



Serbia

This report describes the structure of the national higher education system in Serbia, focusing on the institutional types as defined by national categories. It builds on the Eurydice Report on the national higher education system but complements it with quantitative information on the role of higher education institution (HEI) types in national systems, based on data derived from the European Tertiary Education Register (<http://www.eter-project.eu>) for the period 2013-2019.

Types of Higher Education Institutions

According to Eurydice¹, the Serbian higher education system comprises four types of HEIs:

- Universities,
- Colleges of Applied Studies,
- Colleges of academic studies,
- Academies of Applied Studies.

Note that in ETER data collection, these four types are all categorized as universities, while ETER additionally features dedicated vocational colleges as important category of the Serbian HE system.

According to the way of their foundation, HEIs are either public or private institutions. Public higher education institutions are established by the state. Higher education institutions founded by an autonomous legal entity or a private person are private HEIs. Both types of HEIs become legal entities within the higher education system in Serbia only after receiving a state permission granted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.

Every accredited higher education institution in Serbia can organise study programmes and issue first and second-cycle degree certificates (academic and professional), but only universities can implement third-cycle educational programmes. In general, a HEI cannot become a university unless it offers doctoral studies in at least three fields (natural sciences and mathematics, social sciences and humanities, medical science, technical and technological sciences and arts). In addition, a difference between universities and other HEIs in Serbia is also reflected by the fact that universities are obligated to be engaged in research - their teachers must have appropriate ranking in the scientific community and apply their scientific knowledge and research results in relevant educational processes.

Main institutional characteristics. Legal status and the right to award a PhD

Table 1 below provides a quantitative overview of the main institutional characteristics of Serbian HEIs. As mentioned in the previous section, Serbian universities are categorized just in two main categories, private and public ones (Private University and State University). The share between these two categories (of those

¹https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/types-higher-education-institutions-31_en

identified), is more or less equal, i.e. 9 State and 8 Private Universities. Both State and Private Universities are all PhD awarding, naturally, since this is a pre-condition to get the legal status of a university as described in the previous section. In terms of the number of institutions, State Vocational Colleges are the most (26), while there are only four Private Vocational Colleges. Vocational Colleges in general are non PhD awarding.

Table 1. Institutional type and legal status by HEI type, 2019

Category		N	Public	Private	PhD awarding
Private University	Приватни универзитет	9	0	9	9
Private Vocational College	Приватна висока струковна школа	4	0	4	0
State University	Државни универзитет	8	8	0	8
State Vocational College	Државна висока струковна школа	26	26	0	0
Total		47	34	13	17

