except in the area of policy autonomy. This means that the existence of a supervisory body has no effect on technical autonomy (see Table 16).

Dimensions of Autonomy	F	Significance	$\omega^2$	Effect Magnitude
Policy Autonomy	–	–	–	–
Financial Autonomy	F(1,99)=54.446	p < 0.001	0.35	Large
Organizational Autonomy	F(1,91)=34.338	p < 0.001	0.26	Large
Strategic Human Resources Autonomy	F(1,103)=20.535	p < 0.001	0.16	Large
Operational Human Resources Autonomy	F(1,102)=13.031	p < 0.001	0.10	Moderate
Leadership Autonomy	F(1,91)=19.338	p < 0.001	0.16	Large

Table 16: *Influence of the Distinguishing Feature „Supervisory Bodies“*

Another possible influencing factor on the autonomy of organizational units could be the number of **employees**. On the one hand, one can assume that organizations having large workforces have more clout vis-à-vis the Federal Council. On the other hand, one can argue that organizations having small numbers of employees draw less focus from policy-makers and the Federal Council and therefore tend to be able to retain more autonomy.

The curve progressions in Figure 3 show that the number of employees has no influence on autonomy. The statistical analyses (ANOVA) also show no linear effects (increasing or decreasing autonomy ratings with increasing numbers of employees), and they do show significant differences in ratings among the categories.

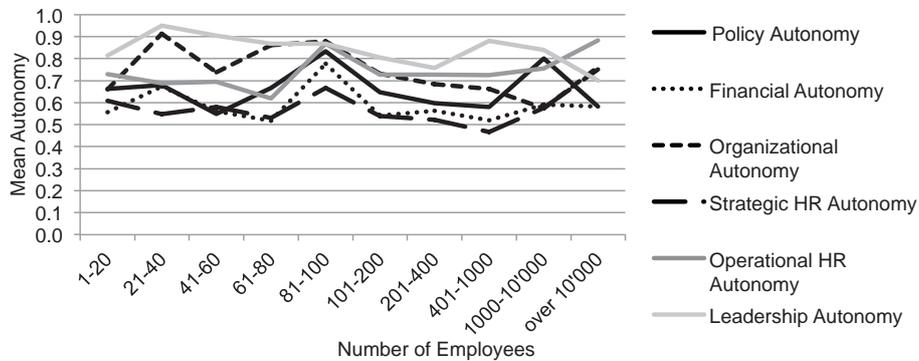


Figure 3: Autonomy Ratings for Different Numbers of Employees

In the area of finances, the question being asked is whether the organization's generation of its own revenues (e.g., from fees and prices for services and products) correlate with their autonomy. It can be assumed that organizations controlling their own revenue sources are also able to regulate the use of these funds. This affords them more comprehensive autonomy than organizations whose funding is solely allocated by the Federal Government (e.g., regular budgets of federal offices or subsidy payments).

Surveyed was the generation of an organization's own revenues as a percentage of its available budget. With this, one can measure the relative scope or the importance of an organization's own revenues.

Significantly different ratings are primarily found among the categories of *financial autonomy*  $F(5,83)=4.717$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $\omega^2=0.17$  (strong effect) and *organizational autonomy*  $F(5,67)=2.404$   $p < 0.05$ ,  $\omega^2=0.09$  (moderate effect). It is also possible to observe a significantly positive linear effect with these two dimensions of autonomy. This means that financial autonomy and organizational autonomy increase when the proportion of an organization's own revenues increases. Finally, there is a significantly positive linear effect for strategic human resources autonomy.

From this one can conclude that the scope of an organization's own revenues has a positive influence on financial and organizational autonomy, as well as, though to a lesser extent, strategic human resources autonomy; but it has no significant effect on the other dimensions of autonomy.

**Mutual trust** is evaluated as the final possible influencing factor on autonomy. It can be assumed that the executive of an organization is granted more autonomy when it enjoys a high level of trust than when mutual mistrust prevails.

