



Academic Freedom Monitor 2024

Analysis of *de facto*
state of academic
freedom in the EU –
Country overview

STUDY

Panel for the Future of Science and Technology



EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service

Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA)
PE 765.775 – April 2025

Academic Freedom Monitor 2024

Part II: Analysis of *de facto* state of academic freedom in the EU – Country overview

Academic freedom is widely recognised as a fundamental value of contemporary higher education and science, and as a prerequisite for well-functioning democratic societies. However, in recent years, major concerns have been expressed by various stakeholders about the state of academic freedom in the European Union. The European Parliament launched an annual EP Academic Freedom Monitor in 2022, to help improve the promotion and protection of academic freedom in the European Union. This report presents one of the two studies conducted in the 2024 edition.

This study firstly provides an updated overview of recent country-specific measurements of academic freedom across the EU. Secondly, it provides a country-specific analysis of the *de facto* state of academic freedom in 10 EU Member States. The study was conducted as a qualitative analysis of various data, with input from stakeholder organisations and academic experts.

On the basis of both studies, this report proposes EU-level policy options for possible legislative and non-legislative initiatives to support academic freedom in the EU.

AUTHOR

This study has been written by Peter Maassen, Jens Jungblut, Dennis Martinsen, and Veslemøy Øvrebø, University of Oslo, at the request of the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA) and managed by the Scientific Foresight Unit of the Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value, within the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (EPRS) of the Secretariat of the European Parliament.

ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBLE

Marika Armanovica, Scientific Foresight Unit

To contact the publisher, please e-mail stoa@europarl.europa.eu

LINGUISTIC VERSION

Original: EN

Manuscript completed in March 2025.

DISCLAIMER AND COPYRIGHT

This document is prepared for, and addressed to, the Members and staff of the European Parliament as background material to assist them in their parliamentary work. The content of the document is the sole responsibility of its author(s) and any opinions expressed herein should not be taken to represent an official position of the Parliament.

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy.

Brussels © European Union, 2025.

PE 765.775

ISBN: 978-92-848-2635-3

doi: 10.2861/4684244

QA-01-25-057-EN-N

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa> (STOA website)

<http://www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu> (intranet)

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank> (internet)

<http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)

Executive summary

Academic freedom is essential to the mission of higher education and research, to the principles of academia, in Europe and elsewhere, and as a prerequisite for well-functioning democratic societies. This insight is based on the broad recognition that universities, colleges and other academic organisations, such as research institutes, are key institutions in our societies. This is due both to the importance of scientific knowledge for the socio-economic, technological and cultural development of our societies and to the importance of academia as a central institution for maintaining and strengthening the democratic principles and institutions that underlie our societies.

Despite the broad recognition of academic freedom as a basic right and a fundamental value in academia, concerns have emerged about the *de facto* erosion of academic freedom in the European Union Member States. These concerns are expressed in intensifying debates about academic freedom and the increasing number of observed threats to and violations of academic freedom.

The existing indices and monitors of academic freedom and the academic literature suggest that there are legitimate concerns about the state of *de facto* academic freedom in the EU Member States. Nevertheless, due to a lack of agreement on a definition of academic freedom and, consequently, the absence of generally accepted indicators for assessing the state of academic freedom, there is currently no clear basis for identifying where and how the *de jure* and *de facto* protection of academic freedom in the EU Member States can and should be enhanced.

This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the developments of *de facto* academic freedom in the EU Member States. Therefore, it does not use one general definition of academic freedom, but instead identifies three basic dimensions of academic freedom: the freedom to conduct research, the freedom to teach and learn, and academic freedom of expression. The study also identifies several conditions for exercising academic freedom effectively, including the academic community's responsibility for guarding academic freedom, institutional autonomy, academic self-governance, and adequate academic labour and financial conditions.

The study provides an updated overview of EU Member States' scores on the Academic Freedom Index (AFI) and other measures of academic freedom in 2024. Furthermore, it analyses the main trends in *de facto* academic freedom in 10 EU Member States – Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Sweden – through a qualitative analysis of various data, with input from stakeholder organisations and academic experts.

There are several factors underlying the *de facto* erosion of academic freedom in the EU Member States. These include: changes in political systems with the increasing influence of new political parties and movements; intensifying geopolitical tensions and conflicts; the growing socio-economic importance of academic knowledge and its link to innovation; growing intra-academic tensions, conflicts, and pressures; and the growing use and impact of social media.

In the ten-country trend analyses, the study's focus has been on analysing the possible impact of the following factors:

- a. Government and politics
- b. Institutional leadership and management
- c. The academic community
- d. Civil society
- e. The private sector
- f. European and national security policies and concerns

The results of the study confirm that the state of *de facto* academic freedom across the EU continues to erode. While systematic and structural infringements of academic freedom occur only in Hungary, various threats to academic freedom are identified and discussed in most other EU Member States.

The most serious recent threats arise from political interference and the impact of security policies and considerations, including foreign interference. In addition, there are reports of various threats to academic freedom by institutional leaders and managers, while there is growing concern about the impact on academic freedom of attacks on dissenting voices, ideas and opinions within the academic community. Furthermore, attacks by civil society on academia have grown since the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing not only on vaccine scientists, but also on academics in other fields, such as climate change, migration studies, and gender studies. Finally, while the growing involvement of the private sector in academia is generally seen as positive, there is broad agreement that this involvement requires more transparent regulations and procedures, preferably at European level.

In addition to common trends in *de facto* academic freedom, significant differences can also be observed between EU Member States. There are, for example, various forms of pressure by governments and politicians on academic freedom. This pressure can take the form of direct interference in key responsibilities of the academic community, such as the management of study programmes. It can also take the form of indirect influence through changes in institutional autonomy, government funding or working conditions, and restrictions on academic self-governance. Moreover, the impact of institutional leadership and management on academic freedom is different in western European countries that implemented university governance reforms in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, such as Sweden, than in central and eastern European countries, such as Bulgaria and Croatia, where university governance reforms are more recent. Another example of inter-country differences in the EU concerns the possible impact of the private sector on academic freedom. There are large differences between European countries in the level of public funding of higher education and research, the main characteristics of the national economy in general and the private sector in particular, the role of private foundations in funding academic activities, and the traditions of cooperation between the private sector and academia. There are also important differences between EU Member States in terms of the nature of other threats to academic freedom.

While this study confirms that concerns about the state of *de facto* academic freedom in the EU are justified, there is a need to further strengthen the knowledge base on the main trends and threats to academic freedom in order to develop appropriate measures to counter the erosion of academic freedom in Europe. This is addressed in the set of policy options proposed on the basis of this research and the 'Overview of *de jure* protection of academic freedom', which was conducted in parallel for the EP Academic Freedom Monitor. These policy options identify measures that could prevent the further erosion of academic freedom in Europe, improve its legal protection, and raise awareness of the importance of academic freedom within the academic community and society as a whole. The proposed policy options include setting up a European platform on academic freedom; integrating academic freedom more effectively and consistently into EU higher education, research, development and innovation programmes; and establishing a European clearinghouse for the meta-analysis of existing research, data and other forms of relevant information on the state of academic freedom. For the further development and implementation of these policy options at European, national and institutional level, the active involvement of the academic community in the work of the EP Academic Freedom Monitor is crucial.

Table of contents

Executive summary	I
1. Key findings and policy options	1
1.1. Key findings	1
1.1.1. Introduction	1
1.1.2. Key findings: Updated overview of measurements	1
1.1.3. Key findings: Latest trends analysis	1
1.2. Joint policy options	3
2. Updated overview of academic freedom monitors	6
2.1. Introduction	6
2.1.1. Research design	6
2.1.2. Methodology	6
2.1.3. Data sources	7
2.2. Country reports	10
2.2.1. Updated 2024 country scores and findings	10
2.2.2. Austria	11
2.2.3. Belgium	12
2.2.4. Bulgaria	13
2.2.5. Croatia	14
2.2.6. Cyprus	15
2.2.7. Czechia	16
2.2.8. Denmark	17
2.2.9. Estonia	18
2.2.10. Finland	19
2.2.11. France	20
2.2.12. Germany	22

2.2.13. Greece	24
2.2.14. Hungary	26
2.2.15. Ireland	28
2.2.16. Italy	29
2.2.17. Latvia	30
2.2.18. Lithuania	31
2.2.19. Luxembourg	32
2.2.20. Malta	33
2.2.21. The Netherlands	34
2.2.22. Poland	37
2.2.23. Portugal	38
2.2.24. Romania	39
2.2.25. Slovakia	40
2.2.26. Slovenia	41
2.2.27. Spain	42
2.2.28. Sweden	44
2.3. Trends of academic freedom	45
2.3.1. State of play of academic freedom in the EU according to the Academic Freedom Index	45
3. Country-specific trends analysis	47
3.1. Introduction	47
3.1.1. Core dimensions of academic freedom	48
3.1.2. Objectives of this part of the study	51
3.2. Study design and methodology	52
3.2.1. Methodological approach	52
3.2.2. Academic freedom – definition and threats	57
3.3. Country-specific trends analysis	60

3.3.1. Bulgaria	60
3.3.2. Croatia	65
3.3.3. Germany	70
3.3.4. Greece	79
3.3.5. Ireland	84
3.3.6. Italy	88
3.3.7. Lithuania	93
3.3.8. Luxembourg	97
3.3.9. Slovakia	100
3.3.10. Sweden	104
4. Conclusions	110
Country-specific references	112
General references	128

1. Key findings and policy options

1.1. Key findings

1.1.1. Introduction

The 2024 edition of the European Parliament's Academic Freedom Monitor consists of two studies. The first study, 'Analysis of the State of *de facto* Academic Freedom in the EU', produced an updated overview of EU Member States' scores in the Academic Freedom Index (AFI) and other measures of academic freedom. The update does not include an assessment of the state of institutional autonomy since the 2023 scores from the EUA institutional autonomy scorecard (Privot et al., 2023) were not updated for 2024. Furthermore, the study analysed the main threats to academic freedom and their potential impact in 10 EU Member States – Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Sweden, through a qualitative analysis of various data, with input from stakeholder organisations and academic experts. The second study, 'Overview of De Jure Academic Freedom Protection', produced an overview of the constitutional legal provisions of academic freedom in all EU Member States and provided an in-depth analysis of the constitutional protection of academic freedom in four EU Member States. The report of the second study is published separately.

1.1.2. Key findings: Updated overview of measurements

Although the state of academic freedom in the European Union is generally better than in most global regions, international academic freedom monitors and assessments point out that there have been worrying trends in recent years. According to the 2024 Academic Freedom Index (AFI) update, the state of academic freedom in the EU deteriorated slightly between 2023 and 2024. Of the nine EU Member States with an academic freedom score below the EU average, only Greece and Poland have a higher score for 2024 than for 2023. The other seven Member States in this group, Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, Croatia, the Netherlands and Hungary, scored lower in the AFI 2024 update than in the AFI 2023. Five EU Member states – Austria, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, and Hungary – showed significant declines in the AFI over 2013–2023, with Hungary's situation being particularly worrying as it ranks in 2024 among the bottom 20–30% of countries in the world.

Furthermore, the Scholars at Risk (SAR) 2024 report presents violations of academic freedom in seven EU Member States, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain. Most of the reported cases concern how government and institutional have responded to academic and student actions in relation to the Gaza-Israel conflict. The SAR report points in this to specific challenges for academic freedom in the EU in relation to geopolitical developments.

1.1.3. Key findings: Latest trends analysis

An analysis of the main recent *de facto* trends regarding academic freedom in ten EU Member States did not reveal systemic and structural violations of academic freedom in any of the ten selected countries. At the same time, there are clear worries about the state of *de facto* academic freedom in most of these countries, with the main threats to academic freedom coming simultaneously from several sources.

The first source identified is undue government or political interference, which threatened academic freedom in most of the selected EU Member States. In some cases, these threats related to direct violations of the academic community's responsibility to safeguard academic freedom, for example, when political arguments were used to question the scientific nature of certain academic areas, such

as gender studies. In other cases, the interference was more indirect and consisted of making significant changes to the conditions under which academic freedom is to be exercised. This includes undue interference with institutional autonomy, changes in institutional governance structures that limit the involvement of staff and students in institutional decision-making on academic matters, the introduction of political constraints on public research funding, or deterioration of working conditions for academic staff.

A second source of threats to academic freedom is the possible impact of institutional leadership and management on academic freedom. The 2024 study revealed, for example, worrying trends in institutional human resources policies in cases where institutional academic employment decisions were driven by non-academic motives and criteria. Furthermore, in some higher education institutions, institutional leadership censored or banned academic activities, such as curricula in certain academic areas or seminars to be given by visiting scholars that were considered controversial. In addition, in several higher education institutions, certain institutional leadership responses to academic staff and student protests related to the Israel-Gaza conflict have been criticised as potentially threatening academic freedom. Another problem was the institutional adjustment of university governance structures, which in several cases eroded the conditions for academic self-governance. The study also found that in at least one EU Member State, institutional leadership played a role in malpractice in competition for academic positions with negative consequences for academic freedom. Finally, the study showed that institutional support for academics and students whose academic freedom has been violated or threatened is ineffective, insufficient or difficult to access in many higher education institutions.

A third source of potential threats to academic freedom comes from the academic community. The threats identified in the research came in the form of actions or pressure from staff and/or students aimed at silencing dissenting voices or certain scientific ideas, or gaining support for certain ideas or positions. Recent research into academic freedom in one of the selected countries shows that the number of academics who feel threatened by other academics or students in relation to their academic work is relatively small, but increasing. Although the term 'cancel culture' is sometimes used to refer to this issue, this research shows that the intra-academic source of threats to academic freedom includes not only attempts to 'cancel' other academics and their work or students, but also other forms of victimisation. Furthermore, during the monitoring period, intra-academic threats to academic freedom emerged related to dominant views in society on certain ideas, beliefs or value issues, such as gender equality. These threats were either related to formal rules and guidelines that conditioned adherence to certain values for access to specific public research funding programmes, or to pressure on academics to conform to certain political ideologies or dominant social values.

Furthermore, the research identified attacks by societal actors or groups on individual academics or academic groups as a fourth source of threats to academic freedom. Its purpose is to end academic activities or to silence academic voices that do not align with the worldview of a specific social group or network. These types of attacks largely take place via social media, but also include stalking or physical violence. Recent studies on academic freedom in Germany and Sweden suggest that these attacks by individual actors or groups can have serious consequences for the victims, with possible consequences for performance and emotions, and for behavior, including self-censorship. Attacks on academic freedom originating from society have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic and no longer primarily target virologists and medical researchers and professionals, but also academics in other areas, such as climate change, security and migration studies.

A fifth source of potential threats to academic freedom is the impact of private sector actors. This source was identified as a threat to academic freedom in previous EP academic freedom monitor studies. Although this research found no new evidence of a negative impact of the private sector on academic freedom in the selected countries, the relationship between academia and the private sector, especially in the area of research funding, is intensifying, as shown recent Swedish studies on academic freedom. Collaboration between academia and the private sector takes place mainly in

the areas of STEM and life sciences and is generally productive and positive. At the same time, previous studies by the EP Academic Freedom Monitor and recent Swedish studies have highlighted the lack of effective and transparent regulations and guidelines for this collaboration. These studies have also identified potential threats to academic freedom when it comes to defining research problems, the specific results to be produced, the ownership of research results, and the open accessibility of the results to be published.

A relatively new source of potential threats to academic freedom are European and national security issues and policies that have arisen as a result of increased geopolitical tensions, the international security situation, and fears of foreign interference¹ in European academia. The security concerns have arisen mainly in relation to the risks attached to academic collaborations with China and other countries that pose a potential security risk. These concerns may increasingly affect academic freedom due to the restrictions contained in specific policies and regulations related to security risks. Examples include responsible internationalisation, which introduces restrictions on international academic mobility, co-publishing and collaboration, the dual use of research, which aims to connect military and societal-oriented research, and knowledge export policies, which introduce regulations to assess which knowledge cannot be shared with third countries.

1.2. Joint policy options

The joint policy options presented in this report are developed on the basis of the two EP Academic Freedom Monitor studies 'Analysis of *de facto* state of Academic Freedom in the EU - country overview' presented in this report, and 'Overview of *de jure* Academic Freedom protection', conducted in 2024 at the request of the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA). The joint policy options take into account the results of both studies, and are presented in this report and the report of the study 'Overview of *de jure* Academic Freedom protection', which is published separately².

Policy option 1: Exploring further the scope and nature of academic freedom as an EU fundamental right

All EU actions, including those proposed in the policy options below, will have to comply with the Article 13 CFR standard of academic freedom. Given the scarcity of authoritative sources on the scope and nature of this freedom in EU law, its key dimensions could be further clarified. Such work should be differentiated from work on legislative definitions of academic freedom as well as from attempts to define academic freedom for monitoring or other purposes.

The constitutional traditions common to the EU Member States will have to inform the EU standard based on Article 52(4) CFR of the Charter referring to those traditions. The four in-depth case studies conducted in the *de jure* report might provide a point of reference for future research. The analysis of the *de jure* protection of academic freedom across the EU Member States may be a source of inspiration for identifying key challenges to academic freedom in national constitutional law debates that should be addressed also in EU law. It might also inform debates about future normative proposals, highlighting effective solutions to such challenges that have already emerged in national jurisdictions.

¹ Foreign interference is understood in this study as 'illegitimate interference by foreign powers in the democratic and political processes of the EU and its Member States'

(see: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2024/760355/EPRS_ATA\(2024\)760355_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2024/760355/EPRS_ATA(2024)760355_EN.pdf).)

² Kosta, V. and Ceran, O. (2025). Overview of *de jure* academic freedom protection. Brussels: Report at the request of the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA), European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2025/765776/EPRS_STU\(2025\)765776_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2025/765776/EPRS_STU(2025)765776_EN.pdf)

Policy option 2: Strengthening existing European legal frameworks for promoting and protecting academic freedom

Strengthened legal protection of academic freedom at European level can be expected to support academics, students, and academic organisations in their internal and external academic activities, while laying down the basic dimensions of academic freedom that EU Member State governments and other governance bodies should uphold within the applicable legal frameworks. New proposals on the promotion and protection of academic freedom could explore different strands of EU competences (education, research, internal market).

In order to determine which further steps might be appropriate and effective, an evaluation of all follow-up actions undertaken in response to the EP resolution of 17 January 2024 on the promotion of the freedom of scientific research in the EU would be essential. Furthermore, all initiatives at the EU level must be appropriately coordinated. In addition, appropriate attention could be given to the potential avenues to promote and protect (aspects of) academic freedom under the already existing legal framework. Any legislative attempts at an EU definition of academic freedom should remain sensitive to the evolving nature and context-dependency of academic freedom challenges.

Policy option 3: Enhancing the awareness of definitions and interpretations of academic freedom

For making valid cross-country comparisons of the state of academic freedom in the EU Member States it is important to identify common interpretations across the EU of its key dimensions and the conditions under which it is to be exercised as optimally as possible. The case studies of the *de jure* report show the variance of academic freedom definitions at national constitutional level, while the *de facto* trend report shows varieties among EU Member States in recent academic freedom trends. However, further work needs to be conducted in this regard. Such work can highlight issues that can be interpreted as a challenge to academic freedom and with respect to which EU-level action could be considered. Additionally, it is essential that the EP Monitor contributes to raising awareness at European universities, colleges, and research institutes among individual staff members and students of the importance of academic freedom for their professional activities, including the practical implications.

Policy option 4: Developing of the EP Academic Freedom Monitor

The current format of the EP Academic Freedom Monitor needs further development and expansion in its role as a European Parliament tool for ambitions to come to fruition. At the current stage, the EP Monitor cannot cover all relevant themes and aspects due to the limitations of existing data and the specific definitions and methodology employed in the present studies. Specific aspects that have been identified in the current studies that need more attention include:

- Academic freedom for students, in terms of freedom to study and students' role in research and institutional governance and its relationship with other fundamental rights, such as the right to education. Such an expansion implies that the EP Monitor would more adequately cover the overall relation of academic freedom to teaching and student learning. It would also reflect the growing importance for higher education of the Erasmus+ programme, and the strategy of the European Commission with respect to the future of higher education in Europe.
- The academic freedom of doctoral students, early career researchers, and non-tenured academic staff as well as researchers from underrepresented groups, who have a precarious position in the academic system. They might be more vulnerable to infringements of academic freedom, especially if they are threatened with career restrictions. Valid data that is focused specifically on this group is hardly available at the current time.

- Data concerning self-censorship and victimisation effects, which at this stage are insufficiently covered in existing academic freedom monitoring and measurement activities.
- The introduction of transparent and effective guidelines and regulations for the intensifying involvement of the private sector in the governance, organisation and funding of academic activities.
- Possible infringements on academic freedom due to EU and national policies and regulations with respect to security risks and the international security situation, and related restrictions on public funding of research, academic publishing of research results, and international academic collaboration and exchange.
- The understanding(s) of positive obligations inherent in academic freedom protection, which seem to vary significantly across the EU and at this stage remain relatively under-discussed.

Policy option 5: Better integration of academic freedom into EU higher education, research, development and innovation

The EU has established, through a range of initiatives, a key role in research and education, academic exchange and other academic activities in Europe. These initiatives are complementary to the backbone of national and regional higher education and research policies and programmes. Given their impact it is highly appropriate that the Horizon Europe Regulation states that, 'the Programme should promote the respect of academic freedom in all countries benefiting from its funds' (Recital 72), while under the Erasmus+ programme 'it should be ensured that academic freedom is respected by the countries receiving funds' (Recital 64). However, although these recitals might support the interpretation of the regulations, there is no authoritative guidance as to how to understand them in the context of the programmes. It can be recommended to embed academic freedom more strongly in the enacting terms of the legal instruments in question, but their implementation would crucially depend on policy option 1 (see above) seeking a sharpened understanding of what the Article 13 CFR standard entails.

The requirements for institutional policies, procedures and support structures to safeguard academic freedom could be strengthened as a condition for obtaining EU research and/or education funding. However, any such conditions need to remain sensitive to the diversity of national frameworks.

Policy option 6: Conducting meta-analysis of academic freedom data

Meta-analysis of academic freedom data in Europe could be stimulated by creating an Academic Freedom Clearinghouse. Furthermore, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency could initiate work on the state of academic freedom, within the Agency's current mandate.

Policy option 7: Enhancing the knowledge basis and deepening understanding

Understanding of different dimensions of academic freedom and its protection can be strengthened, for example, through pan-European surveys of academics, leaders, and authorities, further studies on the relationship between legal protections and practice, and dedicated EU-funded research projects under Horizon Europe or FP10.

2. Updated overview of academic freedom monitors

2.1. Introduction

The European Parliament Academic Freedom Monitor 2024 intends to contribute to a better understanding of current threats to academic freedom in the EU Member States, and ways in which the protection and promotion of academic freedom can be strengthened. It builds on the previous studies commissioned by the European Parliament in the framework of the EP Academic Freedom Monitor (Kováts and Rónay, 2023; Maassen et al., 2023; Craciun et al. 2024).

The first part of the report consists of a systematic update of data on academic freedom in the 27 EU Member states from already existing monitoring projects. The focus is on new measurements of academic freedom since the independent analysis provided by Craciun et al. (2024) for the European Parliament. The current report is to be read with its companion study in the EP Academic Freedom Monitor 2024 on the legal protection of academic freedom in the EU Member States, entitled 'Overview of De Jure Academic Freedom Protection' undertaken by Professor Vasiliki Kosta and Olga Ceran, University of Leiden, the Netherlands.

The structure of this part of the report is as follows.

Section 2.1 provides an overview of the research design of the first part of study which is based on desk research. In addition, the results of the study were reviewed by a sounding board of higher education stakeholders whose input was used to validate and enrich the study.

Section 2.2 provides a synthesis of existing measurements of academic freedom in the 27 EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. In this section we offer country fact sheets for each EU Member State that synthesise existing measurements of academic freedom in the respective country.

Section 2.3 builds on the findings from the previous subsection 2.2 and identifies the major recurring challenges to academic freedom in the European Union. The trends analysis maps out the groups of countries who witness specific threats related to the various dimensions of academic freedom. The analysis also identifies those countries who score high on academic freedom measurements so that peer learning can occur. The identified trends were discussed with a group of experts on academic freedom in an online consultation.

2.1.1. Research design

Considering the aims, the study is designed to provide an update on the state of academic freedom in each of the 27 EU Member States based on recent monitoring scores and case interpretations. These sections provides a brief overview of the methodology and the data sources employed.