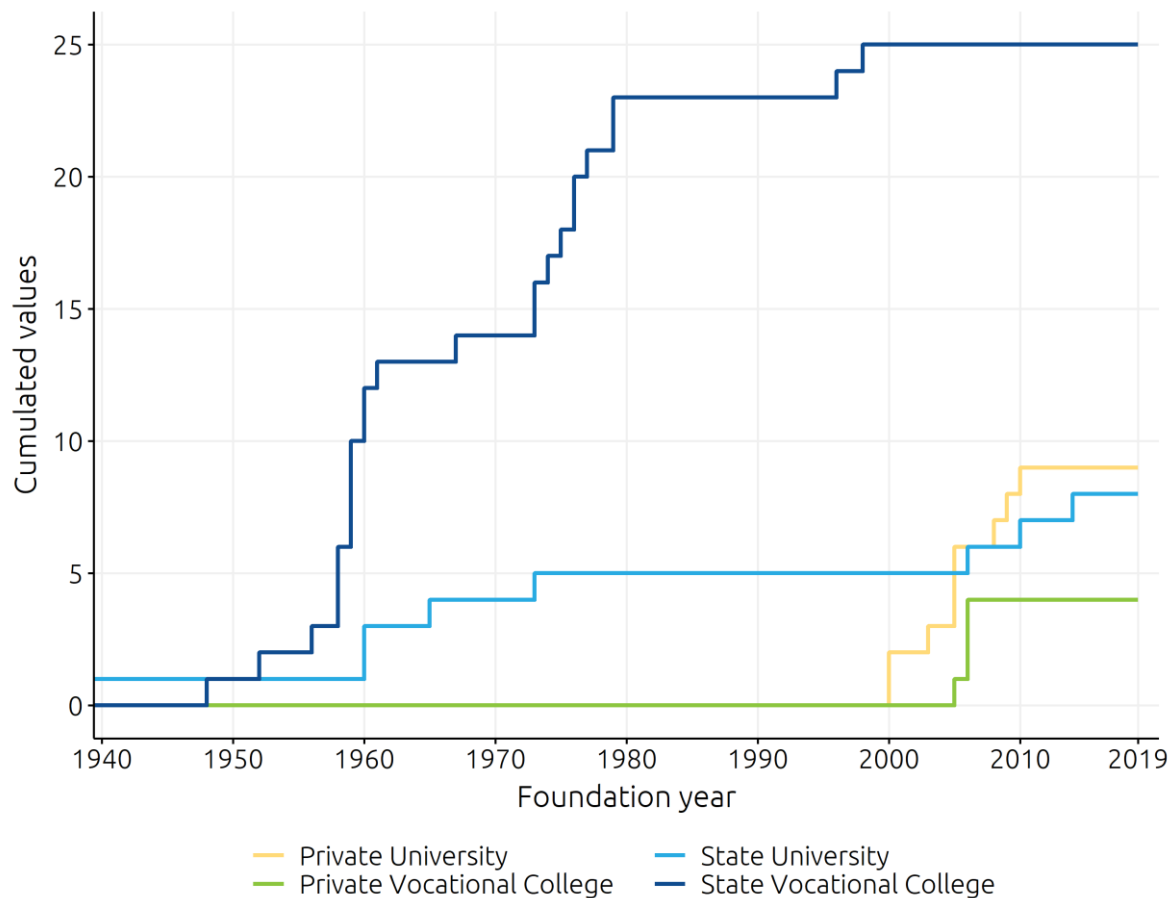
Note: Numbers reflect inclusion in ETER

Institutional history. Older and younger institutional types

Data on the HEI foundation year provide information on the history of Serbia's higher education and its evolution over time.

Figure 1 overleaf shows that the expansion of the system in terms of the number of HEIs is relatively recent. Interestingly, State Vocational Colleges have substantially increased to be established between the 1960s and 1980s during the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963–1992). The oldest Serbian university (University of Belgrade) dates back to 1905, also given that Serbia as an independent state was just admitted in the late 19th century. Until the 1960s, we can observe only three more State Universities that have been established, while we can observe a significant increase between 1960 and 1980 related to the socio-economic development of Serbia as core of Yugoslavia. During the years of the Balkan war, we can see a stagnation of further HEI establishments, while with the proclamation of the Republic of Serbia and after the war ended, a steady growth of newly founded HEIs can be observed. In particular, we can identify a significant growth of Private Universities, with the first ones occurring in 2000, and already overtaking State Universities in 2008.

