

# Abstract

## **The Flemish universities' salary policy applicable to their academic staff**

*The Court has examined how the Flemish universities set the salary scales applicable to their academic staff. It appeared that not a single university does this in accordance with the decree provisions. The prescribed review of previous experience, academic career services and qualifications was shown to be particularly at fault. Moreover, the universities' governing bodies scarcely account for their salary ranking decisions and sometimes depart from their own self-defined rules.*

### **Analysis of the salary policy**

The Court has examined the Flemish universities' salary policy applicable to their academic staff. Since 1st October 1999, the universities have become largely autonomous in this respect with the University decree, apart from the fact that they are under an obligation to account for their decisions. The audit covered the period from August 2000 to September 2001 and the eight Flemish university institutions.

### **Time limitation**

The decree did not give the universities sufficient time to set up and implement their own salary scale policy. Therefore, they often fell back on the existing principles for setting scales, instead of making full use of the newly acquired autonomy they had opted for. For instance, they generally decided to apply the principle of the immediately higher salary: a new university teacher earns a salary that is just a little higher than in his previous occupation. The Court pointed out that this principle sometimes results in unwanted, but really unequal treatment.

### **Non-compliance with the decree**

The institutions have not taken full advantage of the opportunity to reform radically the principles for setting salary scales. Moreover, the principle of the immediately higher salary is not in agreement with the principles laid down in the decree, since its enforcement rules out an actual evaluation of the previous experience, the professional career and the acquired qualifications. This results in a rather one-sided approach to the salary policy, as the universities only take into account the professional career, and even then, exclusively from a quantitative viewpoint.

### **Salary guidelines**

Rather than opting for individual salary ranking, most universities set up a salary guideline. This made it easier for them to account for their decisions. However, several guidelines do not meet the legal technical requirements or contain unacceptable methods, such as a systematic salary ranking from a "zero year". Moreover, the universities' governing bodies proved not always to be able to stick to their own guidelines.

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## **Insufficient accountability**

The great majority of the universities hardly account for their salary rankings. A few school institutions promised improvement.

### **Assistant profession**

When they had to set scales for assistant staff, all institutions fell back on the former salary regulations, which used to turn the length of time already worked automatically into seniority, without evaluating the acquired professional experience or qualifications. Apart from this, a fixed procedure for setting salary scales is often missing. In some universities, assistant professors were even granted a salary scale level without any formal decision being taken. The universities abide even less scrupulously by the obligation to account for their decisions as far as the assistant professors are concerned.

### **Minister's response**

Except for a few points, the Flemish Minister of Education agreed on the Court's findings. She promised to allow for longer implementation when introducing future changes in important regulations.