2.1.2. Methodology

The methodology of the current study is based on desk research. Overall, the report builds on the efforts of previous academic freedom studies from the European Parliament. Specifically, the study providing an overview of existing conceptualisations and monitoring efforts of academic freedom (Kováts and Rónay, 2023) the study providing an overview of *de facto* trends and developments in academic freedom in the EU (Maassen et al., 2023), and the update studies conducted in 2023 (Craciun et al., 2024).

In the first phase of the research, desk research was used. To provide an update on the state of academic freedom in each of the 27 EU Member States we drew on the latest existing measures to

monitor the state of academic freedom. We collected and synthesised academic freedom measurements for each EU Member State from the latest releases of the Academic Freedom Index, the Freedom in the World Report of Freedom House. Where available, the quantitative scores were supplemented with reports from the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project. These data sources are presented and discussed in the next section (see Section 2.1.3).

In the second phase of the research, we consulted experts on academic freedom. The aim of the consultation was to gather expert assessments on what are the major concerns and threats regarding academic freedom in EU Member States. The consultation drew on the synthesis of findings from the country reports (see Section 2.2) from which we extracted both recurrent threats to academic freedom identified in different Member States and concerning threats to academic freedom that need to be addressed urgently. The expert consultation sought to triangulate the findings of the research team and improve the comprehensiveness and depth of the findings. In addition, we asked experts to propose and assess various legislative and non-legislative policy options that would help to enhance protections of academic freedom in EU Member States.

In the third phase of the research, we validated and enriched our findings through a sounding board of higher education stakeholders. The sounding board was composed of cross-sectorial European academic associations representing both education and research. The members of the sounding board came from All European Academics (ALLEA), the European Association of Universities (EUA), European Students Union (ESU), Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE), Young Academy of Europe (YAE), the European Council for Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc), the League of European Research Universities (LERU), The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities (The Guild), Science Europe, Scholars at Risk (SAR), and the Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research (CESAER). The members of the sounding board provided input on emerging threats and developments on academic freedom as well as policy options to address these from the perspective of the organisations they represent.

2.1.3. Data sources

The country reports presented in this part of the report are part of the European Parliament Academic Freedom Monitor 2024. They present an overview of the most recent scores and findings on Academic Freedom for each EU Member State from selected monitors. They update the country reports published in the Synthesis part of the EP Academic Freedom Monitor 2023 (Craciun et al., 2024, pp. 50–53)³.

This part of the report is based on the selected monitoring projects aimed at assessing the state of academic freedom. Each individual data source has its own strengths and limitations in terms of factors such as geographical coverage, regularity of reporting, type of data used⁴, contextual specificity, breadth, and depth in covering all the elements of academic freedom, and consideration of how they apply to different members of the academic community. As a previous study for the European Parliament by Kováts and Rónay (2023) provides an extensive discussion of efforts to assess academic freedom, we will not engage in an extensive analysis of monitoring methodologies here. Instead, we will briefly describe each of the monitors consulted.

³ In addition to the country reports on all EU Member States referred to here, the EP Academic Freedom Monitor 2023 also contained country reports on 10 selected EU Member States in which the main trends on *de facto* academic freedom in these countries were presented (Craciun et al., 2024).

⁴ For a detailed overview of the types of data that can be employed to monitor academic freedom see Spannagel (2020) who provides an extensive discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of expert assessments, opinion data, events data, institutional self-assessments, and *de jure* assessments.

Academic Freedom Index

The Academic Freedom Index (AFI) is a recurring global index that assesses levels of academic freedom based on yearly expert assessments. The AFI is based on time-series data collected through the V-Dem Project⁵. V-Dem provides up-to-date multidimensional and disaggregated measurements on various dimensions democracy in 179 countries and territories around the world based on the assessment of more than 2000 country experts. Some of the data collected to assess the health of democracies is related to academic freedom. Five V-Dem indicators are used by AFI to provide a global comparison on how countries are faring in terms of academic freedom: freedom to research and teach, freedom of academic exchange and dissemination, institutional autonomy, campus integrity, and freedom of academic and cultural expression. These indicators are coded by country experts on a 0-4 scale on a country-year basis starting from 1900 and then aggregated into the index which has a value between 0-1 (Spannagel and Kinzelbach, 2022)⁶. The dataset used for the current report is V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedage et al., 2024). It is important to notice that each year the experts involved assess the state of academic freedom in their country of expertise anew. This can lead to small differences in scores between the AFI updates. E.g. the score for a specific country for 2021 in the AFI 2024 update might be slightly lower or higher than the score for that country presented in the original AFI report on 2021.

The general score for academic freedom in the AFI is an index that ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 constitutes no respect of academic freedom and 1 constitutes full respect of academic freedom in the country. The scores for the other categories in AFI range from 0 to 4, with 0 representing the lowest score and 4 the highest. In the AFI country tables presented below, grey coloured indicators indicate no change in score compared to the previous year. With pink we have highlighted the indicators where we see a downward change compared to the previous year, with green we have highlighted the indicators where we see an upward change compared to the previous year. The indicated change refers to the direction of change and is not necessarily statistically significant.

EUA Autonomy Scorecard

The EUA Autonomy Scorecard is a comparative *de jure* analysis of institutional autonomy in European higher education systems that published its fourth edition in 2023. Institutional autonomy is considered an important enabling condition for academic freedom (Maassen et al., 2023). The latest edition of the EUA scorecard includes an analysis of 35 European higher education systems including a novel analysis of academic freedom protections in national legislation. For comparison, EUA Autonomy Scorecard scores for this report were obtained from its third (Pruvot and Estermann, 2017) and fourth editions (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023). These reports are based on data collected in 2015 and 2021-2022, respectively. Since there is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard, the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard presented in the synthesised country reports (see also Craciun et al., 2024) are not included in this report.

Freedom in the World Report

The Freedom in the World Report (Freedom House, 2024) is a yearly global comparative overview of political rights and civil liberties providing both quantitative indicators and narrative accounts. The assessment of each country is conducted by external analysts on the basis of "a broad range of sources, including news articles, academic analyses, reports from nongovernmental organisations,

⁵ More information on the data collection methods used by V-Dem can be found here: <https://v-dem.net/>. V-Dem datasets are open access and can be downloaded from the project website.

⁶ For a detailed description of the AFI and its indicators, see Spannagel and Kinzelbach (2022).

individual professional contacts, and on-the-ground research" (Freedom House, 2024)⁷ and reviewed by expert advisors and regional specialists for validation purposes. Freedom House has been conducting this assessment for the last 50 years. The scores presented in the country studies of this report were collected specifically for the question, "Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?".

Academic Freedom Monitoring Project (Scholars at Risk)

The Academic Freedom Monitoring Project (SAR, 2024) is a database that aggregates incidents of academic freedom or human right infringements affecting academic communities. The database only contains records of hard repression against academic freedom such as killings/violence/disappearances, wrongful imprisonment/detention, wrongful prosecution, restrictions on travel or movement, retaliatory discharge/loss of position/expulsion from study, and other significant events related to academic freedom infringements that affect the higher education community⁸. The database was searched for incidents affecting academic freedom in EU Member States from the July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. Additional accounts of EU Member States were sought in the 2024 edition of Free to Think (SAR, 2024), an annual report by Scholars at Risk, to check whether threats to academic freedom were reported in the geographic scope of interest to this study. Because the type of cases recorded by Scholars at Risk is not the main type of threat to academic freedom in EU Member States, the data used from this source is limited. Still, the events data gathered from this source provides a qualitative account of worrying academic freedom developments in EU Member States, in the period recorded especially in relation to students and staff protests concerning the Gaza-Israel conflict. The aim was to identify possible recurring threats so as to identify relevant policy options.

⁷ For a detailed account of the methodology used in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in the World Report, see: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/FIW_2024%20MethodologyPDF.pdf

For a general presentation of Freedom in the World Research Methodology, see:

<https://freedomhouse.org/reports/freedom-world/freedom-world-research-methodology>

⁸ More details about how the data is collected and validated can be found here: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/actions/academic-freedom-monitoring-project/>

2.2. Country reports

2.2.1. Updated 2024 country scores and findings

In this section, we present country scores from the latest editions of the Academic Freedom Index (Spannagel and Kinzelbach, 2022; Coppedage et al., 2023, 2024; Kinzelbach et al., 2024), the Freedom in the World Report (Freedom House, 2022; 2023, 2024), and cases presented in the Scholars at Risk 2024 report 'Free to Think' (SAR, 2024) involving EU Member States. These sources of data were described in Section 2.1.3.

Use of colors in tables: In the AFI country tables presented below, grey coloured indicators indicate no change in score compared to the previous year. With pink we have highlighted the indicators where we see a downward change compared to the previous year, with green we have highlighted the indicators where we see an upward change compared to the previous year. The indicated change refers to the direction of change and is not necessarily statistically significant

2.2.2. Austria

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Austria are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Austria: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Austria – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.96	0.91	0.87
Freedom to research and teach	3.77	3.25	3.11
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.84	3.64	3.52
Institutional autonomy	3.48	3.48	3.11
Campus integrity	3.80	3.62	3.48
Academic and cultural expression	3.73	3.73	3.73

Source: V-Dem Version14 (Coppedage et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

According to the AFI, Austria is in the top 10–20% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). At the same time, Austria is marked red in the 2024 AFI update which indicates that there has been a statistically significant decreasing overall change in Austria's AFI scores over the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024, p. 10). This indicates that the negative trend in different AFI indicators on *de facto* academic freedom in Austria (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute, 2023) as referred to in the EP Academic Freedom Monitor 2023 report (Craciun et al., 2024, pp. 26–27) has further deteriorated.

The score for Austria on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "academic freedom is generally upheld, and the educational system is free from extensive political indoctrination" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Austria presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Privot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no cases or specific incidents of academic infringement in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024 in Austria.

2.2.3. Belgium

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Belgium are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Belgium: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Belgium – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.96	0.97	0.97
Freedom to research and teach	3.82	3.82	3.82
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.88	3.92	3.92
Institutional autonomy	3.64	3.64	3.64
Campus integrity	3.64	3.83	3.63
Academic and cultural expression	3.51	3.78	3.78

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Belgium is in the top 10% of countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach, et al., 2024), ranked 3rd of 179 countries included in the AFI 2024 update. Recent AFI scores for Belgium are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade (Kinzelbach, et al. 2024).

The score for Belgium on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "The government does not restrict academic freedom. Schools are free from political indoctrination, and there are no significant impediments to scholarly research or discussion" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Belgium, that is, Flanders and Wallonia, presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Belgium in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.4. Bulgaria

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Bulgaria are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Bulgaria: Academic Freedom Index

Bulgaria – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.87	0.85	0.84
Freedom to research and teach	3.61	3.31	3.20
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.35	3.29	3.22
Institutional autonomy	3.26	3.05	3.05
Campus integrity	3.33	3.36	3.36
Academic and cultural expression	2.86	3.63	3.63

Source: V-Dem Version14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

According to the AFI, Bulgaria is in the top 20–30% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Bulgaria are generally stable, with the general score slowly, but not significantly decreasing since 2021. However, there is a significant change reported between 2012–2022 in the freedom of academic exchange and dissemination (–0,451) (FAU Erlangen–Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute, 2023). For the rest of the indicators no significant change in the last decade is reported.

The score for Bulgaria on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is generally upheld in practice" (Freedom House, 2024).

Bulgaria is not included in the EUA Autonomy Scorecard.

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Bulgaria in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.5. Croatia

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Croatia are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Croatia: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Croatia – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.87	0.85	0.80
Freedom to research and teach	3.27	2.92	2.92
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.36	3.47	3.32
Institutional autonomy	3.24	3.25	2.89
Campus integrity	3.79	3.79	3.60
Academic and cultural expression	2.85	2.70	2.82

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

According to the AFI, Croatia is in the top 30–40% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach, Lindberg, Pelke and Spannagel, 2023). Recent AFI scores for Croatia are generally stable with the general score slowly, but not significantly decreasing since 2021. However, there is a significant decrease reported between 2012–2022 in the freedom of academic and cultural expression (-0,49) (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute, 2023). For the rest of the indicators no significant change in the last decade is reported.

The score for Croatia on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 3 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "While there are generally no overt restrictions on speech in classrooms, critics continue to allege inappropriate political interference at all levels of education" (Freedom House, 2024). The same concern was raised for Croatia in 2022 and 2023.

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Croatia presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Croatia in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.6. Cyprus

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Cyprus are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Cyprus: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Cyprus - Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.92	0.92	0.92
Freedom to research and teach	3.56	3.56	3.75
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.75	3.75	3.75
Institutional autonomy	3.51	3.51	3.17
Campus integrity	3.42	3.44	3.44
Academic and cultural expression	3.33	3.33	3.33

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

According to the AFI, Cyprus is in the top 10% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Cyprus are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Cyprus on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 3 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is respected in Cyprus. However, state schools use textbooks containing negative language about Turkish Cypriots and Turkey, and there is pressure from elements of the political system regarding schools' treatment of sensitive historical and unification-related issues" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Cyprus presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Privot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Cyprus in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.7. Czechia

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Czechia are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Czechia: Academic Freedom Index (2021-2023 scores)

Czechia – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.93	0.98	0.98
Freedom to research and teach	3.59	3.86	3.86
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.58	3.91	3.91
Institutional autonomy	3.59	3.59	3.73
Campus integrity	3.91	3.91	3.91
Academic and cultural expression	3.35	3.83	3.71

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Czechia is in the top 10% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024), ranked 1st of 179 countries included in the AFI 2024 update, as was its rank in 2023 (Kinzelbach et al., 2023). Recent AFI scores for Czechia are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Czechia on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is respected. Ceremonial presidential approval is required for academic positions" (Freedom House, 2024). The same was reported in 2022 and 2023 (Freedom House, 2022, 2023).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Czechia presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Czechia in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.8. Denmark

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Denmark are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Denmark: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Denmark – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.92	0.91	0.89
Freedom to research and teach	3.59	3.59	3.59
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.56	3.56	3.56
Institutional autonomy	2.81	2.76	2.85
Campus integrity	3.90	3.76	3.35
Academic and cultural expression	3.73	3.73	3.73

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Denmark is in the top 10–20% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024), with the general score slowly, but not significantly decreasing since 2021. Recent AFI scores for Denmark are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Denmark on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World monitor is 4 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023 (Freedom House, 2022, 2023). According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is generally respected" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Denmark presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Privot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Denmark in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.9. Estonia

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Estonia are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Estonia: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Estonia – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.96	0.97	0.97
Freedom to research and teach	3.58	3.87	3.87
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.89	3.82	3.82
Institutional autonomy	3.43	3.43	3.43
Campus integrity	3.94	3.94	3.94
Academic and cultural expression	3.79	3.79	3.79

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Estonia is in the top 10% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024) and was ranked 2nd of 179 countries included in the AFI 2023 and 2024 updates (Kinzelbach et al., 2023). Recent AFI scores for Estonia are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Estonia on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World monitor is 4 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is generally respected, though a recently adopted law aimed at establishing Estonian as the language of instruction in all schools may impact individual rights" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Estonia presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Privot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Estonia in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.10. Finland

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Finland are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Finland: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Finland - Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.94	0.94	0.93
Freedom to research and teach	3.51	3.51	3.50
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.82	3.82	3.67
Institutional autonomy	2.75	2.94	2.94
Campus integrity	3.89	3.89	3.89
Academic and cultural expression	3.81	3.81	3.81

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Finland is in the top 10% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Finland are generally stable, with no statistically significant changes over the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Finland on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is generally respected" (Freedom House, 2024). The same was reported in the previous years (Freedom House, 2022, 2023).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Finland presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Finland in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.11. France

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for France are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. France: Academic Freedom Index (2021-2023 scores)

France - Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.88	0.90	0.90
Freedom to research and teach	3.67	3.67	3.67
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.21	3.49	3.49
Institutional autonomy	2.65	2.65	2.65
Campus integrity	3.41	3.41	3.41
Academic and cultural expression	3.86	3.86	3.86

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

France is in the top 10-20% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for France are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for France on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0-4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "There are no formal restrictions on academic freedom in France" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for France presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports two cases of academic freedom attacks in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, in France.

The first report refers to a case where police forcibly removed pro-Palestinian student protesters who had established a tent encampment and were peacefully protesting at Sorbonne University (SAR, 2024)⁹. Scholars at Risk indicates that it is concerned about this being a case of forcible removing peaceful student protesters from campus.

The second report refers to Professor Abu Sittah, rector of the University of Glasgow, United Kingdom, being denied entry to France, where he was scheduled to speak to France's Senate. French officials stated that Abu Sittah was barred due to Germany requesting a one-year ban on his entrance to all countries in the Schengen Area. (SAR, 2024)¹⁰. Scholars at Risk indicated that it is concerned about public authorities denying an academic entry to their country in an apparent effort

⁹ See: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-04-29-sorbonne-university/>

¹⁰ See: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-04-12-university-of-glasgow/>. See also section 2.2.12. on Germany.

to restrict or retaliate against his nonviolent exercise of academic freedom and freedom of speech – conduct which is protected by international human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which France is a signatory.

2.2.12. Germany

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Germany are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Germany: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Germany – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.97	0.96	0.93
Freedom to research and teach	3.89	3.89	3.62
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.91	3.91	3.91
Institutional autonomy	3.26	3.01	3.01
Campus integrity	3.82	3.82	3.46
Academic and cultural expression	3.48	3.48	3.48

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

According to the AFI 2024 update, Germany is in the top 10% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Germany show a decreasing trend, even though there has not been a statistically significant change in the last decade (Kinzelbach, Lindberg, Pelke and Spannagel, 2023).

The score for Germany on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4, the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is generally respected, though legal prohibitions on extremist speech are enforceable in educational settings" (Freedom House, 2024). The same was reported in the previous years (Freedom House, 2022, 2023).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Germany that is, the states of Brandenburg, Hessen and North Rhine–Westphalia, presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al. 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports three cases of academic freedom attacks in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, in Germany¹¹.

The first case report refers to Professor Abu Sittah, rector of the University of Glasgow, United Kingdom, being denied entry to Germany scheduled to speak at a pro-Palestinian event later that day in Berlin. Germany requested a one-year ban on Professor Abu Sittah's entrance to all countries in the Schengen Area. (SAR, 2024)¹². Scholars at Risk indicated that it is concerned about public authorities denying an academic entry to their country in an apparent effort to restrict or retaliate against his nonviolent exercise of academic freedom and freedom of speech – conduct which is

¹¹ For more information on academic freedom trends in Germany in relation to the Gaza-Israel conflict, see the country-specific section (3.3.3) on Germany in of this report.

¹² <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-04-12-university-of-glasgow/>

protected by international human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Germany is a signatory.

The second report refers to a case the University of Cologne (UoC) announced the withdrawal of its 2024 Albertus Magnus Professorship because the intended recipient, Nancy Fraser, a professor of philosophy at The New School, had previously signed a letter in support of Palestine (SAR, 2024)¹³. Scholars at Risk indicates that it is concerned about the withdrawal of an academic position in retaliation for the peaceful exercise of freedom of expression.

The third case concerns the announcement by the Max Planck Institute (MPG) for Social Anthropology that it had terminated the contract of Ghassan Hage, an Australian-Lebanese professor and anthropologist, in apparent retaliation for pro-Palestine comments that he made on social media and his support of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel (SAR, 2024)¹⁴. Scholars at Risk indicates that it is concerned about the arbitrary dismissal of a scholar for non-violently exercising his right to freedom of expression – conduct that is expressly protected by international human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Germany is a party.

¹³ See: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-04-05-university-of-cologne-the-new-school/>

¹⁴ See: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-02-07-max-planck-institute-for-social-anthropology/>

2.2.13. Greece

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Greece are presented in Table 12.

Table 12. Greece: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Greece – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.79	0.79	0.78
Freedom to research and teach	3.28	3.30	3.30
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.36	3.36	3.36
Institutional autonomy	2.79	2.79	2.68
Campus integrity	2.68	2.75	2.79
Academic and cultural expression	2.88	2.88	2.77

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Greece is in the top 40–50% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Greece are generally stable. However, if we look at the developments in the last decade there is a significant change reported between 2012–2022 in the freedom of academic and cultural expression (-0.947) (FAU Erlangen–Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute, 2023). For the rest of the indicators no significant change in the last decade is reported.

The score for Greece on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4, the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "There are no significant constraints on academic freedom in Greece, and the educational system is free of political indoctrination. A 2021 law introduced police forces to some university campuses in an effort to fight crime, a long-standing problem in some institutions. Delays in the implementation of the policy reflected the government's ambivalence in light of protests and violence in opposition to such deployments" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Greece presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al. 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

In this section, we present any qualitative country reports of academic freedom threats, infringements or violations from the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project published in 2024. This source of data was described in Section 2.1.3 .

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports two cases of academic freedom attacks in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, in Greece.

The two reports refer to two incidents of raiding and vandalising an administration building at the National Technical University of Athens by a large group of hooded assailants, reportedly including

several students (SAR, 2024)¹⁵. Scholars at Risk expresses its concern about violent and destructive attacks on campus, apparently intended to prevent the functioning of a higher education institution.

¹⁵ See: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-01-15-national-technical-university-of-athens/>; and: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-01-16-national-technical-university-of-athens/>

2.2.14. Hungary

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Hungary are presented in Table 13.

Table 13. Hungary: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Hungary - Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.37	0.34	0.30
Freedom to research and teach	1.68	1.68	1.50
Academic exchange and dissemination	2.31	2.25	2.00
Institutional autonomy	0.93	0.73	0.73
Campus integrity	2.74	2.74	2.74
Academic and cultural expression	1.86	1.79	1.77

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Hungary is in the bottom 20–30% of countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Hungary is marked red in the AFI 2024 update, implying that AFI scores for Hungary have significantly decreased over the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024, p. 10). If we look at the developments in the last decade in more detail, there is a significant decrease reported between 2012–2022 in the general academic freedom score (-0.266), the freedom to research and teach (-0.643), institutional autonomy (-1.538), and the freedom of academic and cultural expression (-1.358) (FAU Erlangen–Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute, 2023).

The score for Hungary on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World monitor is 2, the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, worrying developments are happening in Hungary regarding academic freedom.

First, "The Fidesz-led government has maintained its efforts to bring schools and universities under close supervision. A gradual overhaul of the public education system raised concerns about excessive government influence on school curriculums, and the parliament has restructured institutions and their finances to increase government-appointed chancellors' powers. Authorities have increasingly threatened the academic autonomy of well-established institutions, pulling support, interfering in their affairs, and landing progovernment supporters in leading positions. In October 2023, a professor at Budapest's Corvinus University was dismissed after criticising the decisions of the Fidesz-linked university leadership." (Freedom House, 2024).

Second, "The government has revoked accreditation from all gender studies programs." (Freedom House, 2024).

Third, "Progovernment media outlets commonly target activists, academics, programs, and institutions, often by calling them "Soros agents," referring to Hungarian-born financier and philanthropist George Soros. In 2017, Fidesz targeted the Central European University (CEU), a graduate school founded by Soros, by changing the requirements for foreign universities to operate in Hungary. The government also targeted the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), stripping the 200-year-old academy of its network of research institutions in 2019 and handing it over to a new governing body. (Freedom House, 2024).

Fourth, "In January 2023, the European Commission announced that it had suspended the rights of 21 universities managed by Fidesz-controlled boards to participate in the EU's Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe programs until the risk of executive interference with university autonomy was reduced. The suspension remained in place as of September" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Furthermore, Hungary was not scored in the fourth edition of the EUA Autonomy Scorecard (Pruvot et al., 2023) because the changes in governance introduced through the foundation system are *sui generis*.

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no specific threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Hungary in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.15. Ireland

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Ireland are presented in Table 14.

Table 14. Ireland: Academic Freedom Index (2021-2023 scores)

Ireland - Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.89	0.89	0.89
Freedom to research and teach	3.48	3.48	3.48
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.39	3.39	3.39
Institutional autonomy	3.07	3.07	3.07
Campus integrity	3.55	3.55	3.55
Academic and cultural expression	3.78	3.78	3.78

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Ireland is in the top 10-20% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Ireland are generally stable, with no statistically significant changes in the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Ireland on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0-4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is respected and protected under the Universities Act (1997)" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Ireland presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports one case of an academic freedom attack in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, in Ireland (SAR, 2024)¹⁶.

This case concerns Trinity College Dublin (TCD) fining the Trinity College Dublin Student Union (TCDSU) €214,285 for financial losses due to peaceful student protests criticising proposed fee increases and TCD's response to Israel's bombardment of Gaza following Hamas' surprise attack on Israel on October 7, 2024. The fine was later dropped. Scholars at Risk expresses its concern about a higher education institution issuing monetary and disciplinary penalties against student organisations in retaliation for the peaceful exercise of freedom of expression and assembly – conduct which is protected by international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Ireland is a party.