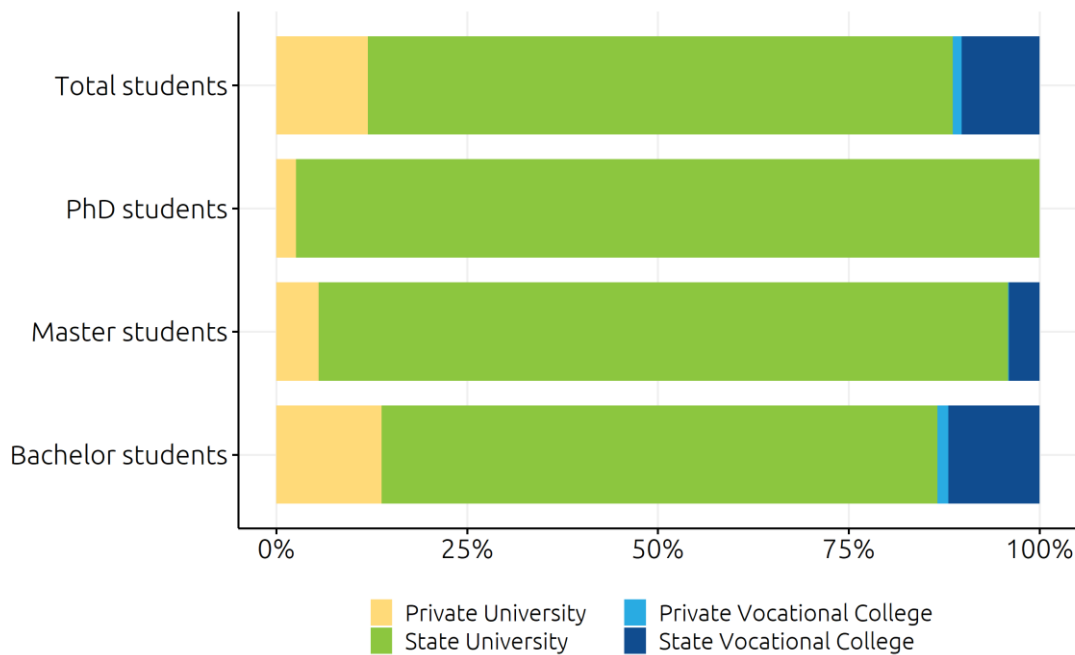
Figure 1. Foundation year of HEIs by type



How are students distributed?

While State Universities and Private Universities are almost equal in terms of the number of entities, State Universities massively outpace Private Universities but also State and Private Vocational Colleges in terms of the number of students enrolled. Actually, State Universities account for more than 75% of all students enrolled in the year 2019. This skewed distribution is even more pronounced for higher ISCED levels, i.e. climbing up to more than 90% for master students, and even 97% for PhD students. The latter underlines the substantial role of State Universities in a research context, while Private Universities play a very little role there. State Vocational Colleges and Private Universities have the highest share of Bachelor students (around 15%), but are still way behind universities. Private Vocational Colleges are negligible in terms of the number of students enrolled.

Figure 2. Students by level and type of HEI, 2019

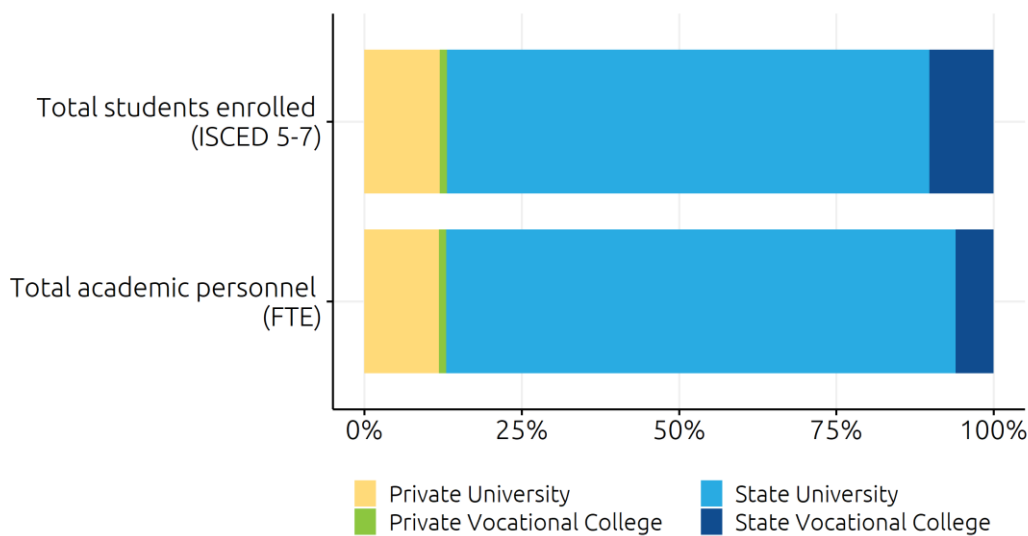


Note: Total students include ISCED 6-7

Academic personnel

As illustrated in Figure 3, in the year 2019 State Universities account for more than 80% of academic personnel of the whole HEI system, i.e. almost exactly corresponding to their share of students. This broadly corresponds to the fact also mentioned in the previous section that State Universities have an important research function.