The variance analyses in Table 17 show no significantly different ratings among the levels of trust nor are significant linear effects apparent. From this, one can conclude that very different autonomy ratings can exist for what are generally very high levels of trust. Accordingly, autonomy and trust are not directly linked to each other.

How do you rate the trust between you and your higher-ranking office?		Policy Autonomy	Financial Autonomy	Organizational Autonomy	Strategic HR Autonomy	Operational HR Autonomy	Leadership Autonomy
small	Mean	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.9
	N	1	1	1	1	1	1
	s	.	.	.	.	.	.
rather small	Mean	0.3	0.6	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9
	N	1	1	1	1	1	1
	s	.	.	.	.	.	.
rather large	Mean	0.7	0.6	0.9	0.7	0.7	1.0
	N	8	9	3	9	9	3
	s	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.0
large	Mean	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.9
	N	33	32	30	35	35	30
	s	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1
very large	Mean	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.9
	N	26	26	19	27	26	19
	s	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3
Total	Mean	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.9
	N	69	69	54	73	72	54
	s	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.2

Table 17: Autonomy and Trust in the (Administratively) Higher-Ranking Office

## 5 Conclusions

The survey of the organizational units of the Federal Government showed that the formal guidelines on autonomy as they have been modeled by legal form and organizational type, as well as by the organization of leadership structures (e.g., appointment of a supervisory body), are congruent with actual autonomy. This finding is not surprising in a country having a clear *tradition as a constitutional state (Rechtsstaatstradition)*; but in international comparison in which the granting of autonomy is more strongly shaped by the preferences of the government, it is completely surprising.

The obvious assumption that the mandate or tasks to be fulfilled determine the degree of autonomy could not be confirmed by the survey. The reason for this finding may be the fact that most organizations on the federal level are not active in merely one task area, but rather act in a sovereign capacity and in economic and regulatory matters, as is the case, e.g., with some NPM offices. Furthermore, the legal form and granting of autonomy are highly path-dependent and do not follow a consistent conceptual design.

The article, however, has simultaneously shown that the intensity with which the Federal Council is involved in the organization is dependent upon the political importance of the organizational unit, regardless of the basic autonomy granted.

This article has confirmed that the autonomy of all organizational units exceeds the lowest possible level of autonomy. Even offices that are managed directly by the government have more room to maneuver. To speak dichotomously of autonomy versus no autonomy would therefore be too simplistic. One may surmise that the movement that started during the early 1990s with the taskforce “More Room to Maneuver” of the office managers has led to a general expansion in maneuverability. Precisely this additional latitude necessitates an effective study of goal achievement. Whether this is already the case must be questioned. Thus, the operational managements’ outcome goals are not considered to be particularly useful. Furthermore, almost all organizational units indicate that they have fully achieved all aspects of their goals. This is not surprising when one considers that the organizations are generally intensively involved in the goal-setting process. Very rarely, however, does this process include the setting of ambitious targets.

### Zusammenfassung

In den vergangenen zwanzig Jahren sind in verschiedenen Ländern Europas – so auch in der Schweiz – Verwaltungseinheiten aus der klassischen Ministerial- resp. Departementalhierarchie herausgelöst worden. Bislang fehlt eine empirische Untersuchung zu dieser Entwicklung auf Bundesebene. Der vorliegende Beitrag zeigt anhand einer schriftlichen Befragung der Geschäftsleitungen aller Organisationseinheiten des Bundes die Struktur und Steuerung der Einheiten auf und welches die Einflussfaktoren der Autonomie sind.

**Schlagworte:** Autonomie, Bundesverwaltung, Organisation

### Résumé

Durant ces vingt dernières années, diverses unités ministérielles ou départementales ont été détachées de l'organigramme administratif dans divers pays européens dont la Suisse. Jusqu'alors, il n'existait pas d'enquête empirique au niveau fédéral sur cette évolution. Basée sur une enquête écrite auprès des directions de toutes les unités d'organisation de la Confédération, cette étude présente la structure et la gestion des unités et les facteurs d'influence de l'autonomie.

**Mots-Clé:** autonomie, administration fédérale

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