¹⁶ See: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-05-02-trinity-college-dublin/>

2.2.16. Italy

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Italy are presented in Table 15.

Table 15. Italy: Academic Freedom Index (2021-2023 scores)

Italy - Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.95	0.95	0.95
Freedom to research and teach	3.76	3.76	3.76
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.78	3.78	3.78
Institutional autonomy	3.52	3.52	3.52
Campus integrity	3.85	3.85	3.85
Academic and cultural expression	3.41	3.22	3.13

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Italy is in the top 10% countries worldwide (ranked 5th) regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Italy are generally stable. However, if we look at the developments in the last decade there is a significant decrease reported between 2012-2022 in the freedom of academic and cultural expression (-0.705) (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute, 2023). For the rest of the indicators no significant change in the last decade is reported.

The score for Italy on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0-4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022, 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is generally respected" (Freedom House, 2024). The same was reported in the previous years (Freedom House, 2022, 2023).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Italy presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Privot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports one case of an academic freedom attack in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, in Italy (SAR, 2024)¹⁷.

The report refers to the incident at the University of Florence (UniFI) where the police forcefully blocked a pro-Palestinian student protest. Two student groups organised the protest and demanded a meeting with the rector who refused. Following this, the demonstrators attempted to walk to a nearby square, which is the location of UniFI's liberal arts library. Police reportedly prevented the students from walking further and used violence to stop them.

Scholars at Risk expresses its concern about the use of force against students peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

¹⁷ See: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2023-11-21-university-of-florence/>

2.2.17. Latvia

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Latvia are presented in Table 16.

Table 16. Latvia: Academic Freedom Index (2021-2023 scores)

Latvia- Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.96	0.95	0.91
Freedom to research and teach	3.83	3.63	3.04
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.89	3.89	3.89
Institutional autonomy	3.17	3.17	2.62
Campus integrity	3.89	3.89	3.89
Academic and cultural expression	3.71	3.71	3.71

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Latvia is in the top 10-20% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Latvia are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Latvia on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 3 (in a 0-4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "While academic freedom is largely upheld, lawmakers have begun to place some limitations on instruction in recent years" (Freedom House, 2024). The limitations refer to restrictions in the language of instruction. The same was reported in the previous year (Freedom House, 2022, 2023).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Latvia presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al. 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Privot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Latvia in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.18. Lithuania

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Lithuania are presented in Table 17.

Table 17. Lithuania: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Lithuania – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.93	0.92	0.82
Freedom to research and teach	3.67	3.54	3.25
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.85	3.85	3.44
Institutional autonomy	2.76	3.00	2.68
Campus integrity	3.74	3.74	3.19
Academic and cultural expression	3.28	3.28	3.10

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Lithuania is in the top 30–40% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Lithuania is marked red in the AFI 2024 update implying that there has been a statistically significant decreasing overall change in Lithuania's AFI scores over the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024, p. 10). If we look at the developments in the last decade there is a significant decrease reported between 2012–2022 in the freedom of academic and cultural expression (-0.642) (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute, 2023). For the rest of the indicators the 2024 AFI update shows a decrease in scores for all indicators compared to the 2023 AFI update.

The score for Lithuania on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is respected, and the educational system is generally free from political influence" (Freedom House, 2024). The same was reported in the previous year (Freedom House, 2022, 2023).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Lithuania presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Privot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Lithuania in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.19. Luxembourg

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Luxembourg are presented in Table 18.

Table 18. Luxembourg: Academic Freedom Index (2021-2023 scores)

Luxembourg - Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.94	0.94	0.94
Freedom to research and teach	3.70	3.70	3.70
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.76	3.76	3.76
Institutional autonomy	2.83	2.83	2.83
Campus integrity	3.92	3.92	3.92
Academic and cultural expression	3.73	3.73	3.73

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Luxembourg is in the top 10% countries worldwide (ranked 7th) regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Luxembourg are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Luxembourg on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0-4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is generally respected in practice" (Freedom House, 2024). The same was reported in the previous year (Freedom House, 2022, 2023).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Luxembourg presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Luxembourg in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.20. Malta

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Malta are presented in Table 19.

Table 19. Malta: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Malta – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.93	0.88	0.88
Freedom to research and teach	3.78	3.11	3.11
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.80	3.80	3.80
Institutional autonomy	2.42	2.42	2.42
Campus integrity	3.83	3.83	3.83
Academic and cultural expression	3.05	3.05	3.05

Source: V-Dem Version14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Malta is in the top 10–20% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Malta are generally stable. However, if we look at the developments in the last decade there is a significant change reported between 2012–2022 in the freedom to research and teach (–0.645) (FAU Erlangen–Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute, 2023). For the rest of the indicators no significant change in the last decade is reported.

The score for Malta on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "The education system is generally free from political indoctrination and other constraints on academic freedom" (Freedom House, 2024). A similar conclusion was reported in the previous year (Freedom House, 2022, 2023).

Malta was not included in the EUA Autonomy Scorecard IV.

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Malta in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.21. The Netherlands

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for The Netherlands are presented in Table 20.

Table 20. The Netherlands: Academic Freedom Index (2021-2023 scores)

Netherlands - Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.86	0.83	0.79
Freedom to research and teach	3.09	3.02	2.73
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.43	3.10	3.36
Institutional autonomy	3.09	3.44	3.14
Campus integrity	3.77	3.52	3.11
Academic and cultural expression	3.31	3.31	3.31

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

The Netherlands is in the top 30–40% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). The Netherlands is marked red in the 2024 AFI update which indicates that there has been a statistically significant decreasing overall change in the Dutch AFI scores over the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024, p. 10). If we look at the developments in the last decade there is a significant decrease reported between 2012–2022 in the freedom of academic exchange and dissemination (-0.528) and in campus integrity (-0.519) (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute, 2023). For the rest of the indicators no significant change in the last decade is reported.

The score for The Netherlands on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022, 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is largely upheld in the Netherlands" (Freedom House, 2024). A similar conclusion was reported in the previous year (Freedom House, 2022, 2023).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for the Netherlands presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports several cases of academic freedom attacks at two universities in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, in the Netherlands (SAR, 2024)¹⁸.

The first case is reported at the University of Groningen and includes the following incidents:

¹⁸ See the following incident reports: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2023-12-13-university-of-groningen/>;
<https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-03-19-university-of-groningen/>;
<https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-04-13-university-of-groningen/>;
<https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-04-25-university-of-groningen/>;
<https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-06-09-university-of-groningen/>;
<https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-06-12-university-of-groningen/>;

- "unknown individuals smashed more than a dozen building's windows, painting some of the glass with graffiti, at the University of Groningen. The graffiti included slogans condemning Israeli military action in Gaza, such as '20,000+ dead', 'We will escalate', 'Free Palestine' and 'Gaza';"
- "unknown individuals painted the facades of several University of Groningen buildings with graffiti and broke several windows. The affected buildings included the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences and an administration building. Both were painted with slogans, including 'free Palestine'. Some of the administration building's windows were smashed;"
- "unknown individuals painted graffiti on the facade of the University of Groningen's Academy building, the walls of the Röling Building (Faculty of Law) and the university's library. The slogans included pro-Palestinian messages, such as 'UG supports Genocide', 'From the river to the sea', and 'complicit';"
- "the University of Groningen (RUG) prevented a student group from showing the movie Farha, about a Palestinian girl forced to leave her home in 1948. The student group Groningen for Palestine planned to show the movie as part of anti-apartheid week, during which students screen a movie each year. Previous movies have focused on Palestine, the war in Ukraine, and the Lebanese civil war. Students had booked a room at the university previously, along with a back-up room. University officials blocked the screening, saying that Groningen for Palestine was not an official student organisation because it includes both student and non-student members. In addition, a university spokesperson stated that the invitation to the screening had been publicly posted on Instagram, making it an 'external party';"
- "the police forcibly evacuating pro-Palestinian protesters who were occupying a building at the University of Groningen (RUG). The building occupation came a few weeks after Dutch higher education institutions agreed to a new directive stating that student protests are allowed if the protesters follow the rules set by their institutions. In the case of RUG, the university had recently announced 36 new protest regulations. The new rules permitted protests inside university buildings, but barred demonstrations after 7pm and mandated that protesters engage in discussion with the faculty board, among other guidelines. The rules state that police may end demonstrations that do not follow the rules. On the afternoon of June 12, a group of pro-Palestine protesters engaged in a march that ended with the occupation of an RUG building. They hung a banner out of a window with the words, "RUG, you can't hide, we charge you with genocide;" Shortly afterwards, police arrived in riot gear and asked the protesters to leave the building. Around 7pm, officers ended the building and forcibly evicted the students. Videos posted on social media show police roughly handling student protesters, and the media reported that police used batons. One protester, who spoke publicly during the protest, reported that police had punched her in the head before holding her alone in a room for more than 16 hours and without providing her medical care for six hours. Two protesters were arrested;"
- "the police forcibly evacuated students occupying the Academy Building at the University of Groningen (RUG). Earlier in the day, a group of students had met with RUG's Executive Board to continue a series of discussions about social safety at RUG. One of the students' demands was that RUG reinstate Susanne Täuber, a former professor and social safety expert whom RUG had dismissed in March 2023 following a years-long dispute related to Täuber's critiques of the university's implementation of its policy on gender equality. Around 100 students affiliated with a protest group Occupy RUG occupied the Academy Building after it became clear that the Executive Board would not reinstate Täuber. According to university officials, police asked students to leave the building several times before moving in to forcibly evacuate the students. A video taken during the evacuation shows police dragging a student down

the stairs by their legs. An assistant professor who was not involved in the occupation told reporters that police had hit her with a baton. Police made no arrests."

Scholars at Risk expressed its concerns about these cases, including the use of force by police to disperse students exercising their peaceful rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly; the intentional vandalisation of a university building; and an attempt by higher education authorities to limit the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly on campus by denying a student group the space to hold an extracurricular event. It is emphasised in the SAR report first that public authorities have a responsibility to refrain from restricting the nonviolent exercise of such rights. In addition to the harm to the immediate victims, the use of force to restrict or deter nonviolent student expression undermines academic freedom and democratic society more generally. Second that acts of intentional vandalisation of a university building erode the right to education, and diminish everyone's access to a safe, free and open university space. Third, that university authorities have a responsibility not to interfere with student expression and assembly, so long as it is undertaken peacefully and responsibly. University actions that limit the rights to free expression or association on campus have a chilling effect on academic freedom and university autonomy, and undermine democratic society generally.

The second case is reported at the University of Amsterdam and concerns the following incident¹⁹:

"police used teargas, a bulldozer, and batons to disperse students who had established a pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). On May 6, a group of students set up an encampment at UvA's Roeterseiland campus to express solidarity with the people of Palestine and to protest UvA's relationships with Israeli institutions. The students contend that the protest was peaceful. According to a statement by the university, while the protest began peacefully, the situation evolved over the evening of May 6, with violent incidents, including the throwing of fireworks, people being hit, and the Israeli flag being set on fire. After Amsterdam's mayor and police came to speak with the student protesters, some but not all left the encampment. The police, Public Prosecutor, and Mayor then made the decision to remove the remaining protesters. Around 3am on May 7, riot police moved in. They used a bulldozer to break up the encampment. Videos from the scene show the bulldozer pushing personal possessions. One protester climbed onto the bulldozer in an apparent attempt to stop it. The videos also show police violently arresting protesters and beating them with batons, as well as a protester spraying police with a fire extinguisher. Throughout the event, students chanted 'We are peaceful, what are you?' and 'Stop attacking us.' Around 140 students and staff were arrested, and some protesters reportedly sustained injuries that required hospital visits."

Scholars at Risk expressed its concern about violence on campus, including the disproportionate use of force by police while dispersing student protesters. While state authorities have the responsibility to maintain order and prevent disruption, they must refrain from the disproportionate use of force and endangerment of civilians. Students too must refrain from violence, especially on campus, and respect the right to freedom of association and freedom of expression, and university authorities must take reasonable measures to ensure safe living conditions for students. In addition to harm to the immediate victims, violence on campus undermines academic freedom and democratic society generally.

¹⁹ See: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-05-07-university-of-amsterdam/>

2.2.22. Poland

The latest Academic Freedom Index scores for Poland are presented in Table 21.

Table 21. Poland: Academic Freedom Index (2021-2023 scores)

Poland – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.76	0.73	0.75
Freedom to research and teach	3.10	2.97	3.03
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.15	3.15	3.15
Institutional autonomy	2.52	2.52	2.52
Campus integrity	3.43	3.43	3.52
Academic and cultural expression	2.31	2.25	2.30

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Poland is in the top 40-50% countries included in the AFI index (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). The 2024 update AFI scores for Poland are slightly increasing. At the same time, if we look at the developments in the last decade there is a significant decrease reported between 2012-2022 on all AFI indicators: the general academic freedom score (-0.242), the freedom to research and teach (-0.921), institutional autonomy (-1), campus integrity (-0.521), and the freedom of academic and cultural expression (-1.508) (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute, 2023).

The score for Poland on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 3 (in a 0-4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023.

According to Freedom House (2024): "While the right to pursue academic research has been upheld by courts, PiS has sought to discredit academics who challenge its preferred historical narrative, particularly with regard to the events of World War II. In April 2023, for example, Professor Barbara Engelking of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) discussed Polish hostility toward Jews during World War II in an interview. Later that month, then education minister Przemysław Czarnek vowed that the ministry would not fund the PAN institute to which Engelking belongs. The ministry reversed course in June, after academics protested the decision".

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Poland presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Poland in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.23. Portugal

The latest, updated Academic Freedom Index scores for Portugal are presented in Table 22.

Table 22. Portugal: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Portugal – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.92	0.93	0.93
Freedom to research and teach	3.38	3.66	3.66
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.77	3.77	3.77
Institutional autonomy	3.10	2.99	3.16
Campus integrity	3.76	3.76	3.51
Academic and cultural expression	3.64	3.64	3.64

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Portugal is in the top 10% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Portugal are generally stable. However, if we look at the developments in the last decade there is argued to be a significant decrease reported between 2012–2022 in institutional autonomy (–0.702) and the freedom of academic and cultural expression (–0.314) (FAU Erlangen–Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute, 2023). The increase in the score for institutional autonomy in the 2024 AFI update indicates that the level of institutional autonomy is increasing again (the 2023 scores in the EUA Institutional Autonomy scorecard confirm this development).

The score for Portugal on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is respected. Schools and universities operate without undue political or other interference" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Portugal presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Portugal in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.24. Romania

The latest, updated Academic Freedom Index scores for Romania are presented in Table 23.

Table 23. Romania: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Romania – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.90	0.88	0.83
Freedom to research and teach	3.49	3.38	3.38
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.73	3.73	3.25
Institutional autonomy	2.88	2.70	2.53
Campus integrity	3.61	3.61	3.61
Academic and cultural expression	3.42	3.07	3.07

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Romania is in the top 20–30% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Romania are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade, even though the scores in the 2024 AFI update indicate a downward trend (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Romania on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 3 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "The government generally does not restrict academic freedom, but the education system is weakened by widespread corruption and politically influenced appointments and financing" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Romania presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Privot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Romania in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.25. Slovakia

The latest, updated Academic Freedom Index scores for Slovakia are presented in Table 24.

Table 24. Slovakia: Academic Freedom Index

Slovakia - Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.96	0.95	0.88
Freedom to research and teach	3.80	3.80	3.01
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.87	3.63	3.47
Institutional autonomy	3.42	3.23	3.02
Campus integrity	3.80	3.80	3.80
Academic and cultural expression	3.83	3.83	3.83

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Slovakia is in the top 10–20% of countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Slovakia are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade, even though the scores of the 2024 AFI update indicate a downward trend (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Slovakia on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World monitor is 4, the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is guaranteed by the constitution and upheld by authorities" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Slovakia presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Slovakia in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.26. Slovenia

The latest, updated Academic Freedom Index scores for Slovenia are presented in Table 25.

Table 25. Slovenia: Academic Freedom Index (2021-2023 scores)

Slovenia - Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.88	0.93	0.94
Freedom to research and teach	3.16	3.16	3.52
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.69	3.87	3.87
Institutional autonomy	2.90	3.49	3.49
Campus integrity	3.85	3.85	3.85
Academic and cultural expression	2.91	3.41	3.14

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Slovenia is in the top 10% countries worldwide (ranked 8th) regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Slovenia are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Slovenia on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0-4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is generally respected" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Slovenia presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Slovenia in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.2.27. Spain

The latest, updated Academic Freedom Index scores for Spain are presented in Table 26.

Table 26. Spain: Academic Freedom Index (2021–2023 scores)

Spain – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.94	0.93	0.93
Freedom to research and teach	3.81	3.81	3.81
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.81	3.81	3.81
Institutional autonomy	3.06	3.06	3.06
Campus integrity	3.44	3.44	3.44
Academic and cultural expression	3.64	3.37	3.23

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Spain is in the top 10% countries worldwide regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Spain are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Spain on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0–4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "The government does not restrict academic freedom in law or in practice" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Spain presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Pruvot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports one case of an academic freedom attack in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, in Spain (SAR, 2024)²⁰.

This case concerns:

"the police forcibly evicting several dozen students who had occupied the dean's office at the University of Seville's (US) Faculty of Philology, injuring at least one student. The students had occupied the office demanding that the university cut ties with Israeli institutions. While US had previously announced that it would temporarily suspend agreements with Israeli universities, the students believed that the terms of the temporary suspension were not sufficiently clear and wanted the university also to sever ties with companies and financial institutions complicit with Israeli military action. Riot police attempted to enter the room that the students were occupying. Seville's emergency services confirmed that they had received reports of several people with injuries and that a medical team evacuated one person to the hospital."

²⁰ See: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-06-10-university-of-seville/>

Scholars at Risk expresses its concern about violence on campus, including the disproportionate use of force by police while dispersing student protesters. While public authorities have the responsibility to maintain order and prevent disruption, they must refrain from the disproportionate use of force and endangerment of civilians. Students too must refrain from violence, especially on campus, and respect the right to freedom of association and freedom of expression, and university authorities must take reasonable measures to ensure safe living conditions for students. In addition to harm to the immediate victims, violence on campus undermines academic freedom and democratic society generally.

2.2.28. Sweden

The latest, updated Academic Freedom Index scores for Sweden are presented in Table 27.

Table 27. Sweden: Academic Freedom Index (2021-2023 scores)

Sweden – Academic Freedom Index	Previous score (2021)	Previous score (2022)	Current score (2023)
General	0.95	0.94	0.94
Freedom to research and teach	3.52	3.52	3.51
Academic exchange and dissemination	3.92	3.92	3.92
Institutional autonomy	2.88	2.54	2.54
Campus integrity	3.85	3.85	3.85
Academic and cultural expression	3.88	3.88	3.76

Source: V-Dem Version 14 (Coppedge et al., 2024)

Legend: for explanation of use of colors, see section 2.2.1

Sweden is in the top 10% countries worldwide (ranked 10th) regarding respect for academic freedom (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). Recent AFI scores for Sweden are generally stable, with no statistically significant change in the last decade (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The score for Sweden on academic freedom in the 2024 edition of the Freedom in World is 4 (in a 0-4 range, where 0 is the lowest and 4 the highest score), the same score as in 2022 and 2023. According to Freedom House, "Academic freedom is generally respected" (Freedom House, 2024).

There is no 2024 update available for the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard. Therefore we refer here to the 2023 scores of the EUA Institutional Autonomy Scorecard for Sweden presented in the 2023 EP Academic Freedom Monitor report (Craciun et al., 2024) and the original report by the EUA (Privot, Estermann and Popkhadze, 2023).

The Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project reports no threats, infringements or violations of academic freedom in Sweden in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

2.3. Trends of academic freedom

2.3.1. State of play of academic freedom in the EU according to the Academic Freedom Index

The Academic Freedom Index (AFI) measures several aspects of academic freedom and a general Academic Freedom score. We discuss in this paragraph the general score and four of the underlying freedoms.

The average level of Academic Freedom in the 2024 AFI update for the EU Member States is slightly lower than the EU average in the 2023 AFI, and also a more detailed analysis of the four aspects of academic freedom and developments over the last decade, raises some concerns. Table 28 lists the EU Member States on their Academic Freedom Index score for general academic freedom for the last two years. In terms of trends, the first 18 countries have a score above the EU average for general Academic Freedom with all 18 countries having status A. Of these countries Italy, and Portugal show a significant change in one of the Academic Freedom index scores over the last ten years; in Italy and Lithuania the freedom of academic and cultural expression decreased significantly between 2012–2022, while for Portugal a significant decrease in institutional autonomy and freedom of academic and cultural expression was measured by the Academic Freedom index over the same decade.

The second group includes eight countries with scores below the EU average for general academic freedom. These are Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, and Croatia, all five countries having status A, and the Netherlands, Greece, and Poland having status B. In six of the eight countries the general academic freedom score was lower in the 2024 AFI update than in the 2023 AFI. Only Poland and Greece had an improvement of their general AFI score over the last two years. When it comes to the specific academic freedom scores there is a variety among the eight EU Member States in this group in the extent to which one or more of these scores deteriorated significantly over the period 2012–2022: in Bulgaria and Lithuania the freedom of academic exchange and dissemination deteriorated significantly in this period, while in Croatia and Greece the freedom of academic and cultural expression, and in the Netherlands the freedom of academic exchange and dissemination and the campus integrity deteriorated significantly.

Table 28. AF in EU Member States according to the AFI-General Score (Comparison 2023 – 2024)

Country	AFI-General Score (2024 / 2023)	Country	AFI-General Score (2024 / 2023)	Country	AFI-General Score (2024 / 2023)
Status A		Portugal	0,92 / 0,93	Austria	0,87 / 0,88
Czechia	0,98 / 0,98	Cyprus	0,92 / 0,92	Bulgaria	0,84 / 0,85
Estonia	0,97 / 0,97	Latvia	0,91 / 0,95	Romania	0,83 / 0,88
Belgium	0,97 / 0,97	France	0,90 / 0,91	Lithuania	0,82 / 0,92
Italy	0,95 / 0,96	Ireland	0,89 / 0,91	Croatia	0,80 / 0,86
Luxembourg	0,94 / 0,95	Denmark	0,89 / 0,91	Status B	
Slovenia	0,94 / 0,93	Slovakia	0,88 / 0,95	Netherlands	0,79 / 0,82
Sweden	0,94 / 0,94	Malta	0,88 / 0,88	Greece	0,78 / 0,77
Germany	0,93 / 0,96			Poland	0,75 / 0,74
Spain	0,93 / 0,94	EU-Average	0,87 / 0,89	Status D	
Finland	0,93 / 0,95			Hungary	0,30 / 0,34

Source: Kinzelbach et al. (2024)

Finally, the AFI confirms that Hungary continues to have a specific position in the EU, characterised by a very low score on the general academic freedom index and on all of the underlying aspects of academic freedom covered in the AFI. In the last decade the situation has seriously deteriorated considering the significant decrease reported between 2012-2022 in the general academic freedom, the freedom to research and teach, the institutional autonomy, and the freedom of academic and cultural expression.

The overall conclusion of the above analysis of the AFI 2024 scores is that on average academic freedom is slightly eroding throughout the EU, with a third of the Member States at a level of academic freedom below the EU average and not improving, with the exception of Greece and Poland. The other 7 Member States in the below average group witness a decrease on certain scores in the AFI 2024 update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024) compared with the AF monitor 2023, while most of them also show a significant deterioration of academic freedom scores over the longer period of 2012-2022.

3. Country-specific trends analysis

3.1. Introduction

The country-specific trends analysis builds on two pilot studies initiated by the STOA Panel in 2022: a review of methods and procedures for monitoring academic freedom (Kováts and Rónay, 2023) and a study of the *de facto* state of play of academic freedom in the 27 EU Member States (Maassen et al., 2023), and two separate but complementary studies initiated by the STOA Panel in 2023: a review of various measurements to assess academic freedom in the 27 EU Member States and beyond, and a qualitative analysis of recent trends in ten EU Member States. The latter two studies have been presented in one, integrated report (Craciun et al., 2024). Parallel to the study presented in this report, a study on the *de jure* state of play of academic freedom in European was undertaken. The results of that study are presented in a separate report.

The establishment of the EP Academic Freedom Monitor is an important step in establishing more effective and insightful approaches to monitoring academic freedom trends. In addition, it allows for discussing which measures could be taken, on the European, national, and institutional levels, to enhance the promotion and protection of academic freedom in the European Union. It complements initiatives taken by the European Commission in the context of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA), and by the Council of Europe through its project on the "Democratic Mission of Higher Education" (2024-2027).