Figure 3. Academic personnel and total students enrolled by type of HEI, 2019

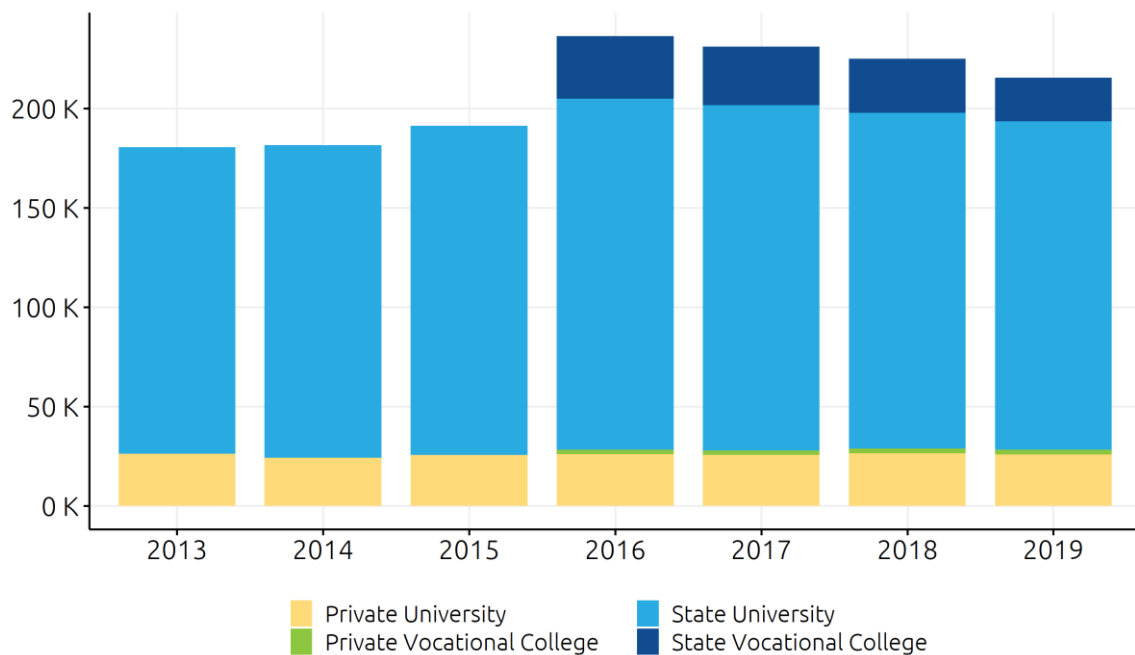


While for Private Universities and Private Vocational Colleges the share of students is almost exactly corresponding to total academic staff, we find a relatively lower share of academic staff in State Vocational Colleges. Note that data on financial resources are not available for Serbia.

Changing roles over time

Figure 4 illustrates changes over time in terms of students enrolled between 2013 and 2019 (no data for 2011 and 2012). We can observe a slight growth between the years 2014 and 2015, but then a steady decline until 2019 of about 8000 students (nearly a 10% decline of the 2016 total). This may be an indication of an increasing number of students that prefers to study abroad. Concerning the distribution between the two types public and private no significant changes have occurred (with public always above 80% of total students enrolled). For State Vocational Colleges (no data for 2013-2015), there is a clearly decreasing trend, both in absolute numbers and in shares of total students.

Figure 4. Share of students enrolled by institutional type



Note: No data available for Private and Public Vocational Colleges for 2013-2015



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