The study presented in this report has analysed specific trends since 2022 concerning *de facto* academic freedom in the European Union. Based on this analysis an overview of the scores of EU Member States in recent indexes and monitors of academic freedom is provided. This overview is an update of the overview presented in the previous study on academic freedom for the STOA Panel (Craciun et al., 2024). Furthermore, the report presents general trends in academic freedom across the EU on the basis of six categories identified as the main sources of the threats to academic freedom in the EU Member States, and by taking a closer look at recent developments in ten European Union Member States.

An important starting-point for the study is that academic freedom is widely accepted as a fundamental value of higher education and research systems and as a prerequisite for well-functioning democratic societies. Furthermore, all EU Member States indicate commitment to academic freedom in some form and having in place legal protections for academic freedom. Academic freedom is a fundamental value recognised by the EU in Article 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/C 364/01): "Freedom of the arts and sciences. The arts and scientific research shall be free of constraint. Academic freedom shall be respected." The explanatory memorandum of the Charter²¹ says that the right to academic freedom, "is deduced primarily from the right to freedom of thought and expression", and that, "it is to be exercised having regard to Article 1²² and may be subject to the limitations authorised by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights".²³ ²⁴ Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights refers to freedom of expression: "1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. The right shall include

²¹ For the full explanations relating to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2007/C 303/02), see: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:303:0017:0035:en:PDF>

²² Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union refers to human dignity: "Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected."

²³ For the full text of the European Convention on Human Rights, see: https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/convention_ENG

²⁴ Academic freedom is thus not an absolute right but carries with it duties and responsibilities such as adhering to academic integrity standards or respecting human dignity.

freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This Article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises. 2. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary." At the same time, academic freedom often lacks precise legal definitions (Stachowiak-Kudła, 2021), raising questions about the state of play of *de facto* academic freedom, even when (some form of) legal protections are in place²⁵.

The importance of fundamental values, such as academic freedom, for Europe's strategic position in the world is also addressed in the 2024 report on the future of European competitiveness (Draghi, 2024a). It is argued, for example, that, "Europe's fundamental values are prosperity, equity, freedom, peace and democracy in a sustainable environment. [...] If Europe can no longer provide them to its people – or has to trade off one against the other – it will have lost its reason for being" (Draghi 2024a, p. 1). This fundamental principle is further developed in relation to research and innovation, highlighting the importance of academic freedom for Europe, including in its efforts to strengthen its competitiveness (Draghi 2024b, p. 246).

3.1.1. Core dimensions of academic freedom

With the establishment and development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the European Education Area (EEA) as well as the European Research Area (ERA), higher education and research systems in Europe have become more interconnected than ever before. In this context, threats to academic freedom are not only a concern within national borders but also across (Craciun, 2022). The current interest in academic freedom in Europe can be argued to have started seriously with the case of Central European University (CEU). This case was brought to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) by the European Commission against Hungary related to the 2017 amendment of the Hungarian Law on higher education. The ECJ ruled that new regulatory "conditions introduced by Hungary to enable foreign higher education institutions to carry out their activities in its territory are incompatible with EU law". Specifically, Hungary failed to comply with the provisions in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Charter provisions on academic freedom, freedom to found higher education institutions, freedom to conduct a business, and freedoms of establishment and free movement of services. While the ruling was welcomed, "the court's decision reinforced the view of many that, on its own, Article 13 does not give enough legal protection to academic freedom" (Deketelaere, 2022) as the Charter only applies when Member States are implementing EU law. In line with this realisation, several initiatives were launched aimed at contributing to the enhancement of the promotion and protection of academic freedom within Europe²⁶.

²⁵ For an updated discussion of the legal protection of academic (and scientific) freedom in the EU, see the report for the EP Academic Freedom Monitor 2024, authored by Costa and Ceran.

²⁶ Providing an up-to-date overview of these initiatives goes beyond the scope of this report. It suffices here to refer to the initiatives within the European Higher Education Area, see e.g. the Tirana Communiqué (<https://eha.info/page-ministerial-declarations-and-communications>), and the project on the Democratic Mission of Higher Education (2024–2027) with a special focus on Academic Freedom in Action (see: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/-/save-the-date-academic-freedom-in-action-conference>)

On a global scale, the state of academic freedom in the European Union can be argued to be in a relatively positive place. For example, in the global monitor Academic Freedom Index (AFI)²⁷, most EU Member States are among the most positive cases. Among the top ten best performing countries in the AFI 2024, seven are from EU. Furthermore, there are no EU Member States among the lowest 20% scoring countries in the AFI.

Table 29. Rank of EU Member States in AFI 2024 Update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024)

Rank in Academic Freedom Index Update 2024	EU Member States
Top 10%	Czechia, Estonia, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Sweden, Germany, Spain, Finland, Portugal, Cyprus (Status A)
Top 10–20%	Latvia, France, Ireland, Denmark, Slovakia, Malta, Austria (Status A)
Top 20–30%	Bulgaria, Romania (Status A)
Top 30–40%	Lithuania, Croatia (Status A)
Top 30–40%	the Netherlands, Greece (Status B)
Top 40–50%	Poland (Status B)
Bottom 40–50%	-
Bottom 30–40%	-
Bottom 20–30%	Hungary (Status D)
Bottom 10–20%	-
Bottom 10%	-

Four countries among EU Member States have a status lower than A in the 2024 AFI, that is, the Netherlands, Greece and Poland are among the countries with status B, and Hungary is among the status D countries. In general, the positions are also reasonably stable over time. According to the AFI, among EU Member States, between 1973 and 2023 only one country show a statistically significant deterioration of the state of academic freedom, that is, the Netherlands (Kinzelbach et al. 2024, p. 3). Furthermore, according to the AFI scores, five EU Member States experienced substantial, statistically significant decreases of academic freedom between 2013 and 2023, that is, Austria, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland and Hungary. Importantly, as global ranks cover very broadly, the AFI scores may thus mask important nuances among the above average performing countries. While academic freedom may not been under direct attack, gradual processes of erosion may contribute to a long-term deterioration of *de facto* academic freedom.

Furthermore, the AFI 2024 Update argues that "... polarisation and academic freedom declines go hand in hand, yet this correlation is no more than an initial empirical hint and certainly no proof of causation. Research on the connection between polarisation and restrictions of academic freedom is still in its infancy" (Kinzelbach et al. 2024, p. 9).

²⁷ The Academic Freedom index is produced by a team of researchers from FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany and the V-Dem institute in Gothenburg, Sweden. It is currently funded by the German Volkswagen Foundation until 2025. It is based on expert based data on five indicators: freedom to research and teach; freedom of academic exchange and dissemination; institutional autonomy; campus integrity; and freedom of academic and cultural expression.

Table 30. Academic Freedom in EU Member states according to the AFI-General Score (Comparison 2023 – 2024)

Country	AFI-General Score (2024 / 2023)	Country	AFI-General Score (2024 / 2023)	Country	AFI-General Score (2024 / 2023)
Status A		Portugal	0,92 / 0.93	Austria	0,87 / 0.88
Czechia	0,98 / 0.98	Cyprus	0,92 / 0.92	Bulgaria	0,84 / 0.85
Estonia	0,97 / 0.97	Latvia	0,91 / 0.95	Romania	0,83 / 0.88
Belgium	0,97 / 0.97	France	0,90 / 0.91	Lithuania	0,82 / 0.92
Italy	0,95 / 0.96	Ireland	0,89 / 0.91	Croatia	0,80 / 0.86
Luxembourg	0,94 / 0.95	Denmark	0,89 / 0.91	Status B	
Slovenia	0,94 / 0.93	Slovakia	0,88 / 0.95	Netherlands	0,79 / 0.82
Sweden	0,94 / 0.94	Malta	0,88 / 0.88	Greece	0,78 / 0.77
Germany	0,93 / 0.96			Poland	0,75 / 0.74
Spain	0,93 / 0.94	EU-Average	0,87 / 0,89	Status D	
Finland	0,93 / 0.95			Hungary	0,30 / 0.34

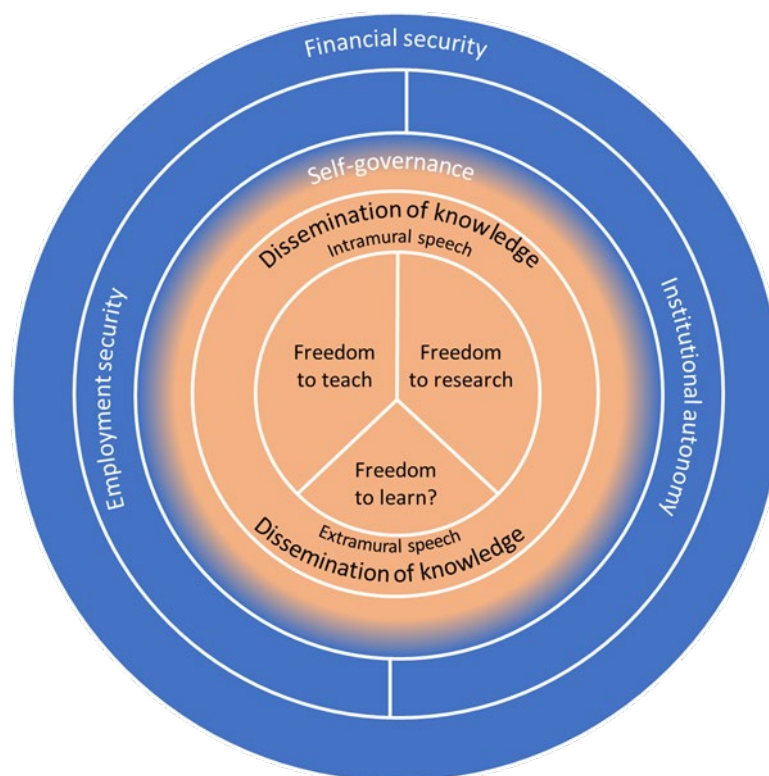
Source: Kinzelbach et al. (2024)

While definitions and degree of specification concerning academic freedom remain varied (Karran, 2007; Kinzelbach, 2020), public authorities and higher education institutions have traditionally committed themselves to protecting academic freedom, leading to a situation in which most countries around the world have *de jure* provisions with respect to academic freedom in place. These provisions can be included in the national constitution or be part of specific higher education sector laws. Additionally, many higher education institutions have provisions protecting the academic freedom of the members of their academic community in their internal regulations or by-laws. More challenging is to get a valid understanding of the *de facto* situation with respect to academic freedom. It is generally acknowledged that *de jure* provisions do not guarantee that academic freedom is respected and protected in practice. Consequently, growing concerns about the state of academic freedom among EU Member States (Kováts and Rónay, 2023; Maassen et al., 2023; Craciun et al. 2024), warrant a continued attention for *de facto* academic freedom trends in the EU.

This study takes a point of departure in the conceptualisations and definitions provided by the studies conducted for the EP Academic Freedom Monitor, the latest of which is the EP Academic Freedom Monitor Report 2023 (Craciun et al., 2024). Building among others on various academic publications (e.g. Metzger 1978; Cole 2017; Bergan et al., 2020; Beaud 2022), definitions presented in the Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research and the Rome Ministerial Communiqué of the European Higher Education Area, and the seminal work by Scholars at Risk (e.g. SAR 2024), the pilot study by Maassen et al. (2023) defined that the essence of academic freedom consists of the triptych of freedom of research, freedom of teaching, freedom of academic expression. While there is general agreement on the importance of these three essential components, more recent debates about academic freedom also bring up a range of other dimensions, e.g. institutional autonomy, academic labour conditions, financial freedom, and self-governance within higher education institutions. While these also represent important elements in discussions on academic freedom, the EP Academic Freedom Monitor studies showed the necessity of distinguishing between the basic dimensions of academic freedom (the triptych) and the conditions that enable the exercise of academic freedom as optimally as possible.

We can refer here to the interpretation of academic freedom by Kováts and Rónay (2023, p. 12), who argued in their study for the EP Academic Freedom Monitor that the core dimensions and conditions of academic freedom form various layers, comparable to an onion. In figure 1 this interpretation is presented, with the core dimensions or substantive elements marked in yellow, while conditions or supportive elements are marked in blue. The core dimensions and conditions are sometimes intermingled in policy documents or academic studies as a consequence of the lack of agreement on the exact distinction between them. In this study we will not discuss whether there is a correct distinction between core dimensions and conditions of academic freedom. Instead, we will focus on the core dimensions of academic freedom, freedom to research, freedom to teach and learn (or study), and the freedom of academic expression or dissemination.

Figure 1 – The onion model: The essential (orange) and supportive (blue) elements of academic freedom (Kováts and Rónay, 2023, p. 12)



3.1.2. Objectives of this part of the study

In this part of the study an interpretation is provided of the state of the *de facto* academic freedom in ten selected EU Member States. The interpretation is based on desk research and expert input to produce a narrative description of recent developments (2022–2024) in ten EU Member States²⁸.

The study provides an overview of the public debates on academic freedom in the selected EU Member States, based on existing data. The overview consists of an update of the overviews presented identified in the 2023 pilot study on 'De facto State of Play of the Academic Freedom in

²⁸ For an elaboration of the desk research method used in the study, see section 3.2.1 in this report.

the EU Member States' (Maassen et al., 2023) and the EP Academic Freedom Monitor 2023 (Craciun et al., 2024). This study assesses the impact of the six identified factors (potentially) threatening the *de facto* state of play of academic freedom in the selected EU Member States. It identifies tensions and areas where there are gaps and more action might be needed.

3.2. Study design and methodology

This study was designed to examine current trends concerning academic freedom in ten EU Member States. The study is conducted as desk research, combined with various forms of expert inputs and interactions with academic stakeholders. We start this section by presenting the methodological approach, followed by the interpretation of academic freedom employed in this report, followed by a brief description of the six sources of threats to academic freedom that were identified in the previous EP studies (Craciun et al., 2024). These six sources are used as an analytical approach in the country cases.

3.2.1. Methodological approach

3.2.1.1. Search method

The country studies were undertaken to identify cases of threats to or violations of academic freedom as well as how a given country has sought to address these issues. The study focused on trends in academic freedom in ten selected EU Member States since the 2022 pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). This implied, amongst other things, that the desk research mainly analysed various international and national media outlets, specialised higher education newspapers (national and institutional), and recent non-peer reviewed reports on academic freedom²⁹. Given the time frame, hardly any academic, peer reviewed publications on recent trends in academic freedom in the 10 selected EU Member States or the EU as such were available. This represents a reality and a challenge for this study. Producing an overview of recent trends in *de facto* academic freedom requires interpreting sources that are not peer-reviewed and in some cases represent an interpretation of in itself. In this, it is important to mention that the interpretation and coverage of academic freedom cases in the report might be imbalanced – and intensive coverage in the media of academic freedom issues in some EU Member States does not necessarily mean that in other Member States with no or little coverage threats to academic freedom are non-existent, nor does it mean that a heated debate of certain cases reflects a systemic violation of academic freedom. While we identify in this report relevant cases, amongst other things, the interpretation of academic freedom needs to become more specific. Furthermore, a better understanding of trends in *de facto* academic freedom requires a more systematic knowledge basis and better empirical data than are currently available or accessible.

The desk research undertaken in the study was aimed at identifying and investigating cases relevant to academic freedom by looking into both structural and discursive aspects of how academic freedom is discussed by key stakeholders within and/or outside the higher education sector. To this end, a number of considerations concerning the search methodology have been made in order to best identify and investigate relevant cases within the framework of this study.

3.2.1.2. Search strategy

In order to most validly identify and investigate cases relevant to each selected country, a strategy using web-based searches in two stages was developed. The first stage aimed to identify the most relevant cases of threats to, and if applicable, violations of academic freedom within a country. During this stage, a broad search using generic search terms relevant to academic freedom was

²⁹ This concerns mainly national reports conducted e.g. by academic staff unions or student unions, as well as studies undertaken at the request of or in response to the national Parliament or Ministry of Education and Science.

conducted aimed at identifying academic freedom cases. During this stage, the web search was conducted in both English and the relevant local language(s) using identical search terms in each respective language. In countries with multiple official languages or with significant minority language users, additional searches were conducted. Where necessary, approximate translations were made based on input from country experts, translation tools, and contextual clues from relevant sources. For both searches, the web search tools are set to the relevant region for both the English and local language searches. All searches are done within the timeframe between the time of data collection and three years prior.

Once the initial search was completed, a second stage of additional searches was undertaken using specific search terms drawn from the specific cases identified in the first stage. These searches were conducted using the same parameters as during the first stage.

3.2.1.3. Source selection

The sources used in the desk research fall into six main categories which together are suitable for creating snapshot that is as comprehensive and coherent as possible of current academic freedom issues within each selected country:

1. Global/international and national news and media outlets. This category is comprised of 'traditional' news and media outlets at both the levels.
2. Media outlets focused on higher education and science news and issues. This category is comprised of organisations and agencies focused on news, issues, and discussions relevant to international and national higher education and science. Some notable examples include University World News, Times Higher Education, and Science|Business.
3. National organisations and governmental bodies. This includes higher education organisations and agencies within a given country that either represent an important stakeholder group in the higher education sector or serve an important role in governing the sector. Some examples include national parliaments or other governmental bodies where political discussions take place; associations/unions representing important groups within the sector, such as students and academic staff, or private sector enterprises.
4. International and supranational higher education organisations and agencies. This is comparable to the previous category, and includes international organisations, agencies, associations, and representative bodies. While not applicable to every country report, some issues find expression beyond the national level in ways that are relevant to ongoing discussions at the national level as well as the country report in question.
5. Higher education institutions. In this category we included national and institutional higher education news outlets
6. Miscellaneous documents and less well-known outlets of high relevance to ongoing issues. This category covers documents and websites that are of high relevance to a specific academic freedom issue without fitting into the above categories. Some examples include petitions, open letters, and blog posts from key actors and stakeholders. Given that there is a general reduction in reliability using these types of sources, their use is subject to stricter requirements and scrutiny with regards to relevance, reliability, and verifiability.

The list is not exhaustive, and the salience of each category will vary between each country depending on a number of factors. Some of these include press freedom³⁰, cooperation between

³⁰ For the Press Freedom Index, see: <https://rsf.org/en/index>

national government and higher education stakeholders in key questions regarding academic freedom, the perceived importance of academic freedom as an issue by central stakeholders, and the degree of specialisation of journalists and news outlets on issues of higher education. This may lead to differences between country reports in the balance between the six categories as issues of academic freedom are identified, expressed, and dealt with differently. For instance, a closer look at EU Member States reveals differences in how each respective country's higher education sector is organised and governed, the role of central stakeholders in political discussions and higher education policy-making, and attitudes among central stakeholders with respect to the role of higher education institutions in society. Furthermore, news and media outlets will necessarily devote a varying degree of attention and resources to higher education issues both within and amongst countries included in the report.

3.2.1.4. Search tools

For the part of the desk research comprised of analysing news and media reports on topics related to academic freedom within each country, two news article databases were considered: Factiva by DOW Jones and NexisUni. While both are reputable databases and search engines used in academic and journalistic research, both were ultimately dropped in favor of a general web search tool for two main reasons. This implied that additional searches were made within the respective webpages of key stakeholders and key actors within the higher education sector.

Firstly, the databases trialed had a significant gap with respect to indexed articles from the date of the search going back several weeks. For several of the reports, the missing timeframe would have led to a lack of coverage of recent developments and ongoing situation with respect to academic freedom. Secondly, the databases trialed were found to be lacking in the title list, and were not considered to provide an exhaustive list of reputable news sources covering ongoing discussions and developments of academic freedom. This is exacerbated by the nature of higher education, and academic freedom in particular, as a specialist field within journalism, favoring a broader approach in the initial background investigation.

3.2.1.5. Search terms

In all reports the search terms have included the name of the country in question, as well as key search terms such as 'academic freedom', 'higher education', or 'institutional autonomy'. In some cases, the search terms have been more specific. For example, the search term 'HEA bill' was used for Ireland, and for Sweden the name of the Minister for Higher Education was used as a search word. In countries where the first language is not English, search terms were translated to the respective language, which has made the search much broader.

The desk search was focused on information from the period 2022–2024, while in some cases articles were included from 2020–2021. In the desk search many of the same sources used in the EP pilot study were consulted with the aim to identify relevant articles published after the EP pilot study report was published (Maassen et al., 2023). In addition to these sources, the desk study identified the sources that seem to be the most trustworthy. In this, the desk research has tried to exclude sources that are not regarded as politically objective.

3.2.1.6. Selected countries in this review

Ten countries were selected for analysis in this study. Two principles have been applied for case selection strategy.

- The selected countries should cover a range of positions in the existing academic freedom indexes. As indicated in the findings of the previous EP Academic Freedom Monitor studies, also in countries with positive overall findings, threats and worries about academic freedom can be identified.

- The countries should represent a reasonable geographical balance where the selected countries include various geographical regions as well as larger and smaller countries in the EU.

The EU Member States selected for inclusion in this study are: Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia, and Sweden. The selected countries cover a range of ranks in the Academic Freedom Index 2024 Update³¹. Four of the selected countries (Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and Sweden), are in the top 10 % of the AFI monitor worldwide, while the other 6 countries are being a spread between being in the top 10-20 percent (Ireland and Slovakia), 20-30 percent (Bulgaria), 30-40 percent (Croatia, Greece, and Lithuania). While this represents some skewness towards the best performing countries in the AFI, this is also indicative of the general performance of EU Member States.

Table 31. Academic freedom index rank³²

Country	Academic freedom index rank (world wide)
Bulgaria	Top 20-30% world wide
Croatia	Top 30-40% world wide
Germany	Top 10% world wide
Greece	Top 30-40% world wide
Ireland	Top 10-20% world wide
Italy	Top 10% world wide
Lithuania	Top 30-40% world wide
Luxembourg	Top 10% world wide
Slovakia	Top 10-20% world wide
Sweden	Top 10% world wide

3.2.1.7. Country-specific trends reports

A review and update of the *de facto* academic freedom in the ten selected countries is carried out. The ten country reports are based on desk research (see explanation above), including examinations of public debates, media outputs and secondary literature. This approach provides an insight into the debates concerning academic freedom in the selected EU Member States. The approach follows directly the methodological approach identified in the previous studies, while it also updates and further systematises the findings from these studies. Methodologically, this represents a form of events data analysis (Spannagel, 2020), where primary focus is on identifying incidents of (potential) infringement where a debate has emerged, and worries and threats concerning academic freedom have been highlighted. The country reports are explicitly structured according to the six factors introduced above. The analysis builds on existing and publicly available documents and literature that can be accessed through desk research. This includes, for example, international and national

³¹ Kinzelbach, K., Lindeberg, S. I., and Lott, L. (2024). *Academic Freedom Index 2024 Update*. https://academic-freedom-index.net/research/Academic_Freedom_Index_Update_2024.pdf

³² See: https://academic-freedom-index.net/research/Academic_Freedom_Index_Update_2024.pdf

media outlets, institutional websites, research literature, and various reports (so-called gray literature).

For each of the ten countries included in the review, the team has identified a list of national experts. These experts were selected based on their expertise concerning the higher education and research sector in that specific country, e.g. by conducting research on higher education or having had roles where they have gained such insights. Given the types of worries and potential threats analysed in this report, the pool of experts does not include persons currently working in political roles, ministries or university leadership roles. The experts receive a draft country report for review and provide either written or oral comments.

Expert-based assessments are widely used in comparative reviews of policies and trends, and in this study they provided the country reports with relevant input, updates and validation. In this instance, expert assessments were primarily used to validate the research team's interpretation of the events identified in through desk research.

Any misunderstandings or errors that should exist in the country reports remain solely the responsibility of the research team.

3.2.1.8. Synthesis and validation

After the completion of the country reports for ten countries, the research team produces a synthesis of key findings and cross-cutting issues.

The findings are further discussed with a Sounding Board.

- The **Sounding Board** has been established with representatives of the major European cross-sectorial stakeholder organisations in accordance with the STOA Panel.

3.2.1.9. Limitations

There are certain trade-offs due to the scope and methodological approach of this study. The study is based on desk research, which means that the research team has drawn on debates and issues that have been reported, debated or mentioned somewhere in the public sphere. Inherently, event-based data have certain limitations in terms of comparability, selection bias, etc. (see, e.g. Spannagel, 2020). An additional challenge is that in this study we have been dependent on events that are of the type that reach the public domain in the form of a debate, complaint or case.

With this premise, the study was not able to capture undocumented and indirect influences on academic freedom, nor to investigate all cases of possible academic infringement at a high level of detail. This means that there are most likely threats and violations of academic freedom that are not included in this report. An example of this could be self-censorship, which can result from undue external or internal pressure on academics³³. While this may not be considered an explicit case of violation, it can still have serious and fundamental consequences for *de facto* academic freedom.

Furthermore, both the nature and existence of national debates on academic freedom are inherently tied to the country's overall cultural and political context. The occurrence of many public debates about academic freedom cannot therefore in itself be seen as a diagnosis for the general deterioration of academic freedom. The occurrence of many debates can also be an indication of a healthy climate in which the scope and limits of academic freedom are regularly discussed in an open and constructive setting.

³³ See e.g. study on self-censorship in Dutch higher education and science (Graaf et al. 2023), and the government assigned study in Sweden on the work of higher education institutions to promote and protect academic freedom (Tovatt et al. 2024).

With this in mind, the methodology applied should therefore not be seen as a valid approach to making a comprehensive diagnosis of *all* aspects of academic freedom in the selected countries, but as a means to identify important debates and gaps where more attention is warranted. Nevertheless, we believe that by using this methodology for examining the state of *de facto* academic freedom in ten EU Member States, this report provides a relevant overview of important trends, areas where debates are ongoing, areas where specific infringements have been identified and how such cases have been addressed and, if applicable, resolved, and whether the principles of academic freedom have been respected.

3.2.2. Academic freedom – definition and threats

While academic freedom is generally acknowledged as a basic value and principle in higher education, there is no globally agreed upon definition of academic freedom, and variations remain in whether academic freedom is defined in a narrow manner (i.e. an individual right of members of the academic profession) or more broadly (i.e. by including also students and administrative staff, or also considering institutional aspects rather than merely individual ones).

The studies conducted since 2022 for the STOA Panel's Academic Freedom Monitor, identified key dimensions that allow for an examination and discussion of the current state of academic freedom in the EU Member States. In identifying the academic freedom dimensions to be examined, the study started with a careful interpretation of two key European interpretations of academic freedom, that is, the Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research and the Rome Ministerial Communiqué of the European Higher Education Area. Building especially on the Rome Communiqué, as well as scholarly work on the area of academic freedom (Maassen et al. 2023; Craciun et al., 2024). The definition takes a starting point in that academic freedom is an individual freedom. Second, academic freedom does not exist in a vacuum, it operates within a specific institutional setting – the university³⁴. The institution of the university has a principal responsibility for safeguarding the optimal exercise of academic freedom, and the exercise of academic freedom is uniquely placed within universities.

It is also important to keep in mind that academic freedom is never absolute, it is contextually bound. There are legitimate constraints on academic freedom, for example, provided by research ethics and integrity guidelines, and specific laws and regulations. Such guidelines evolve over time, e.g. what may have been considered acceptable research decades ago, might not be considered acceptable now. Academic freedom may also collide with other rights and freedoms, for example, the right to privacy or of religious communities to self-determination (Stachowiak-Kudła, 2021). As societies develop, new expectations emerge that may warrant a need to renegotiate the scope of academic freedom. The following elements of academic freedom were identified and addressed, and are consequently applied as the definition in this study:

Central dimensions and conditions of academic freedom

From: Maassen et al (2023) "State of play of academic freedom in the EU member states: Overview of de facto trends and developments".

Central dimensions

- **Freedom to research:** *this dimension concerns the freedom of each individual academic staff member to develop and follow his/her own research agenda without any undue political, administrative, religious, economic, social, cultural, or academic infringements. The freedom*

³⁴ Interpreted broadly and including all types of formal academic institutions.

referred to here is not absolute, but has to be exercised within the generally accepted framework conditions for academic freedom.

- **Freedom to teach, and freedom to study:** *This dimension concerns the freedom of individual academic staff to develop and follow their own teaching agendas and aspirations, and the freedom of students to develop and follow their own study preferences without any undue political, administrative, religious, economic, social, cultural, or academic infringements. The freedom referred to here is not absolute, but has to be exercised within the generally accepted framework conditions for academic freedom.*
- **Freedom of academic expression:** *This dimension concerns the freedom of academic staff and students to express themselves on the basis of their academic area of expertise or field of study within their institution and the wider academic community on academic and/or governance matters, without any undue internal or external pressures or risks of being punished. In addition, it concerns the freedom of academic staff to publish, disseminate and exchange research findings through academic journals and other outlets without any internal or external infringements, violations, threats or pressure.s*

Conditions for academic freedom

- **Institutional autonomy:** *This dimension concerns the room to manoeuvre that higher education institutions have to manage their own internal academic and administrative affairs without undue external interference. The interference referred to here can be political/legal, religious, economic, social, or cultural, and affect the procedural and/or substantive autonomy of higher education institutions.*
- **Self-governance:** *This dimension concerns the right of academic staff and students to be involved in the institutional governance and decision-making with respect to academic affairs. Self-governance is also referred to as the right of academic staff and students to co-determine academic affairs.*
- **Labour conditions:** *This dimension concerns the extent to which the labour conditions of academic staff provide the conditions under which all members of the academic community can exercise their academic freedom without fear of losing their job (tenured staff), or their contract not being renewed, or of access to a tenured position being jeopardised (non-tenured staff).*
- **Financial conditions:** *This dimension concerns the extent to which funding conditions for teaching or research have an impact on the freedom of the academic staff to develop and follow their own teaching and research agendas, and the freedom of students to develop and follow their own study preferences, that goes beyond what are regarded as valid and legitimate framework conditions.*

3.2.2.1. Six factors affecting academic freedom

The studies conducted for the EP Academic Freedom Monitor since 2022 show that while there is no crisis of academic freedom in the EU, there are developments in every Member State that have raised concerns about and threats to one or more academic freedom dimensions. The factors that cause these concerns and threats are as follows.

Government and politics

This factor refers to the ways in which political actors, that is, governments and their agencies, and individual politicians, such as members of parliament and their parties, influence or seek to influence the state of academic freedom in their country in such a way that this unduly limits the opportunities for academics and students to optimally exercise their academic freedom.

Institutional leadership and management

This factor concerns the ways in which the leadership and management of universities and colleges, as well as research institutes influence or seek to influence the state of academic freedom in their institution in such a way that this unduly limits the opportunities for academics and students to optimally exercise their academic freedom. This category includes both formal academic institutional leaders, such as presidents, rectors, vice-chancellors, and deans, as well as institutional administrative leaders/managers, such as directors of administrative offices, and managers responsible for administrative procedures and routines.

The academic community

This factor concerns the ways in which members of the academic staff and/or students influence or wish to influence the state of academic freedom in their institution or in higher education in general in such a way that this unduly limits the opportunities of other academics and students to optimally exercise their academic freedom.

Civil society

This factor concerns the ways in which individual citizens or groups of citizens, such as social action groups, influence or want to influence the state of academic freedom in their country (and sometimes beyond) in such a way that this unduly limits the possibilities of academics and students to optimally exercise their academic freedom. The use of social media plays a central role in this.

Private sector

This factor concerns the ways in which private companies influence or seek to influence the state of academic freedom in their country (and sometimes beyond) in such a way that it unduly limits the opportunities for academics and students to optimally exercise their academic freedom. The use of legal and financial instruments plays an important role in this.

European and national security policies

This factor relates to the ways in which European and national security concerns and policies that have recently emerged as a result of growing geopolitical tensions influence or seek to influence the state of academic freedom in such a way that they unduly limit the opportunities of academics and students to optimally exercise their academic freedom. Proposed and realised changes in the funding of scientific research ('dual use of research'), knowledge export regulations and restrictions of internationalisation, e.g. limiting the freedom of academics to determine who they want to collaborate with, are relevant features of this factor. An important and relevant aspect in this is worries about foreign interference³⁵ in European academia.

These six factors have been discussed with the sounding board and academic experts. They are used in this study to structure the data gathering and analysis, and will be developed further and refined on the basis of the outcomes of this study.

Each country report provides an overview of potential concerns and threats to, and where applicable, violations of academic freedom in the ten selected EU Member States. The presentation of the identified worries, threats and violations is organised according to the six factors introduced above. Each country report shows which of the identified dimensions of academic freedom may be threatened by which of the six identified factors. Where relevant, feedback and input from the sounding board and academic experts have been incorporated into the country reports.

³⁵ Foreign interference can cover a wide range of activities, including manipulative online practices, illicit party or campaign financing, covert influence peddling, and direct action against individuals
(see: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2024/760355/EPRS_ATA\(2024\)760355_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2024/760355/EPRS_ATA(2024)760355_EN.pdf))

3.3. Country-specific trends analysis

3.3.1. Bulgaria

Introduction

In the 2022/23 pilot study on the state of play of academic freedom in the EU Member States commissioned by the European Parliament STOA Panel (Maassen et al., 2023), Bulgaria was argued to have a relatively positive *de facto* academic freedom situation³⁶. At the same time, the Academic Freedom Index score of Bulgaria was among the lowest of all EU Member States scores with Bulgaria ranked as 23rd of the EU Member States in the 2021 AFI index. Bulgaria was not included in the 2017 EUA autonomy scorecard, while the study by Beiter et al. (2016) suggested that the legal protection of institutional autonomy in Bulgaria was slightly below the average for all EU Member States.

As presented in section 2 of this report, the current state of academic freedom in Bulgaria has been assessed as rather stable. The score for Bulgaria in the AFI 2024 update (0.84) is slightly lower than in 2021 and indicates that Bulgaria is in the top 20-30% of countries worldwide, and has status A. Furthermore, Bulgaria is still not included in the EU institutional autonomy scorecard implying that no update can be given on the current state of institutional autonomy in the country (Pruvot et al., 2023). The AFI score can be interpreted as a medium-high score globally, with Bulgaria ranked 21st among EU countries in the AFI 2024 update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

As discussed in the pilot study, key for understanding the state of academic freedom in Bulgaria is the tension between the relatively strong formal legal protection of academic freedom versus the lack of a consistent interpretation and implementation of the legal protection of academic freedom in the practice of the Bulgarian higher education system and institutions. In the period before 2023 this has led to the controversial dismissal of tenured professors and a worry in the academic community that the government was trying to increase its control over higher education and research, with possibly negative consequences for academic freedom (Maassen et al. 2023, pp. 34-35). This worry has continued until today, embedded in a seemingly slow overall erosion of *de facto* academic freedom. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence for identifying key, detailed features of this erosion.

A relevant aspect of the Bulgarian higher education system is that it, both academically and administratively, is among the least investigated systems in the European Union. As a consequence, while in other EU Member States academic studies and other publications, for example, government commissioned reports, provide relevant insights in the state of academic freedom, this is far less the case in Bulgaria. Therefore, in order to get a better understanding of specific features of the state of academic freedom in Bulgaria, for example, whether self-censorship is widespread and the extent to which public authorities try to interfere in the responsibility of the academic community to guard academic freedom and determine the quality of scientific activities (see also Vögtle and Windzio, 2024), additional empirical research needs to be undertaken. As indicated in this country section, the available sources of information analysed in the monitoring period (2023-24) did not reveal any specific recent, new worries about or infringements on academic freedom beyond the possible interference of the public authorities (Maassen et al., 2023; Craciun et al., 2024).

³⁶ In line with the legal protection of academic freedom, all Bulgarian universities have introduced and enforced their formal Ethic code in which academic freedom, academic and institutional responsibility therein defined. For the Ethics code of Sofia University, see: <https://astro.phys.uni-sofia.bg/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Etichen-kodeks-SU.pdf>

Government and politics

As indicated above, Bulgaria can be regarded as an EU Member State with relatively strong legal protection of academic freedom through its Constitution and Higher Education Act. However, as argued by Spannagel and Kinzelbach (2023, p. 3971) the "main problem with a purely legal analysis ... is that it risks capturing a misleading picture when not compared to a country's *de facto* situation of academic freedom, as discrepancies between law and practice are likely to be high in many countries". This also applies to Bulgaria. As discussed in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023), there is apparently a mismatch between the formal legal protection of academic freedom and the external interference in academic freedom especially by public authorities in Bulgaria (see also Corbett, 2022). This creates the situation where the way to strengthen *de facto* academic freedom in Bulgaria and counter its gradual erosion is not necessarily through strengthening its legal protection, but for all stakeholders involved, and especially the public authorities, to respect the legal protection of academic freedom and refrain from undue interference. As argued in a report by the Association "Innovative Trans-Border Solutions"³⁷ to the special rapporteur on the right to education of the United Nations: "Problems and challenges to academic freedom [in Bulgaria] mainly stem from the different interpretation of the legal regulations during their enforcement" (OHCHR, 2024). Key examples of the problematic relationship between public authorities and the higher education system mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023) were the efforts of the government to enforce a standardised national accreditation system (Filipova, 2022; Georgieva, 2022), and the continuous tension between the government and the higher education institutions about the (insufficient) level of public funding. Especially the higher education funding situation continued since 2022 to impact the debates on and worries about threats to academic freedom in Bulgaria.

The funding situation of Bulgarian higher education was characterised earlier this year (2024) by Prof. Dr. Miglena Temelkova, Chairman of the Council of Rectors as follows: "For years the Bulgarian higher education sector has been underfunded, which for me also means neglected by the political power in the country" (Bulgarian National Television, 2024). The situation became rather tense after a promised salary increase by the state did not materialise. The universities even closed down on 20 May 2024 to express their discontent with their budget situation³⁸. The rectors of the 44 universities involved argued that the universities were not protesting solely for higher wages but also for adherence to the Higher Education Act. Recent changes to the law mandated salary increases in universities, which have still not been implemented³⁹. By amending the Higher Education Act, rules had been adopted by the previous government that would tie the funds provided from the state budget for education and science to a certain minimum percentage. However, as indicated by the university rectors, not only the announced salary increase was not taken place but in addition, a large amount of funding the universities were legally to receive could not be allocated because of the country's budget situation (Bulgarian National Television, 2024). In an interview given to explain the arguments underlying the shutdown, the chairperson of the Council of Rectors, Prof. Miglena Temelkova, and Kalin Kostov – chairman of the Association for Quality in Higher Education argued twofold. First, the government is not allocating the level of funding it is legally required to invest in the universities which has led to a structural underfunding especially in the area of research of the

³⁷ See: <https://itbsinterconsult.com/>

³⁸ See: Bulgarian National Television (2024) and Novinite.com, a news agency in Sofia: <https://www.novinite.com/articles/226151/Universities+in+Bulgaria+Close+Doors+in+Protest+Over+Insufficient+Funding>. See also: https://kinsights.capital.bg/politics_and_society/2024/05/20/4628407_probe_into_vitoshka_lift_shutdown_police_in_sofia_swoop/

³⁹ Bulgaria invested e.g. (in 2022) 0.75% of its GDP in R&D which puts it among the 4 EU Member States that invest the smallest percentage of their GDP in R&D (see: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=R%26D_expenditure)

university system. Second, the government is argued to lack a long-term vision and adequate policies on higher education and research. As stated by Prof. Temelkova, "piecemeal reforms are carried out, and changes in laws are initiated from today to tomorrow without the academic community being involved". The lack of adequate policies is also argued to cause the lack of incentives for the engagement of business with universities⁴⁰. The funding situation and lack of adequate higher education policies can be argued to have an impact on the conditions under which academic freedom is to be exercised. From this perspective it is of relevance to quote the then Deputy Minister of Education and Science who presented as one of the reasons for placing academic freedom in a disproportionate dependence on state funding the inability of academic leaders, "to open up to the European market and participate in more European funds and programs"⁴¹.

An example of the way in which government interference has been argued to negatively impact institutional autonomy is the government's attempt to impose uniform rules for academic promotion across all fields/disciplines in higher education institutions. In his criticism on the position of the Minister who states that differences between disciplines in determining academic promotion are unacceptable, Kalin Kostov⁴², chairman of the Association for Quality in Higher Education has argued that that are important differences between humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, technical sciences, and the medical field that should be taken into account. While this issue might not seem to be a key factor for the state of academic freedom in Bulgaria, it is indicative of the way in which the government has developed a political position and tries to impose it on the academic system, instead of allowing the system to exercise its autonomy in a meaningful way. The OHCHR report refers to three Bulgarian researchers⁴³ who opine that "... in the modern period of the development of society there is a need to combine academic autonomy with mechanisms for institutional responsibility – to achieve transparency and connection with the interests of society." According to the report, "that is not entirely the case in Bulgarian practice" (OHCHR, 2024).

Furthermore, it is of relevance to refer to extensive public debates taking place in 2024 about a Law banning LGBTQ+ 'propaganda' in Bulgarian schools. This Law was adopted by Parliament in August 2024. It resembles anti LGBTQ+ laws in Russia and Hungary, and many academics signed an open letter⁴⁴ criticising the amendment for, "introducing sanctions for a non-existing problem".⁴⁵ The EU Commissioner Mrs Helena Dalli, who is responsible for equality issues, send a letter to the Bulgarian Minister of Education and Science, Mr. Galin Tsokov, "to request for further information on the legislation"⁴⁶.

Institutional leadership and management

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific recent worries about or infringements on academic freedom by university leadership and management beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). At the same time, the discussions on the funding situation of Bulgarian universities included some criticism on the university rectors for lacking strategic management skills. Furthermore, there were some concerns about the efforts of public authorities and university leadership to censor certain curricula and

⁴⁰ See: <https://fakti.bg/en/bulgaria/882417-the-protest-of-the-universities-was-not-so-much-about-money-but-against-the-lack-of-adequacy>

⁴¹ See: <https://www.segabg.com/category-observer/tozi-universitet-shte-ima-100-prepodavateli-drugiya-250>

⁴² See: <https://fakti.bg/video/678163-adv-kostov-ako-debatat-za-akademichnata-avnomia-stigne-ks-znachi-nakoi-e-prekrachil-granici-video>

⁴³ The three academics in question are: Veselina Slavova, Andriyana Andreeva, and Darina Dimitrova.

⁴⁴ See: <https://dversia.net/7992/open-letter-zpuo-academia/>

⁴⁵ See: <https://www.politico.eu/article/bulgaria-anti-lgbtq-law-ban-propaganda-school-ruman-rudev/>

⁴⁶ See: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-10-2024-001504-ASW_EN.html

course literature with respect to the pre-democratic socialist regime and in relation to the ongoing war in Ukraine. However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Bulgaria of specific actions of institutional leadership and management, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Academic community

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any clear recent worries about or infringements on academic freedom from within the academic community beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). The OHCHR report (2024) refers to criticism from within the academic community about the lack of research funding for humanities and for topics that have to do with the socialist period. But this criticism could not be further corroborated. The discussions on the funding situation of Bulgarian universities included some criticism on the university rectors for lacking strategic management skills. However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Bulgaria of specific actions of institutional leadership and management, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Civil society

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by civil society actors beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). Therefore, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Bulgaria of specific actions from civil society, e.g. attacks on academics through social media, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Private sector actors

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by private sector actors beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). As indicated under the heading 'Government and politics' in this country section university rectors accuse the government of lacking higher education policies that would incentivise the private sector to engage with universities. This could indicate that the engagement of the private sector with Bulgarian universities is not as well developed as in other EU Member States. Also the OHCHR report does not include a direct reference to the possible interference of private sector actors with academic freedom. However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Bulgaria of specific actions of private sector actors additional empirical research would be necessary.

Security policies and concerns

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom in relation to national security concerns and policies beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). We can refer in this to the traditional relatively close relationships between Bulgarian politicians (and their parties) and the Russian political leadership. However, during the monitoring period no specific information was available that would allow for a closer analysis of how this relationship and other factors might affect national security policies in Bulgaria. Therefore, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Bulgaria of national Bulgarian security concerns and

policies, or the impact of foreign interference in Bulgarian universities, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Conclusion

The debates on the state of academic freedom in Bulgaria can be characterised as being driven mainly by the tension between the legal protection of academic freedom and the ineffective implementation of the relevant legal articles. In this, the funding situation of Bulgarian higher education and research plays a central role. As argued in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023), the debates on the governance and funding relationship between public authorities and universities are indicative of the still rather weakly institutionalised practices of academic freedom in Bulgarian academia making it all the more important to enhance the common understanding of and knowledge basis on academic freedom and institutional autonomy in the country effectively.

3.3.2. Croatia

Introduction

In the 2022/23 pilot study on the state of academic freedom in the EU Member States commissioned by the European Parliament STOA Panel (Maassen et al., 2023), Croatia was argued to have a relatively positive *de facto* academic freedom situation. At the same time, the Academic Freedom Index score of Croatia was among the lowest scores of all EU Member States with Croatia ranked as 22nd of the EU Member States in the 2021 AFI index. In addition, the 2017 EUA autonomy scorecard scores indicated that institutional autonomy in Croatia was at a low level in Europe (Croatia being ranked 26th of 29 countries included). As presented in section 2 of this report, the current state of academic freedom in Croatia has been assessed as slowly deteriorating. The score for Croatia in the AFI 2024 update (0.80) is lower than in 2021 (0.87). The score indicates that Croatia is on the border between Status A and Status B and is in the top 30-40% of countries worldwide. Croatia's AFI score can be interpreted as a medium-high score globally, with Croatia ranked 23rd among EU countries in the AFI 2024 update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). The 2023 EU autonomy scorecard score for Croatia (41.5%) has deteriorated further in comparison to the low 2017 score and Croatia is ranked 25th of 27 European countries included (Pruvot et al., 2023).

In the EP pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023), Croatia was found to have challenges related to oversight at the institutional and political levels of higher education governance as well as issues related to labor conditions and public higher education and research funding. Croatia had also enacted a law of higher education and science with the aforementioned challenges as a backdrop aimed at increasing the transparency and accountability of universities.

Considering the six potential sources of threats to academic freedom followed in this study, the pilot study findings for Croatia can be interpreted as relating to especially two out of six threats: government and politics, and institutional leadership and management.

As regards the interference of government and politics, the debates around the introduction of the new Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity served to highlight the then challenges facing the Croatian system. While the need for reform was recognised by the majority of stakeholders, the debates identified a number of shortcomings with the Act, in particular the balance between accountability of institutions through political control mechanisms and the basic principle of promoting and protecting academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and self-governance.

Threats to academic freedom and the democratic governance of institutions were indicated in the pilot study to come from institutional leadership and management. Cases of corruption, embezzlement of university funds, and the attempt to silence voices critical of the institutional leadership were identified, all contributing to the wider debate concerning how to further reform the Croatian system of higher education and research while maintaining the protection of basic values, such as academic freedom.

The pilot study argued that the Croatian case shows the complexity with respect to the state of academic freedom in a number of the new EU Member States in CEE. In the democratisation of the political order of these countries the reform of higher education and science was in most cases not prioritised. Only in recent years have many CEE countries introduced reforms aimed at modernising higher education and research. Higher education and research reforms were also demanded in the framework of the EU Covid-19 recovery plan (NextGenerationEU⁴⁷). Finding an effective balance between the drive for modernising higher education and research, and protecting and strengthening basic values, such as academic freedom, is a challenge for Croatia, as for most other CEE governments and the various groups making up the academic community (Maassen et al., 2023).

⁴⁷ See: https://next-generation-eu.europa.eu/index_en

From that perspective it was seen as positive that a 'moderate' version of the new Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity was adopted October 2022. This was seen as an indication that the dialogue between the minister and ministry, parliament and the academic community, has resulted in a new Act that might be acceptable to most parties involved.

Continuing or emerging worries during the monitoring period about the state of academic freedom in Croatia include the significant decrease in student numbers, governmental interference affecting academic freedom and institutional autonomy, public funding issues, academic labor conditions, institutional autonomy, corruption, and public trust in higher education and research.

Government and politics

In ongoing debates, the introduction of the 2022 Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity has been viewed as indicative of the variety of worries about and threats to academic freedom rather than a governmental effort to resolve them. Groups of academics and students have argued that the government is apparently unwilling to involve academic representatives and their viewpoints in important policy decisions that affect higher education and research (Obadić, 2024b).

The 2022 Act introduced programme contracts between universities and the Ministry of Science and Education with consequences for funding arrangements and accreditation of newly proposed programmes⁴⁸. While this was aimed at increasing the transparency and accountability of Croatian higher education and its institutions, raising scientific excellence, and strengthening the link between education and the labor market, academics argue that the 2022 Act introduced risks of money laundering and embezzlement of funds (Independent Union of Science and Higher Education, 2022) and undue political influence over the accreditation process to coordinate study programmes with labor market needs and the government's strategic plan (Obadić, 2024a).

An example that illustrates some of these issues concerns the recent rejection of a new gender studies Master's programme at the University of Zagreb. The programme, which was initially scheduled to accept students in the fall of 2024, was ultimately rejected on the grounds that the accreditation process was conducted under the old system, meaning that it did not meet the updated requirements. (Editorial - N1 Zagreb, 2024). This highlights challenges in implementing the reform during the early transition period. The rejection of the programme was preceded by a public debate on the conflict between gender theory and Croatian societal and religious values (Gelenčir, 2024b). The complexity of this issue in the Croatian context can be illustrated by the following quotes⁴⁹. One of the initiators of the study programme, Professor Branka Galic, argued that this was a political decision, in the sense that, "This was just a test to see the reactions of the political actors. Now, of course, they can delay the procedure as long as they want". In a positive response to the decision Marijan Pavlicek, leader of the conservative and Christian-right party Croatian Sovereignists, in parliament stated, "I think it was to be expected that they would be rejected if we abide by the decision of the Croatian parliament and the interpretative declaration to the Istanbul Convention that gender ideology must not be allowed to penetrate Croatian society. Obviously, the gender studies programme has not adhered to this interpretative declaration". This response was in line with the response by the Catholic Bishops of the country who released a statement calling on those responsible in state and society to reconsider the introduction of the degree programme in gender studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. "Although the bishops wanted to stay out of ideological and political debates and not interfere with academic freedom, they nevertheless saw it as their duty to point out some aspects of gender theory that could harm society in the long term.

⁴⁸ See: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2022_10_119_1834.html. For an overview of the legislation in the field of higher education in Croatia, see: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/eurydica/croatia/higher-education>

⁴⁹ See the article by the news site N1: <https://n1info.hr/english/news/academic-freedom-under-fire-gender-studies-programme-rejected-in-zagreb/>.

Certain courses such as feminist theory, gender history and queer linguistics would give the impression that "gender ideology is to be indirectly introduced into the Croatian education system", which they oppose⁵⁰. Furthermore Matija Kroflin, the Secretary General of the Independent Union for Science and Higher Education stated in response to the government decision that, "The autonomy of universities, and an essential part of it, is the ability of faculties to choose independently and autonomously, without the influence of capital, the church or social aspects, the topics on which they will research and teach." He pointed out that the possible ban on gender studies sets a dangerous precedent for the academic community. Finally, the responsible Minister (Fuchs) argued that the gender studies programme had used the wrong procedure: "They have not received a rejection, this must be made clear. The initiation of a new degree programme begins with the faculty; after the academic council of the faculty has given its approval, the procedure is passed on to the university. Under the old law, the process would end there, with the university sending a notification to the ministry to put the programme on the list. Under the new law, higher education institutions are on an equal footing. Public universities also need quality assurance of the study programme by a public body"⁵¹.

Another aspect of the 2022 Act is the government's intention to merge legislation and regulations for academic staff with those of civil servants and public sector employees. Academics are concerned this represents a trend of establishing political control that puts institutional autonomy at risk (Obadić, 2024a). Part of the change involves the removal of the scientific titles tied to individuals and the translation of salary levels within the old system to that of civil servants and public sector employees. The removal of titles is concerning for academics as it contributes to lowering the status of academics and universities, as well as making the link between academic achievement and experience in salaries less apparent (Independent Union of Science and Higher Education, 2022). The translation of salary levels and their subsequent adjustment was argued to be a turbulent process due to the adjustments and translation being done by individual institutions (rather than centralised by the government), inconsistencies in the legal texts and relevant instructions from the government, and the implementation happening on short notice within a short timeframe (Independent Union of Science and Higher Education, 2024b; 2024c).

The changes in salary and working conditions also prompted renewed negotiations between the Ministry and the Independent Union of Science and Higher Education Employees (NSZVO) as the only representative union of academics recognised by the government. The new collective agreement has been criticised for failing to involve representatives from important groups within the academic community (The Academic Union, 2024). Furthermore, during the process leading up to the negotiations, the Ministry was accused of falsifying the statements of the NSZVO's president, Predrag Marković, and in general being unresponsive to official requests by the NSZVO (Independent Union of Science and Higher Education, 2024b; 2024d).

The conditions for dialogue between the academic community and the government regarding important policy issues in higher education and research are characterised by limited efforts by the government to involve academics and higher education experts, as well as an apparent disregard for the identified needs of the system and academic values and practices. The debates indicate that issues related to human and financial resources, policy formulation, policy implementation, and increased political control over higher education, contribute to affecting both individual academic freedom and institutional autonomy. There is also concern in the academic community that higher education and research are seen as low-status and untrustworthy by government officials and some

⁵⁰ See: <https://english.katholisch.de/artikel/54662-bishops-demand-rethink-the-introduction-of-gender-studies-at-university>

⁵¹ See: <https://n1info.hr/english/news/minister-gender-studies-were-not-rejected-the-application-was-sent-to-the-wrong-address/>

parts of civil society, and that there is a lack of awareness, if not a 'profound ignorance' about academic freedom (Gelenčir, 2024a).

In November 2024, a conference on academic freedom was held by the universities of Zagreb, Split, Rijeka, and Osijek and their faculties of law in which topics related to important conditions for academic freedom were discussed (Editorial - Akademski.hr, 2024). Notably, the speakers did not include any representatives from the Ministry of Science and Education.

Institutional leadership and management

The 2022 Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity has also led to worries about possible infringements on academic freedom by institutional leadership and management, especially by affecting labor conditions and allowing for dismissal on the basis of non-academic criteria or arguments. The 2022 Law stipulates, for example, evaluation processes that allow for the assessment of academic performance and conduct by rectors and deans once every academic year (Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity, 2022, Article 45). Critics argue that the mechanism can be used to pressure dissenting or non-conforming academic voices, leading to employment decisions driven by non-academic motives and criteria (Debeljak, 2024; Kruljak, 2024).

Academic community

In the monitoring period, the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom from within the academic community beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Croatia of specific threats or actions from within the academic community, e.g. the possible impact on academic freedom of internal corruption, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Civil society

The initial rejection of the gender studies programme at the University of Zagreb by the government was preceded by a public debate on gender theory vis-à-vis religious and societal values in Croatia. While the rejection is formally attributed to the 2022 Law and its implementation failing to account for study programmes ready for accreditation and approval during the transition period of the reform, it has been argued that the main motive might be political with the aim to abide to certain dominant civil actors and groups. This raises concern for how societal debates and dominant worldviews can influence decisions traditionally reserved for universities and the academic community.

Private sector actors

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by private sector actors beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Croatia of specific actions of private sector actors additional empirical research would be necessary.

Security policies and concerns

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by national security policies and concerns beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive

understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Croatia of specific initiatives and intentions in the area of national security, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Conclusion

In general, a large part of the academic community views the Croatian higher education system as being in a dire situation due to lack of financial and human resources, staffing conditions, political and academic corruption, and a policy making practices which fail to sufficiently involve academic staff and student perspectives on important policy areas. While some of these issues existed before the introduction of the 2022 Law, this Law is thus far regarded by many in the academic community as unsuccessful in providing broad and lasting improvements on the back of problematic dialogue conditions between the academic community and the government, an overly ambitious timeframe of implementation of six months, and legal texts that contain certain inconsistencies in their interpretation and application. Some academics have expressed a particular concern for academic freedom and institutional autonomy in Croatia, and fear that the 2022 Law represents a change towards more political control and steering of universities.

3.3.3. Germany

Introduction

In the 2022/23 pilot study on the state of play of academic freedom in the EU Member States commissioned by the European Parliament STOA Panel (Maassen et al., 2023), Germany was indicated to have a very strong *de facto* academic freedom. The AFI score of Germany was characterised as stable with Germany ranked as 1st of the EU Member States in the 2021 AFI index, with a score of 0.97. As presented in section 2 of this report, also the current state of academic freedom in Germany has in general been assessed as positive and stable. While the score for Germany in the AFI 2024 update (0.93, implying Germany has status A) is slightly lower than in 2021, it is still among the top 10% in the world. Nonetheless, Germany has dropped from being ranked first among EU Member States in 2021 to 8th in the AFI 2024 update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The pilot study argued that because of the concentration of the governance responsibilities for higher education at the state (*Land*) level, there are clear limitations for the Federal Government of Germany to interfere directly into the internal affairs of the higher education institutions. Furthermore, the pilot study discussed similarities among the German states in their legal protection of academic freedom and institutional autonomy within their state and provided examples of these similarities (Maassen et al., 2023), as well as of the ways in which individual universities are committed to the promotion and protection of academic freedom. This background was argued to be a factor underlying the high 2021 AFI score for Germany (Kinzelbach et al. 2022), which was not only the highest score among the EU Member States, but the highest score of all countries covered by the AFI. The pilot study did not identify structural threats to academic freedom at the national level in Germany.

Various indicators, including the 2024 AFI update, suggest that even though the state of academic freedom in Germany is still very positive, it is at the same time under pressure. Germany is no longer the highest scoring EU Member State in the AFI, and also the German cases presented in the Scholars at Risk 'Free to Think' report (SAR, 2024) confirm that there are concerns about the development of *de facto* academic freedom in Germany, especially in relation to the Israel-Gaza conflict.

Furthermore, some academics have pointed to the increasing political polarisation and commercialisation of research, while others have referred to other factors affecting academic freedom in Germany negatively, such as the precarious working conditions of early career scholars⁵². While the current state cannot be characterised as an academic freedom crisis, the trends in academic freedom in Germany over the last 3 years seem to indicate that academic freedom is slowly eroding in the country.

At the end of the 2010s some of the signs pointing to this erosion were already on the wall. In the pilot study an overview of emerging threats and worries was presented (Maassen et al., 2023). These included a growing scepticism in politics and society towards science, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, growing interference of the private sector in science as a consequence of insufficient levels of public funding for research and higher education, and deteriorating labour conditions for temporary academic staff (Maassen et al., 2023). In addition, also growing worries about the impact of foreign interference on academic freedom were mentioned, especially in relation to scientific collaborations between Germany and China. Overall, the worries and threats identified in the pilot study were part of trends in academic freedom in Germany that resembled in many respects the developments in other EU Member States, which can be characterised as, "Threats to Academic Freedom in the EU Member States come from various sources at the same

⁵² See e.g.: <https://blog.tib.eu/2024/11/29/international-panel-discussion-of-perspectives-on-academic-freedom-with-insights-from-germany-and-ukraine-osicu2024-2/>

time" (Craciun et al., 2024). When taken separately, each of these threats on its own might not represent a structural violation of academic freedom, but taken together and when not countered in time, they can have a significant eroding effect on academic freedom in Germany and other EU Member States in the coming period.

Government and politics

The pilot study referred to worries in the academic system about the growing influence of populist politicians in Germany, and especially the political party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). This worry has continued in the monitoring period. After the electoral success in 2024 of the AfD in two German states the Times Higher Education (THE) cited several higher education leaders who warned that because of the success of the AfD, "German institutions could become less attractive employers for international scholars"⁵³. The Rector of the Technical University of Dresden, Professor Ursula Staudinger, stated in the THE article that while the election results were 'concerning', she did not fear for her institution's 'stability and security', since the current state government and the rectors of all Saxony's universities had agreed in May 2024 on the terms of basic funding for the next eight years. "This agreement is of utmost importance to us," Professor Staudinger said in the article. The AfD did in the end not become a member of the respective state governments, but they still have sizable state parliamentary factions, implying that they might use their parliamentary presence to politicise certain higher education-related policy issues.

The programme of the AfD on the federal level in the area of education, science and research⁵⁴ indicates that the party wants to introduce restrictions that would potentially affect academic freedom, such as discontinuing the public funding of gender-studies study programmes and research, and introducing conditions for migrants' access to education. It also argues that the Bologna process has failed in the sense that it has caused a schooling of academic studies, and has curtailed academic freedom and made changing study places more difficult. To counter this development the party wants to move away from modularisation and competence orientation and reintroduce the traditional diploma and Magister degree courses. Furthermore, the party would like to close down all Confucius Institutes at German higher education institutions. Finally, the party programme indicates that the party wants to strengthen the institutional autonomy and enhance academic and science freedom, and increase the basic funding for universities and Fachhochschulen in order to reduce their dependence on third-party funding. It is at the time of this study not possible to make a valid assessment of how this programme might be implemented and how the balance between restrictions that would affect academic freedom, and other programme elements will look like if the party would have formal governmental responsibility.

Of direct relevance for the state of academic freedom in German is the impact of geopolitical developments in the monitoring period. This concerns not only the tensions in the science relationships with China referred to in the pilot study and the consequences of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, but in particular also the impact on academic freedom of the Gaza-Israel conflict. As presented in the first part of this report, *Scholars at Risk* is expressing worries about several attacks on academic freedom in relation to the Gaza-Israel conflict, referring to three cases that have been identified in the period June 2023 to July 2024. These are first the denial of entry into the country of the rector of the University of Glasgow, United Kingdom⁵⁵, second the withdrawal of a professorship⁵⁶, and third the arbitrary dismissal of a scholar⁵⁷. All three cases concern responses by

⁵³ See: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/german-universities-could-be-less-attractive-far-right-rises>

⁵⁴ See: <https://www.afd.de/wahlprogramm-bildung-wissenschaft-forschung/>

⁵⁵ See also: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20240417131457177>

⁵⁶ See also: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/apr/10/nancy-fraser-cologne-university-germany-job-offer-palestine>

⁵⁷ See: <https://easaonline.org/outputs/support/mps0224.shtml>

national authorities or institutional leadership to public expressions or opinions of the scholars in question on the Gaza– Israel conflict. For understanding the rationale behind these responses, it is of importance to take, amongst other things, the German law into account, which makes it illegal to deny Israel's right to existence as a state. This implies that in some of the cases in question the response does not concern the pro-Palestinian position per se that the academics advocated with respect to the Gaza–Israel conflict, but rather how they formulated their opinions or ideas. For example, if an academic advocates a Palestinian one–state solution and thereby denies Israel's right of existence, this person would violate the German law. The specific nature of the German case with respect to the Gaza–Israel conflict should be taken into account when assessing the impact of the above mentioned responses on *de facto* academic freedom in Germany.

Several public expressions of concern from within the academic community in Germany have been published in 2024. For example, the Board of the German Association of Social and Cultural Anthropology released a statement⁵⁸ in February 2024 in which it expressed, "grave concern over the fact that researchers working in Germany are finding their fundamental rights to academic freedom and freedom of expression increasingly restricted". This concern relates to the cases identified by SAR, and more general the marginalisation of academics who are argued to exercise their academic freedom, and the growing limitations to one of the core tasks of universities and research institutes in Germany, that is, their role as, "spaces for difficult discussions in highly polarised social moments".

Spring 2024 the number of protest actions of pro-Palestinian staff and student groups was increasing at German universities, including efforts to occupy rooms or create camps on the university campus, e.g. in Berlin, Bremen and Leipzig. This led both at the institutional and political level to discussions about whether such protest actions are legitimate from an academic freedom of expression perspective or examples of anti-Semitism⁵⁹. Of relevance is that not all protest actions were peaceful. At the Free University of Berlin, for example, an attempt to occupy in October 2024 a university building was accompanied by violent attacks on university staff and destruction of property⁶⁰.

In this situation what has been referred to as an 'academic freedom scandal' erupted in Germany⁶¹. Core of the 'scandal' was that information emerged indicating that the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) appeared to check whether it could revoke research funding from academics who had supported a pro-Palestinian protest in an open letter. The case started with pro-Palestinian protests at universities in Berlin in May 2024. In an open letter signed by around 1,400 academics, the signatories advocated for the students' "right to peaceful protest, which also includes the occupation of university premises"⁶². Furthermore, the signatories saw it as, "the university management's duty to strive for a dialogic and non-violent solution for as long as possible"⁶³. The executive board of the FU Berlin was argued in the letter to violate this duty by initiating a police

⁵⁸ See: <https://www.dgska.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2024-02-12-Statement-GASCA-Academic-Freedom.pdf>

⁵⁹ For examples of supporters of either perspective, see: <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/universitaeten-proteste-nahost-100.html>

⁶⁰ See: <https://www.rbb24.de/panorama/beitrag/2024/10/berlin-fu-praesidium-besetzt-vermummte-hintergrund-nahost.html>

⁶¹ See, e.g.: <https://sciencebusiness.net/news/universities/german-science-official-steps-down-row-about-pro-palestine-protest>; and: <https://scilogs.spektrum.de/menschen-bilder/skandal-im-forschungsministerium-sollte-die-wissenschaftsfreiheit-ingeschraenkt-werden/>

⁶² The original German text is formulated as follows: „*Recht auf friedlichen Protest, das auch die Besetzung von Uni-Gelände einschließt*“.

⁶³ The original German text is formulated as follows: „*Pflichten der Universitätsleitung, solange wie nur möglich eine dialogische und gewaltfreie Lösung anzustreben*“.

evacuation. The letter concluded with the demand: "We call on the Berlin university management to refrain from police operations against their own students and from further criminal prosecution. Dialogue with students and the protection of universities as spaces for the critical public should have top priority – both of which are incompatible with police operations on campus."⁶⁴ What is an important feature of the letter is that the signatories distanced themselves from the content of the protest and focused instead on the right of students to freedom of (academic expression), debate and demonstration.

Federal Minister Stark-Watzinger, responsible for education and research, responded very critical to the letter and released in June a statement⁶⁵ in which she expressed her view as follows: "It still astounds me to this day how one-sidedly the terror of Hamas was ignored in this letter. And how there was a blanket demand not to prosecute crimes at universities, while at the same time anti-Semitic incitement and violent attacks against Jewish fellow citizens can be observed."

Emails published in June indicated that someone in the political leadership of the Ministry had given the order to review whether there could be a ground for legally prosecuting the statements in the letter and whether the Ministry could revoke already allocated public research funding to academics who signed the letter⁶⁶. While it was rapidly clarified in the internal responses to the emails that there was no legal or political foundation for disciplinary measures, State Secretary Sabine Döring was indicated by Minister Stark-Watzinger to be responsible for initiating the so-called test order, and was therefore dismissed by the Minister from her position. While there were also demands for the Minister to resign, she stayed in her post until November 7, 2024 when her party, the FDP, left the governing coalition.

In November 2024 the University Rectors' Conference (HRK) criticised the plan to pass a resolution in the German parliament against anti-Semitism specifically for use at universities and schools. The central requirements with respect to the higher education sector included regular data collection on anti-Semitism at universities and in schools, the establishment of anti-Semitism officers at higher education institutions, and a critical attitude towards the boycott of Israeli science. "Such a decision is not objectively necessary and is not useful against the background of university autonomy and academic freedom," states the resolution of the 39th HRK general meeting on November 19th⁶⁷. According to the HRK, the discussion about the definition of anti-Semitism is the subject and task of academic debate. State intervention in scientific discourse at universities is not permitted and, "It must be ensured that state funding for research and teaching is distributed solely according to science-led principles and procedures"⁶⁸.

Both the responses of the Federal Government and federal politicians in parliament to the Gaza-Israel conflict and the high level of political polarisation on the issue especially around some of the

⁶⁴ The original German text is formulated as follows: "*Wir fordern die Berliner Universitätsleitungen auf, von Polizeieinsätzen gegen ihre eigenen Studierenden ebenso wie von weiterer strafrechtlicher Verfolgung abzusehen. Der Dialog mit den Studierenden und der Schutz der Hochschulen als Räume der kritischen Öffentlichkeit sollte oberste Priorität haben – beides ist mit Polizeieinsätzen auf dem Campus unvereinbar. Nur durch Auseinandersetzung und Debatte werden wir als Lehrende und Universitäten unserem Auftrag gerecht.*"

⁶⁵ See: https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/shareddocs/pressemitteilungen/de/2024/06/160624_StD.html

⁶⁶ The original German text is formulated as follows: "*...eine juristische Prüfung einer etwaigen strafrechtlichen Relevanz der Aussagen in den [sic!] offenen Brief" sowie "eine förderrechtliche Bewertung, inwieweit vonseiten des BMBF ggf. förderrechtliche Konsequenzen (Widerruf der Förderung etc.) möglich sind".*

⁶⁷ See: https://www.hrk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/hrk/02-Dokumente/02-01-Beschluesse/2024-11-19_HRK-MV_Entschliessung_Antisemitismusdebatte-im-Bundestag.pdf

⁶⁸ See: <https://www.forschung-und-lehre.de/politik/hrk-kritisiert-antisemitismus-resolution-speziell-fuer-hochschulen-6772>

larger universities, e.g. in Berlin⁶⁹, increased the pressure on higher education institutions but also local politics to react to a constantly shifting public and media debate. This shows the complexity and also the sensitivity not only of the various perspectives on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but also of the issue of academic freedom in general and freedom of (academic) expression in particular in German higher education and research.

The two issues presented here, that is, the worries about the possible impact on academic freedom of the growing influence of populist politicians in Germany⁷⁰, and the worries about the impact on academic freedom of the responses to the public expressions, opinions, and actions of academic staff and students in relation to the Gaza-Israel conflict concern to a large extent the Federal Government and politics. At the same time, as indicated in the introduction, the main governance responsibility for higher education and research lies at the state (*Land*) level in Germany. This implies that despite the direct relationship to the Federal Government and politics of the cases and worries presented in this section, they also relate to the state level. The influence of populist parties can, for example, be expected to be different among German states, while also the responses to student actions e.g. in relation to the Gaza-Israel conflict might differ from state to state. This is also of relevance when assessing the trends in institutional autonomy in Germany. The European University Association institutional autonomy scorecard does therefore not include the federal level in its assessments but three German states (Pruvot et al., 2023). Also when it comes to assessing the state of *de facto* academic freedom in Germany it would make sense to address both federal trends and state trends when it comes to worries about and threats to *de facto* academic freedom coming from government and politics. However, this study focused on Germany as a whole and did not review academic freedom trends in each of the German states. It can be recommended to conduct such a review in one of the future studies for the EP Academic Freedom Monitor.

Institutional leadership and management

Overall, the leadership of German universities, Fachhochschulen and research institutes is committed to promoting and protecting academic freedom within their institution. At the same time, several institutions and institutes have been criticised for their responses to pro-Palestinian protests, for example by students on campus, and to pro-Palestinian opinions and voices, for example by invited speakers or staff. This can be illustrated by the three cases identified by Scholars at Risk (2024) and discussed in the previous section⁷¹. These cases show that there is a rather a thin line for institutional leadership between adherence to basic values, such as the necessity of combatting antisemitism, racism and islamophobia, and undue limitations to academic freedom, e.g. by cancelling academic invitations or firing staff for non-violently exercising his right to freedom of academic expression, or by inviting the police for ending student protests on campus. Furthermore, in some cases university leadership was put under pressure by state politics and enacted these infringements in response to this pressure, implying a relationship between (state) politics and institutional leadership as a source of possible academic freedom infringement.

Academic community

⁶⁹ See, e.g. the case of the Humboldt University Berlin: <https://www.hu-berlin.de/en/press-portal/nachrichten-en/may-2024/nr-24523>; <https://www.hu-berlin.de/en/press-portal/nachrichten-en/may-2024/nr-24524>; <https://www.hu-berlin.de/en/press-portal/nachrichten-en/may-2024/nr-24527>; and: <https://www.hu-berlin.de/en/press-portal/nachrichten-en/may-2024/nr-24529>

⁷⁰ For a response from the academic community to the electoral success of the AfD in Thüringen, see, e.g.; <https://www.forschung-und-lehre.de/politik/unterschriften-gegen-einfluss-der-afd-6672>

⁷¹ It is of relevance to point here to the fact that some of the pro-Palestinian protesters occupying university buildings or protesting on campus were neither students enrolled at the universities in questions nor academic staff of the universities. Therefore the right to academic freedom does not apply to these protesters who are not part of the academic community.

Compared to the situation in other EU Member States, the level of possible threats to academic freedom emerging from internal academic conflicts and disagreements, e.g. in the form of attempting to silence dissenting voices, seems rather moderate in Germany. In this we can refer to Germany's first representative empirical study on academic freedom of speech by the German Center for University and Science Research (*Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung*, 2024). According to this study, overall, academic freedom of expression at universities in Germany is in good to very good shape, as stated by 80% of the study's respondents. The vast majority of the more than 9,000 participants in the study do not feel restricted and have not experienced any restrictions on freedom of speech either personally or in their immediate academic environment. Only 3% of the respondents rate the autonomy and freedom of research in the science system as very poor (*Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung*, 2024, p. 8). Structural restrictions or even a systematic 'cancel culture' cannot be identified. This study seems to confirm that even though academic freedom is slightly eroding in Germany, the majority of the academic staff at the German higher education institutions is still very positive about its current state.

Civil society

The pilot study referred to the impact on academic freedom of attacks on academics during the COVID-19 pandemic. The issue of attacks on academics from civil society in Germany has continued to attract attention during the monitoring period. In a recent report Seeger et al. (2024) present an overview of research on the theme 'attacks on scientists'. While during the pandemic the attacks were aimed especially at virologists and medical researchers and professionals, the report shows that since the pandemic attacks have also been aimed at researchers in other areas, such as research on climate change, and research on racism, diversity and integration (Seeger et al., 2024, p. 4). Most of the attacks take place online and can have serious consequences for the victims, with possible impacts on performance, on emotions and cognitions, and on behaviour (including self-censorship). The report states that hostility towards scientists has been increasing since the pandemic and has become a serious problem that affects scientists from a wide range of disciplines (Seeger et al., p. 19). Here we can also refer to a recent study on the theme of hostility towards scientists by Blümel and Just (2024), in which 45% of the participants indicate that they have experienced at least one form of hostility in relation to their academic work. This figure suggests that while internal academic attacks on dissenting voices is low in comparison to the situation in other EU Member States (*Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung*, 2024), the level of hostility towards academics originating from outside academia is relatively high. However, to substantiate such a conclusion additional long-term research in Germany and comparative research among EU Member States is necessary.

Seeger et al. (2024, p. 20) indicate that the development in the area of comprehensive support for victims of hostility in academia seems positive, even if there is a lack of thorough evaluation studies. While scientists in Germany have traditionally been left on their own in dealing with hostilities, recently established support initiatives for victims suggest an improvement in the supply situation. However, in following the recommendation by Seeger et al. (2024, p. 20), it can be argued that it is desirable to institutionalise the topic of support for victims of hostilities more firmly at higher education institutions and research institutes in order to ensure low-threshold and long-term training and support. The uncertain financing of many comprehensive offers in German academia poses the risk that victims of hostilities will not be offered the support and backing they would need, which could increase the risk of problematic coping strategies, such as undesirable forms of self-censorship.

Private sector actors

Even though the level of public funding for higher education and research is comparatively positive in Germany, it is still under pressure. This implies that like in other EU Member States also in Germany

the involvement of the private sector in funding and governing academic activities, especially scientific research, is increasing. This is in itself seen by many actors within and outside academia as a positive development that might contribute to a more diversified funding basis for higher education and research, and the development of public-private partnerships that address societal needs and challenges. At the same time, in Germany like in other EU Member States there are worries about the relative lack of appropriate regulations for and transparency of academic-private sector collaborations. This has led to worries about the possible impact of these increasing partnerships on academic freedom, e.g. when it comes to the freedom of academics to determine their own research problems, their preferred forms of dissemination and publishing of research results, and the issue of the ownership of research results.

Even though the available sources of information in the monitoring period did not reveal any specific new worries about or infringements on academic freedom by private sector actors beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023), it can be recommended for all EU Member States including Germany to identify ways in which more appropriate regulations for academic – private partnerships can be developed and introduced, and the transparency of these partnerships can be enhanced. In order to prevent undesirable competition in this between EU Member States it would make sense to coordinate the work to be done in this area across the EU.

Security policies and concerns

The possibility of threats against academic freedom emerging from security policies and concerns in Germany can be discussed by referring to two issues. The first issue concerns the efforts of the Federal Government to engage universities more actively into defence research. Many German universities have committed themselves to engage only in research that would not have direct military applicability. The so-called 'Zivilklausel' (Civil Clause) was first implemented by the University of Bremen in 1986 and today around 70 universities have implemented similar rules. Due to the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of research, such a clause cannot be forced upon a university by law, but has to originate from the universities themselves. While the concrete formulation varies among universities, the clause usually regulates that research should not directly support military usage or aims.

From that perspective it can be argued that Germany's Federal Minister of Education and Research Bettina Stark-Watzinger has started to promote a new way of strategic thinking by encouraging closer cooperation between universities, the Federal Army and the arms industry (Gardner, 2024). In line with the announcement last November by the Federal Minister of Defence Boris Pistorius that Germany had to 'get fit for war', Stark-Watzinger has demanded that the separation between civilian and military research in Germany should be 'reassessed' (Gardner, 2024). Leading politicians from the Christian Democratic Party also criticised the civil clause, while Bavaria has banned its universities from introducing civil clauses since a new law in July 2024.

The efforts to engage universities in military research has been criticised, for example, by Germany's Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW – Education and Science Workers' Union). Eduard Meusel, spokesperson for higher education and research in GEW Bavaria has stated that, "Forcing universities to conduct military research is a violation of academic freedom and clashes with the peace imperative of Germany's Basic Law" (Gardner, 2024). The worries expressed by the GEW about the possible impact on academic freedom of the abolition of the civil clauses are based on the fear that this development will mean a gradual subordination of academic freedom to security policies and concerns.

A second relevant issue in this area are the roles of fundamental values, such as academic freedom, in scientific relationships with non-EU countries who could pose potential security risks. For example, the Friedrich-Alexander-University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (FAU), has decided to suspend collaboration with students funded by the China Scholarship Council (CSC) in order, "to reduce the risk of industrial espionage" (Sharma, 2023), while continuing to accept students who are

on the joint scholarship scheme organised by the CSC and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). It is the first university in Germany to break with this Chinese government scholarship scheme, with universities in other EU Member States, such as Denmark, the Netherlands or Sweden, having preceded the FAU decision.

The debate about scientific collaborations with China was additionally fuelled when in April 2024 three people were arrested in Germany under the suspicion of espionage for China. The authorities claimed that the suspects had interacted with a German university related to a research project the results of which could have been advantageous for the Chinese military⁷². The Federal Minister Stark-Watzinger then called on all universities in Germany to re-assess their collaborations with China following the arrests⁷³. Investigative reporters also published an article in July 2024 describing strong ties between Chinese funders and military institutions and some engineering research environments at the RWTH Aachen⁷⁴, raising questions about threats of research results being used by institutions working for the Chinese armed forces.

Even though there are convincing reasons to limit relations with Chinese higher education, it is of relevance to discuss whether the growing dominance of security perspectives and concerns in national and institutional academic policies do not form an increasing threat to academic freedom. This challenge was also the theme of a policy discussion in May 2024 organised by the DAAD⁷⁵. An important, more general issue in this is, what role fundamental values adhered to in Germany, such as academic freedom, should play in international scientific relations at a time when geopolitical tensions, for example, between the EU and China, lead to an incorporation of scientific relations in security policies. There can be argued to be two basically different approaches in this. The first is to use adherence to academic freedom and other values as a condition for scientific relations, while the second approach would be to promote the importance of academic freedom and other values in scientific relations, while clarifying why they are important to German (and EU) academia and society, without demanding the adherence to these values as a condition for scientific relations. In the discussions on the decision of the FAU both positions can be identified (Sharma, 2023), while in the debates regarding research collaboration there seems to be a stronger focus on minimising security risks. It can be argued that both in Germany and the EU further discussion is required for developing more common and transparent approaches to the relationship between security policies and higher education and research policies, including the role of academic freedom in global science relations. At the same time, de-risking of academic relations becomes harder as the definition of what would be security relevant research contains more grey zones (Sharma, 2024). Moreover, there are also increasing worries about Chinese policies. The Mercator Institute for China Studies (Merics) published a study pointing to a growing set of Chinese policy tools intended to stop technology flowing out of its borders. While these tools have not yet been extensively used these measures – including export controls on civilian technology – could be used to prevent strategic knowhow leaving the country, including results of joint research collaborations (Sharma, 2024). In a way, this can be seen as a response to discussions in Europe or Germany about collaborations with China, and it highlights the potential for further distancing and increased hurdles in scientific collaboration.

Conclusion

⁷² See: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2024-04/zwei-deutsche-wegen-mutmasslicher-spionage-fuer-china-festgenommen>

⁷³ See: <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/forschungsministerin-stark-watzinger-hochschulen-muessen-zusammenarbeit-mit-china-ueberpruefen-100.html>

⁷⁴ See: <https://correctiv.org/aktuelles/china-science-investigation/2024/06/18/die-bling-bling-professoren-aus-aachen/>

⁷⁵ See: <https://www.daad.de/de/infos-services-fuer-hochschulen/kompetenzzentrum/kiwi-events/kiwi-policy-talk/wissenschaftsfreiheit/>

With a strong constitutional protection and a traditionally very positive *de facto* academic freedom practice, Germany used to be the frame of reference for academic freedom in the EU. From this perspective, the increase in threats to academic freedom in Germany, as evidenced by declining academic freedom scores, will not only call into question the country's position as a European frame of reference, but the erosion of German academic freedom could also affect the state of *de facto* academic freedom in other EU Member States. The latter from the perspective of Germany's central position in the EU's higher education and research landscape.

The academic freedom trends in Germany can be interpreted within the broader political and socio-economic contexts of higher education and science. This concerns especially the impact of geopolitical trends, for example, the Gaza-Israel conflict and the tensions with China, as well as the efforts to engage universities more actively into defence research; the changing economic circumstances for German higher education and research, including the growing reliance on competitive funding arrangements⁷⁶; and national political developments. The rapid changes in these contexts raise serious questions about the extent to which the current conditions for the promotion and protection of academic freedom are sufficient to effectively address the erosion of academic freedom in German academia. It is therefore important not just for countering the current erosion of academic freedom in Germany, but for the state of academic freedom in the EU as a whole, to carefully monitor the development of academic freedom in Germany in the coming years. It is expected that this will provide relevant insights into what new legal and other measures are necessary to improve the protection of academic freedom in the EU at European, national/state and/or institutional level.

⁷⁶ <https://scilogs.spektrum.de/menschen-bilder/skandal-im-forschungsministerium-sollte-die-wissenschaftsfreiheit-eingeschraenkt-werden/>

3.3.4. Greece

Introduction

In the 2022/23 pilot study on the state of play of academic freedom in the EU Member States commissioned by the European Parliament STOA Panel (Maassen et al., 2023), Greece was indicated to have a deteriorating *de facto* academic freedom. The Academic Freedom Index score of Greece was characterised as being under pressure with Greece ranked as 25th of the EU Member States in the 2021 AFI index. Greece was not included in the 2017 EUA autonomy scorecard, but the scores for Greece in the study by Beiter et al. (2016) suggested that the legislative protection of institutional autonomy was considerably weaker than in most other EU member countries, with Greece being ranked next to last.

As presented in section 2 of this report, the current state of academic freedom in Greece has been assessed as relatively stable. The score for Greece in the AFI 2024 update (0.78, implying Greece is in the top 30–40% of countries worldwide, and has status B) is slightly lower than in 2021 (0.79). Greece is included in the 2023 EU autonomy scorecard and the score for Greece (33.5%) is the lowest of all 27 countries involved (Pruvot et al., 2023). The AFI score can be interpreted as a medium-high score globally, with Greece ranked 25th among EU countries in the AFI 2024 update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

In the pilot study undertaken for the EP Academic Freedom Monitor (Maassen, et al., 2023), Greece was found to have academic freedom related challenges linked to the academic and political discussions of the 2022 reform of the Greek Law for Higher Education. Overall, academics were concerned with the perceived increasingly authoritative control over public universities by the government through the establishment of the University Institution Protection Teams (OPPI) and a reform to the governance structures of higher education institutions, posing as threats to academic self-governance and the possibility of democratic representation of the academic community.

Considering the six potential threat sources to academic freedom addressed in this study, the pilot study findings for Greece can be identified with three out of these six sources: Governance and politics, institutional leadership and management, and civil society. With regard to governance and politics, the pilot study identified challenges related to the ongoing reform of the Greek higher education system. While laws that made up these reforms addressed legitimate concerns for funding, governance, and security, the proposed draft laws were met with significant opposition from part of the academic community on grounds of an argued weakening of conditions for academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and democratic self-governance. Groups of academics, students, and the political opposition felt in the early 2020s as though the government's reform efforts were rushed with limited opportunities for debate or input from academics and students, and inadequate consideration for issues related to academic freedom. The context for the discussions was further informed by the tradition of academic asylum on Greek campuses as well as clashes between students and police during the student uprisings of 1973 against the military junta. While academic asylum was linked to university campuses acting as hubs for political activism and promoting student voices, it was also argued that it enabled delinquent behavior deteriorating the academic environment and putting students and faculty at risk. On the one hand, the government made a bipartisan claim that the then state of Greek universities with respect to violent student groups and ineffective internal governance structures required drastic measures to achieve modernisation on par with other European higher education systems and a climate in which academia could thrive for the benefit of Greek society. On the other hand, part of the academic staff and student community were in stark opposition to the proposed reforms addressing campus security and internal management. While academics had indeed recognised, and in some cases been subject to, student acts of vandalism and physical threat, some claimed that the establishment and deployment of the governmental University Institution Protection Teams (OPPI) as a continuation of the abolishment of academic asylum led to the erosion of academic freedom, institutional autonomy,

and democratic self-governance of universities. The proposed changes to the executive boards of Greek universities were perceived as overly centralising resulting in weaker conditions for academic representation and self-governance, increased risk of nepotism through the new election system, and an imbalanced representation of internal and external interests. The process leading up to the finalisation of the reform bill was characterised as hasty and disingenuous by not giving academics or the political opposition enough time to debate or propose changes to the draft prior to legislation.

As regards institutional leadership and management, the changes introduced by the 4957/2022 reform bill were found to critically weaken the conditions for institutional autonomy and democratic self-governance. Key points of concern related to changes to the executive boards of universities including the challenges to adequate academic representation, the appointment of the university rector among and by the board's members, the ability to dismiss the rector by the board, and the risk of corruption and clientelism through an imbalance of power and accountability. Alongside challenges in facilitating discussions between universities and the government on higher education policy, the media representation of the discourse was argued by part of the Greek academic community as well as academics internationally to be problematic and biased in favor of the government. Additionally, the tradition of academic asylum and the Greek higher education's history of dissent during the military junta regime has made many academics and students sensitive towards potential overreach by any sitting government that might infringe upon conditions for academic freedom.

The scores for Greece on academic freedom in international monitors suggest that academic freedom in Greece is slowly eroding. In this follow-up study to the 2022 pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023), recent debates on the state of academic freedom in Greek academia are presented. These debates indicate that the worries with respect to the state of *de facto* academic freedom in Greece discussed in the pilot study still apply.

Government and politics

Debates concerning academic freedom and institutional autonomy continue to be centered on the ongoing higher education reform as new draft laws are introduced and legislated. Currently, the reform consists of four laws addressing various aspects of higher education management and governance at the system and institution levels. The three most recent ones, namely 4777/2021, 4957/2022, and 5094/2024 have been subject to stark criticism by academics, students, and the political opposition. In many ways, the sentiments found among critics and supporters of the relevant elements of the laws are consistent with those identified in the pilot study report (Maassen et al., 2023), with challenges related to weakening of conditions for academic freedom and insufficient room for debate between the academic and political spheres.

The 4777/2021 law provided for the establishment of the OPPI as a specialised security force under the Hellenic police (EL.AS) for the purposes of dealing with campus crime and unlawful behavior (Law 4777/2021, 2021, Articles 18–20), further supported by the 4957/2022 law requiring universities to have adequate digital surveillance systems and providing the OPPI the ability to process relevant personal data from these systems (2022, Articles 224–225). The implementation of the OPPI has been challenging and inconsistent, with current activities being limited in comparison to the provisions and ambitions of the laws. This can in part be explained by the existing political tensions in and the historical context of the governance relationship between universities and public authorities. This complex relationship is exacerbated by the initial reception of the OPPI on university campuses⁷⁷. Additionally, the universities had failed to install security infrastructure, such as turnstiles or student access cards, necessary for controlled student access to university facilities (Tezaris, 2024). Prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis recently commented that the university police

⁷⁷ See, e.g.: <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2022/09/11/greek-students-and-teachers-protest-deployment-of-university-police-on-campus/>

has not worked as planned, but emphasised, "that the government will not allow the growth of lawlessness in universities" (Tezaris, 2024), a sentiment shared by the EL.AS (Liberal.gr, 2024). Currently, the OPPI has been absorbed by the EL.AS with its former staff delegated to normal police duties. Emerging cases of crime or violence on campuses largely being deferred to the main Hellenic police force.

The debate is still ongoing pending any new policy actions or revisions of the current legal status of the OPPI bar its absorption into the EL.AS. There are concerns that security threats to persons or property become replaced by a climate of intimidation and surveillance unless the implementation of special police teams would allow for taking into account in campus security measures and practices representing universities' rights and values, governmental security concerns, as well as the challenging historical relationship between universities and police authorities (Stilianidou, 2021).

The concerns about the new Law have also been raised in relation to the way in which the government responded to student protests about the Gaza-Israel conflict. For example, May 2024, 28 persons were arrested by Greek police during a protest and encampment in solidarity with Palestine at the Athens Law School. Of those arrested, nine UK and EU nationals have been designated as 'unwanted aliens', facing deportation in an unusual move by authorities. The response of the government to criticism on this arrest and intended deportation has been that it does not want to allow protests against Israel to escalate on university campuses as they have in other countries⁷⁸. The situation of student and staff protesters in Greece requires close attention in order to establish the extent to which Government responses to protests represent a violation of academic freedom.

Furthermore, the governance reform of the 4957/2022 law received negative attention during its draft phase for its apparent dismantling of democratic university governance structures and the apparent undermining of the interests of the universities and its academic communities. Faculty associations as well as the Panhellenic Federation of Teaching and Research Staff Associations (POSDEP) criticised the law leading up to its legislation, and continued to do so following its rather turbulent implementation by the government. Some of the issues raised relate to the new university councils and include complaints about the imbalance of power and representation of interests, lack of democratic representation, lack of mechanisms for transparency, accountability, and democratic governance with the academic senate, and an overly complicated election system ill-suited for university operations (Choli-Papadopoulou & Chrysafis, 2023; The Aegean University Faculty Association, 2023). The POSDEP has emphasised that the law is not a result of dialogue or consultation with the academic community, leading to a law argued to have a considerable mismatch with and disregard for university values and operations (Seimenis & Litsardakis, 2022). In a more recent statement, POSDEP refers to the experiences and the current situation of several universities with the new election process with several universities (Universities of Thessaly, Patras, Ionian, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) experiencing significant difficulties and in some cases annulment of election results due to the rigid framework of the law. Accountability and transparency of the university councils are described as being fully dependent on the sitting members as they are under no obligation to provide insights into governance or decision-making processes to the university community (Seimenis & Litsardakis, 2024). This is in spite of the law undergoing a large round of amendments in order to address the most severe technical shortcomings (Esos.gr, 2024a; Esos.gr, 2024b). The teaching and research staff of The International Hellenic University issued a statement in opposition to other parts of the law relating to a top-down standardisation of staffing conditions, funding agreements, and degree structures which serve to commercialise and financially exploit educational, research, and other services provided by institutions while sacrificing quality

⁷⁸ See: <https://greekcitytimes.com/2024/05/28/greece-to-deport-foreign-students-engaged-in-anti-israel-protests/>; and: https://schengen.news/9-eu-uk-students-in-greece-to-be-deported-after-participating-in-anti-israel-demonstrations/#google_vignette; see also University World News (<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20240531084022251>)

and the competence of academic staff (Unified Association of Teaching and Research Staff of IHU, 2022).

A recent law, 5094/2024, allows for the establishment of Non-State Universities (NPPEs), which are non-profit degree-granting institutions located in Greece and operated as a branch of recognised international institutions (Law 5094/2024, 2024). Similar to earlier parts of the ongoing reform, this Law has received support as well as criticism. The support is motivated e.g. by the contribution of the private institutions to reduce brain drain from Greece, while critics argue, for example, that the Law fails to address the dire needs of public institutions while introducing significant changes to the higher education landscape⁷⁹. Furthermore, a number of university senates have voiced their concern over the financial conditions, retention of teaching and research staff, and the quality of education and research combined with the introduction of increased competition (Secretariat of the Senate of the University of Ioannina, 2024; Senate of the University of Patras, 2024; Senate of the University of the Aegean, 2024; The Senate of AUTH, 2024). Similarly to prior debates, University senates have criticised the government for failing to include the public institutions or the academic community effectively in discussions and transformations that have lasting effects on a struggling Greek higher education system. Additional concerns were raised for insufficient evaluation and accreditation mechanisms to ensure the quality of the academic operation of new institutions. Almost 200 student associations across Greece with 18000 students in Athens participated in an organised protest against the bill, with some groups occupying faculty buildings in opposition to the government (Foitikanea.gr, 2024).

Institutional leadership and management

As indicated in the above discussion, the reform of university governance structures and the introduction of the current iteration of university councils risks deteriorating conditions for academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and academic and democratic self-governance. The composition of the boards and the way in which they interface with the academic staff and students at the universities risk neglecting the values, needs, and interests of the academic community. Additionally, the lack of accountability and transparency measures is argued to increase the risk of governance by external interests, whether private sector or public sector, and corruption, and a further erosion of academic freedom.

Academic community

While the government has been under harsh criticism for the implementation of the reform, student threats of violence and mobbing towards groups and individuals negatively influences the academic environment. The general environment becomes influenced by these actions as well as the attraction of police forces. In 2023, the president of the Department of Philosophy at the National and Kapodistrian university of Athens, professor Vana Nikolaidou-Kyrianidou, being victim to an attack by students in response to a Facebook comment. The comment was a critical response to a recent demonstration, after which the students demanded her immediate firing and replacement as president of the department (Φιλοσοφική ΕΚΠΑ / Καθηγήτρια σε ανοιχτό μέτωπο με τους φοιτητές - Γιατί ζητούν παραίτησή της [Faculty of Philosophy / Professor in an open front with the students - Why are they asking for her resignation], 2023). More recently, the rector of AUTH, Charalambos Feidas, was chased and trapped by students protesting the poor conditions of their dormitories after an elevator had fallen (ProtoThema.gr, 2024).

The current climate at Greek universities is such that students may find the justification to not only protest and act in protests aimed at the government, but also against individuals or groups within

⁷⁹ For an overview of the discussions on the pros and cons of the Law, see Niaoti (2024).

the academic community, thereby violating academic freedom from within the academic community.

Civil society

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by civil society actors beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Greece of specific actions from civil society, e.g. attacks on academics through social media, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Private sector actors

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by private sector actors beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Greece of specific actions of private sector actors additional empirical research would be necessary.

Security policies and concerns

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by national security policies and concerns beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Greece of specific initiatives and intentions in the area of national security, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Conclusion

The Greek government has introduced several Laws in the last years as part of a major reform process of Greece's higher education and research system. While there has been support for these laws, the reform process has also been criticised, amongst other things, for a lack of input from and coordination with the academic community. The reform efforts are arguably aimed at real and demonstrable challenges within the system, and academics and students express the need for support in upholding academic values and for legislation to be compatible with the realities of financing, service provision, and governance in accordance with those values. The reforms also aim at establishing a pattern of transferring governance and management responsibilities away from the academic community. This concerns, for example, the introduction of a new police body to guard university campuses, which lacked effective private security and have suffered from political violence as well as petty crime. This introduction led to heavy protests by students in 2022 and 2023. Furthermore, the current government has opened up for the possibility of reforming Article 16 which ensures the academic freedom and self-governance for Greek universities in order to clear a legal path for academic activities of foreign private universities (Naftemporiki.gr, 2023). Underneath the protests to the new reform lie concerns for funding, staffing conditions, quality of education and research, the deterioration of Greek public higher education institutions, and threats to academic freedom.

3.3.5. Ireland

Introduction

In the 2022/23 pilot study on the state of play of academic freedom in the EU Member States commissioned by the European Parliament STOA Panel (Maassen et al., 2023), Ireland was found to have relatively strong *de jure* and *de facto* academic freedom. The Academic Freedom Index score of Ireland was characterised as stable with Ireland ranked as 12th of the EU Member States in the 2021 AFI index, and the 2017 EUA autonomy scorecard scores indicating that institutional autonomy in Ireland is at a medium level in Europe. Also the current state of academic freedom and institutional autonomy in Ireland is assessed as rather positive and stable. For example, the score for Ireland in the AFI 2024 update (0.89, implying Ireland has status A) is slightly lower than in 2021 but still among the top 10–20% in the world, while the 2023 EU autonomy scorecard score for Ireland (71%) is slightly higher than in 2017. Both can be interpreted as medium-high scores, with Ireland ranked 15th among EU countries in the AFI 2024 update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024) and 12th among 27 included countries/regions in the 2023 EUA autonomy scorecard scores (Pruvot et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the pilot study referred to worries about the possible impact of the Higher Education Authority Bill 2022 on academic freedom (Maassen et al., 2023). Since the pilot study the Bill has been passed and made into law. Some debates on the possible impact of the Bill are still ongoing today, and questions have been raised about how this Bill will protect academic freedom in practice, without any direct examples of possible negative impacts of the Act having been identified or discussed until now. This reflects in general the rather stable state of academic freedom in Ireland. At the same time, as discussed in the first part of this report, the response to student and staff protests on some university campuses in relation to the Gaza–Israel conflicts have raised new concerns⁸⁰. Furthermore, there have been some discussions about the impact of the Athena Swan charter on academic freedom (see, e.g., O'Brien 2024).

The scores for Ireland in international monitors do not indicate any significant recent changes in the state of academic freedom. In this follow-up study to the 2022 pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023), recent debates on the state of academic freedom in Irish academia are presented. These debates concern the *de facto* state of play of academic freedom in Ireland and indicate that also from other sources than the international monitors there is no clear evidence of specific violations of or structural threats to academic freedom in Ireland.

Government and politics

Academic freedom is regularly debated in the Irish public media⁸¹ and academic community. As stated in the 2022 pilot study, the Higher Education Authority Bill 2022 raised some initial concerns regarding potential undue government interference in academic freedom in Ireland (Maassen et al., 2023).

The 2022 Bill repeals the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971. In explaining what the 2022 will mean for the higher education system the Irish government states that, "It is important to note that nothing in the legislation will impinge on the academic freedom of higher education institutions or their staff. This is a core tenet which will continue to be enshrined in legislation" (Gov.ie, 2022). In comparison to the 1971 Act, the 2022 Bill is amended by including a specific section addressing academic freedom covering both the obligation of university boards to preserve and promote academic freedom, and the principle that all members of the academic staff of universities should be treated

⁸⁰ See e.g.: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-05-02-trinity-college-dublin/>

⁸¹ See, for example, the range of articles addressing various academic freedom aspects in what can be regarded as Ireland's leading newspaper, the Irish Times: <https://www.irishtimes.com/>

equally by their institutional boards and should not be disadvantaged for expressing dissenting ideas or opinions, or addressing dissenting opinions or ideas in his/her teaching and research⁸².

Both academic staff and students have expressed concerns about the new legislation, especially before it came into effect. Researchers who opposed the Bill claimed, for example, that it "amounts essentially to a Government takeover of academia" (Casey, 2022). The chairman of the student group Students4Change as well as the vice-president of the Irish Federation of University Women argued in a paper (Molnarfi and Scanlon, 2022) that the Bill would be a move towards an environment resembling the UK, which would culminate student loans and student debt. Another major concern for the students was the lack of Student Union representation on the governing authorities of higher education institutions. In responding to these concerns, the Bill was passed in the Irish Seanad with amendments⁸³ including the guarantee of student union representation on the governance bodies of higher education institutions (Madden, 2022). Overall, the amendments included in the final version of the 2022 Bill appear to have largely met the criticism and requests for change of the institutional leadership, students and staff.

Institutional leadership and management

A worry about possible threats from institutional leadership and management to academic freedom concerns university responses to student and staff protests on campus in relation to the Gaza-Israel conflict. Scholars at Risk reports one case of an attack on academic freedom in the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, in Ireland (SAR, 2024). This case concerns Trinity College Dublin (TCD) fining the Trinity College Dublin Student Union (TCDSU) for financial losses due to peaceful student protests criticising proposed fee increases and TCD's response to Israel's bombardment of Gaza following Hamas' surprise attack on Israel on October 7, 2024. The fine was later dropped. Scholars at Risk expresses its concern about TCD issuing monetary and disciplinary penalties against student organisations in retaliation for the peaceful exercise of academic freedom and freedom of expression and assembly. At the same time, talks between students and university leadership in the aftermath of the protests led to an agreement which included the establishment of a special working group, including student union representatives, to consider TCD's future involvement with Israeli companies, academic institutions and student exchanges (Walshe, 2024).

While some of the responses to way in which TCD has dealt with these student protests are critical⁸⁴, overall the university's agreements reached with the protesting students seem to be in line with the broad public support for the Palestinian cause in Ireland which political leaders have voiced strongly throughout 2024 (Walshe, 2024). As a consequence, the level of disruption of campus life and violation on campus emerging in other countries, such as the USA and the Netherlands, has not been observed in Ireland⁸⁵.

Academic community

A current discussion in Irish universities on academic freedom is taking place in relationship to the governmental gender equality policy and the question to which extent external rules and guidelines should be used to determine the way in which the academic community is to handle specific policy issues, such as gender equality. This debate relates both to the possible interference of politics in

⁸² See section 120 of the Higher Education Authority Act (<https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/HEA-Act-2022.pdf>)

⁸³ See Higher Education Authority Act 2022, esp. sections 16 (2b), 73 (2e), and 109 (4e) (<https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/HEA-Act-2022.pdf>)

⁸⁴ For example, former Minister for Justice Alan Shatter accused TCD of capitulation to the students (Walshe, 2024).

⁸⁵ See, e.g.: <https://sciencebusiness.net/news/universities/german-research-organisations-criticise-discriminatory-israel-boycotts>

academic freedom, and the way in which attacks on dissenting voices in academia can affect academic freedom.

As a part of the equality strategy aimed at promoting the representation of women in science, the Athena SWAN charter, established by a UK-based charity called Advance HE⁸⁶, was introduced in Ireland in 2015. Engaging with the Athena SWAN charter is a key pillar in the strategy for gender equality in Irish science, and in order to be eligible for receiving research funding from Ireland's major research agencies all higher education institutions in Ireland are required to follow this scheme (Higher Education Authority, 2022). After a redevelopment in 2021, the focus of the charter was broadened with the aim to promote "gender equality across all disciplines in higher education". This broadening includes the principle that applicants to a position in science must pledge to "fostering an environment that creates collective understanding that individuals can determine and affirm their gender"⁸⁷. In a statement, Advance HE has argued that the charter principles were developed in consultation with the Irish higher education sector: "The Athena Swan Ireland framework does not prescribe particular policies or approaches to EDI [equality, diversity and inclusion]. Universities determine their own action plans to tackle inequalities and the plans are independently peer reviewed by staff in the Irish higher education sector. Any policy regarding participation in Athena Swan and research funding are matters for Ireland policymakers and are not determined by Advance HE" (O'Brien, 2024)⁸⁸.

The broadening of the charter inspired discussions around academic freedom and have led to "the Trinity Declaration on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression", launched by the organisation Free Speech Ireland (FSI), which opposes the Athena SWAN charter (Conneely, 2024). This declaration is supported by students and academic staff, and has gained support from other campaigns and groups, such as Academics for Academic Freedom (AFA). The Dublin branch of AFA wants the charter to be removed as it "limits freedom of speech and threatens academic freedom"⁸⁹.

The controversy with respect to the Athena SWAN Charter is not caused by a disagreement on the principle of gender equality, but rather by the demand of the Higher Education Authority to commit the universities to the Charter in its broadened form on the threat of being punished financially. The UK version of the Charter has been changed in recent years to remove a reference to "fostering collective understanding" around gender identity, and is no longer tied to research funding, while the Irish version remains unchanged (O'Brien, 2024). An argument used by the opponents of linking the Athena Swan charter to research funding is that this creates "a culture of censorship which is affecting Irish students and staff in their careers"⁹⁰. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) rejects these claims, stating that all public bodies are required under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act to "seek to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of public sector staff, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans" (O'Brien, 2024).

The question can be asked whether, and if so how, the Charter in its current form constitutes a threat to or even a violation of academic freedom. On the one hand, it can be argued that the academic community should be allowed to develop its own guidelines and principles for promoting gender equality in science, and that the specific nature of the Charter runs the risk of silencing certain ideas and perspectives in academia. On the other hand, the principles of diversity and gender equality represent fundamental European and Irish values, and should obviously be respected by Irish

⁸⁶ Advance HE is a member-led charity that works for HEIs to "improve higher education for staff, students and society" (see: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/>)

⁸⁷ See: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/international-charters/athena-swan-ireland#principles>

⁸⁸ See: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/international-charters/athena-swan-ireland>

⁸⁹ See: <https://www.afaf.org.uk/dublin-universities/>

⁹⁰ See: <https://griptide.ie/trinity-declaration-on-academic-freedom-launched-in-response-to-pernicious-censorial-culture/>

universities. Nonetheless, requiring universities to pledge to "fostering an environment that creates collective understanding that individuals can determine and affirm their gender" as a requirement to qualify for research funding could be seen as conflicting with the 2022 Higher Education Authority Bill which states in section 120(2) that:

"A member of the academic staff of the College shall not, subject to the provisions of any enactment or rule of law, be disadvantaged, or subject to less favourable treatment by An Bord, arising from his or her questioning and testing received wisdom, putting forward new ideas or stating controversial or unpopular opinions in his or her teaching, research and any other activities either in or outside of the College" (Higher Education Authority, 2022).

In this case the question can be raised to what extent the specific formulations of the Charter do represent "provisions of any enactment or rule of law".

Civil society

In the monitoring period, the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by civil society actors beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Ireland of specific actions from civil society, e.g. attacks on academics through social media, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Private sector actors

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by private sector actors beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Ireland of specific actions of private sector actors additional empirical research would be necessary.

Security policies and concerns

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom in relation to national security concerns and policies beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). In this, we can refer to the 2024 National Risk Assessment report of the Irish Government. This annual report presents an overview of strategic risks for Ireland and has been published since 2014 (Government of Ireland, 2024). The 2024 report does not include an explicit discussion of the possible consequences of increasing strategic risks, e.g. geopolitical risks, for the Irish higher education and science system. However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Ireland of national Irish security concerns and policies, or of foreign interference in the Irish academic system, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Conclusion

Unlike the situation in some other EU Member States, Ireland has since 2022 not experienced intense public debates on and major worries about the development of *de facto* academic freedom. The amendments to the Higher Education Authority Bill of 2022 were in general welcomed by the academic community. Overall, the core of the debates on the state of academic freedom were related to internal academic worries, especially in relation to the required commitment of universities to the Athena SWAN charter and possible repercussions of student protests concerning the Gaza-Israel conflict. While the university leadership and student bodies seem to have come to an agreement on how to address the Gaza-Israel conflict in a way that is acceptable to both, the situation with respect to the disagreements on the possible impact of the Athena SWAN charter requires further monitoring.

3.3.6. Italy

Introduction

Italy can be regarded as an EU Member State with strong and stable *de facto* state of academic freedom. In the 2022/23 pilot study on the state of play of academic freedom in the EU Member States commissioned by the European Parliament STOA Panel (Maassen et al., 2023), Italy was indicated to have a very strong *de facto* academic freedom. The Academic Freedom Index score of Italy was characterised as stable with Italy ranked as 2nd of the EU Member States in the 2021 AFI index with a score of 0.97. At the same time, the 2017 EUA autonomy scorecard scores indicating that institutional autonomy in Italy was at a medium-low level in Europe. As presented in section 2 of this report, also the current state of academic freedom in Italy has in general been assessed as very positive and stable. This can be illustrated by the score for Italy in the AFI 2024 update (0.95, implying Italy has status A) which is slightly lower than in 2021 but still among the top 10% in the world. The AFI score is among the highest of Europe, with Italy ranked 4th among EU Member States in the AFI 2024 update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). The 2023 EU autonomy scorecard score for Italy (60%) was slightly higher than the 2017 score. And can be characterised as medium-low with Italy ranked 21st among 27 included countries/regions in the 2023 EUA autonomy scorecard (Pruvot et al., 2023; Craciun et al., 2024).

In the pilot study, a brief overview was presented of the protections the Italian Constitution provides for aspects of academic freedom through guarantees of freedom the arts and sciences, freedom of establishment, and the freedom for higher education institutions to formulate their own regulations and statutes (Maassen et al., 2023)⁹¹. The pilot study also presented an overview of the ways in which some of the largest Italian universities had used this freedom for identifying and stressing the importance of academic freedom in their statutes.

As discussed extensively in the pilot report, 'malpractice' is a continuous problem in the Italian university system. Also in recent years, various university staff members, including rectors and vice-rectors, were prosecuted for cases of 'academic malpractice' referring especially to possible corruption in the internal university competitions for professor positions. In some cases, the winners of the competitions were identified even before the competition was announced (Gallina et al., 2023)⁹². The pilot study also referred to worries about the possible impact of political actions on academic freedom, such as the request by the then governing party Lega Nord to remove a critical book from a university reading list (Matthews, 2019). Worries about the possible impact of undue government interference in academic freedom continued over the monitoring period, and the nature of these worries will be discussed in this section. They include concerns about the potential impact of a cut in public funding of higher education, which Italy has in common with other EU Member States, such as the Netherlands (Matthews, 2024).

While there are continuous worries about certain possible threats to academic freedom in Italy, overall, no examples of structural violations of academic freedom were identified during the monitoring period (2022-2024). At the same time, as discussed in the first part of this report, the response to student protests on one university campus in relation to the Gaza-Israel conflict was identified by Scholars at Risk as an attack on academic freedom⁹³. While the violence on Italian university campuses in relation to student protests about the Gaza-Israel conflict were not as violent and controversial as in other European countries or the US, the use of force against students

⁹¹ For an updated overview and discussion of this protection, see the 2024 EP Academic Freedom Monitor study 'Overview of de jure Academic Freedom protection' by Vasiliki Kosta and Olga Ceran.

⁹² See also: <https://www.quotidianodelsud.it/calabria/cronache/giudiziaria/2023/09/05/concorsi-pilotati-alluniversita-di-firenze-il-pm-vuole-il-processo-per-33-persone>

⁹³ See: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2023-11-21-university-of-florence/>

peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly in the case reported by SAR can be seen as a threat to academic freedom.

Overall, the current state of *de facto* academic freedom in Italy can be characterised as relatively stable, with increasing worries about possible interference of politics in academic freedom, and worries about internal cases of academic malpractice. Another area where a recent initiative by the government might lead to debates on the impact on academic freedom is national security. The Italian government plans to protect its universities and research from foreign influence in order to prevent other nations from obtaining valuable scientific and technological knowledge⁹⁴. This plan was announced early November 2024, and it is therefore too early to discuss how it might impact academic freedom.

Government and politics

When the current government was installed in 2022 several Italian academics expressed worries about possible further cuts to funding by the new government in an article in *Nature* (Guglielmi, 2022). These worries concerned possible changes in the higher education and research agencies, such as research funding agencies, possible overall cuts in the public funding of universities, and less governmental interest in and a reduction in financial and political support for research on topics such as climate change and migration (Guglielmi, 2022). The developments since then show that overall, the current Italian government has not prioritised higher education and research as much as the previous government, led by Mario Draghi. At the same time, our study did not identify in the monitoring period any major direct interferences of the government in the core dimensions of academic freedom. Instead, we could identify some developments in the conditions under which academic freedom is exercised. This concerns especially the level of public funding for higher education and science. With the overall spending on R&D in Italy at a lower level in 2023 than the average for EU Member States (about 1.3% of the GDP for Italy versus around 2.2% for the EU)⁹⁵ the previous government had announced a long-term investment plan for research. However, the current government has not adopted this plan. The challenging budgetary situation of Italian universities can be further illustrated by two cases.

The first case concerns the annual public funding for the European Brain Research Institute (EBRI), a private non-profit research centre in Rome founded by Nobel laureate Rita Levi-Montalcini. The Italian 2024 budget law approved by parliament did not include the €1 million funding that EBRI has received annually for the past 10 years, for covering its running costs. This cut would imply that the institute would have to shut down. It is argued in an article in *Nature Italy* that "The reason behind the disappearance of funds for EBRI from this year's bill is not clear. A spokesman for the ministry for universities and research (MUR) told *Nature Italy* that the decision was taken in parliament and the ministry had not been aware of it" (Paterlini, 2024) In February 2024 a parliament majority reached an agreement on an amendment to a decree that would earmark €1 million for EBRI in 2024⁹⁶. While parliament agreed on the continuation of the funding for EBRI for 2024, the situation shows the lack of certainty for the long-term development of the Italian science system.

The second case concerns deteriorating working conditions, including uncompetitive staff salaries, and threats to job security that have made the academic profession in Italy less attractive compared to the state of the academic profession in other EU Member States (Civera et al., 2023). This has led to brain drain due to the high number of academics, especially young scholars, leaving the country

⁹⁴ See: <https://formiche.net/2024/11/piano-nazionale-anti-ingerenze-straniere-universita/#content>; see also: <https://www.mynrination.com/italy/2024/11/07/foreign-influence-prompts-italy-to-shield-universities-research>

⁹⁵ See: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=R%26D_expenditure

⁹⁶ See: https://www.ansa.it/english/news/science_tecnology/2024/02/06/ebri-brain-research-institute-to-get-1mn-in-funding_893f1264-d43d-4773-898f-3553133aebcd.html

after completing their doctoral study (Civera et al., 2023, p. 18). The increase in the public funding required to allow the universities to improve the labour conditions of academics has not been realised until now. Within this overall challenging situation for the academic profession in Italy one staff category has received for decades lower salaries and benefits than their Italian counterparts, that is, non-national foreign language lecturers at Italian universities (referred to as *lettori*). The dispute about this situation concerns about 1,500 foreign lecturers, and has been handled in Italian and European Union (EU) courts since 1989 without resolution (Dionisi, 2023).

Institutional leadership and management

The pilot study reported on the efforts in the Italian academic system to tackle the issue of certain cases of malpractice at the country's universities (Candito et al., 2022; Upton, 2022; Maassen et al., 2023). The observation in the pilot study that "corruption is recognised as a significant problem in Italian academia and that insight into the practices reveal that multiple universities have cases of corrupt practices in competitions for academic positions, which are often led by the rectors" (Maassen et al., 2023, p. 107) also applies to the monitoring period of this study. This can be illustrated by referring to a case at the University of Florence in 2023, where the prosecutor indicted 33 staff members of the University of Florence. The case concerned the way in which professor vacancies were filled at the University's Faculty of Medicine. According to the prosecutors the accused had breached basic rules of impartiality and not used academic performance criteria for selecting candidates. With respect to some positions, a candidate had been selected even before the vacancy was announced⁹⁷. It can be argued that this form of malpractice at Italian universities has an impact on the state of academic freedom, not only of those academics directly involved, but the whole academic community. Like any public organisation in Italy, also universities are required to have their own anti-corruption and transparency officer⁹⁸. We can refer in this matter to the measures taken by the Universities of Bologna (University of Bologna, 2022), Milan (Università degli Studi di Milano, 2022), Naples (University of Naples, 2022), Venice (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, 2022), and Genoa (University of Genoa, 2019). The University of Milan has, for example, introduced the position of Vice Rector with authority to ensure lawfulness, transparency, and equal rights⁹⁹.

In addition, a point of concern is the relatively low level of institutional autonomy at Italian universities, as shown in the EUA University Autonomy scorecard (Privot et al., 2023). This can be argued to be one of the factors that complicates the efforts of institutional leadership at many universities to deal effectively with budgetary and personnel policy challenges. This issue clearly emerged in 2024 in publicly expressed criticism by university leaders, academics and scientific societies of the government's budget plans for universities, which proposed serious cuts¹⁰⁰.

Another issue concerns the way in which some universities responded to student protests in relation to the Gaza-Israel conflict requires closer attention in order to establish whether the case reported by Scholars at Risk at the University of Florence was an incident, or part of a more structural repression of the academic freedom of students (and staff) to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression and assembly. The complexity of this issue can be illustrated by referring to

⁹⁷ See: <https://www.quotidianodelsud.it/calabria/cronache/giudiziaria/2023/09/05/concorsi-pilotati-alluniversita-di-firenze-il-pm-vuole-il-processo-per-33-persone>

⁹⁸ This is required by Law no. 190/2012. This officer has the task to assess the organisation's exposure to the risk of corruption and suggest mitigating measures.

⁹⁹ See: <https://www.unimi.it/en/university/la-statale/anti-corruption-and-transparency>

¹⁰⁰ See: <https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-europe-italy-2024-7-minister-and-rectors-fall-out-over-university-budget-plans/>; and: <https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-europe-italy-2024-10-italian-research-groups-protest-cuts-for-universities/>; as well as: <https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-europe-italy-2024-10-italy-news-roundup-4-17-october/>

the variety of responses to the University of Turin's decision to suspend a collaboration agreement with Israeli universities and research institutes in response to student protests¹⁰¹.

Academic community

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom from within the academic community beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Italy of specific actions from within the academic community and the extent to which this results in self-censorship, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Civil society

An example of a possible attack on academic freedom from a civil society organisation in Italy is the case of Pro Vita & Famiglia against the University of Roma Tre. Pro Vita & Famiglia is an association¹⁰² that has attacked the University for its pedagogical approach to transgender students, and especially a workshop organised October 2024 aimed at minors, between 7 and 14 years old, who attended with the presence of their parents. The families, who voluntarily chose to participate, had already been carrying out activities of this type for some time within an NGO and the researchers involved from Roma Tre only intended to collect their stories for an unfunded research project. Nonetheless, Pro Vita & Famiglia collected 32 000 signatures to stop the workshop and the research project arguing, amongst other things, that the project lacked any scientific basis¹⁰³. The case is of relevance first because a non-academic, civil association assumes that it is in a position to claim that an academic project that is supported by the leadership of Roma Tre lacks a scientific basis. Second because various members of parliament supported the association in its attacks on the University. This coalition between a civil association and politics requires further attention in order to get a better understanding of the ways in which attacks from civil groups on academic freedom in Italy develop and under which circumstances these attacks get support from politics and the public administration.

Private sector actors

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by private sector actors beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Italy of specific actions of private sector actors additional empirical research would be necessary.

Security policies and concerns

As in other EU Member States, also in Italy there is a growing worry about the possible impacts of foreign interference in the Italian universities and science system. While other EU Member States, such as France and the Netherlands (see Craciun et al., 2024), had launched national security policies for their science systems some years ago, in Italy the government announced that it is preparing a plan to shield its universities and research from foreign influence in November 2024¹⁰⁴. At this stage

¹⁰¹ See: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/italys-university-of-turin-to-exit-israel-research-pact-amid-gaza-protests/>

¹⁰² See: https://www.provitaefamiglia.it/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlaIqobChMIsoLvqmqmYiwMVxmSRBR1bbTfKEAAYASAAEgLQI_D_BwE

¹⁰³ See: <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/al-via-corso-giovanissimi-transgender-32mila-firme-contro-pro-vita-famiglia-AG1dLIG>

¹⁰⁴ See: <https://formiche.net/2024/11/piano-nazionale-anti-ingerenze-straniere-universita/#content>

it is not clear how this plan will affect higher education and research, as well as the state of academic freedom in Italy. Whether a balance between security policies and academic freedom can be found that is satisfying for all involved remains to be seen, and will require a careful analysis of the new plan and its implementation.

The government denied in the announcement of the plan that it will be targeted at any specific nation or nations, even though it was assumed that China's attempts to gain access to valuable technology in recent years has played a role in initiating the plan. From that perspective it is of relevance that a few days after the announcement of the plan, at a China-Italy University Rectors Dialogue it was announced that China will offer over 100 exchange opportunities to Italian universities, with the aim of further deepening higher education exchanges between the two countries. The Dialogue meeting was attended by representatives from about 50 universities in both countries, as well as by the Chinese Minister of Education and the Italian Ministry of University and Research¹⁰⁵.

Conclusion

The Italian university and research system is characterised by a comparatively strong *de facto* state of academic freedom and a medium-low level of institutional autonomy. Overall, the study did not reveal any major external or internal violations of academic freedom during the monitoring period, but there are a number of continuous features of the Italian academic system that are underlying concerns about a possible erosion of academic freedom. This concerns the relatively weak and in some respects insecure funding basis of Italian universities and research, the internal malpractices in personnel policies, and comparatively weak overall labour conditions for academic staff. More recent features of the academic system are a national government that does not prioritise higher education and science, and the impact of geopolitical conflicts, including the announcement of a new security plan that might have far reaching consequences for academic freedom. The current state of play of academic freedom in Italy therefore requires a careful monitoring of how the traditional and new threats to academic freedom will develop in the coming years.

¹⁰⁵ See: <https://www.crui.it/archivio-notizie/dialogo-tra-universita-cinesi-e-italiane.html>; see also: <https://english.news.cn/20241110/89d64fd3ece94816ad0394b668875704/c.html>

3.3.7. Lithuania

Introduction

In the 2022/23 pilot study on the state of play of academic freedom in the EU Member States commissioned by the European Parliament STOA Panel (Maassen et al., 2023), Lithuania was indicated to have a strong *de facto* academic freedom. The Academic Freedom Index score of Lithuania was characterised as stable with Lithuania ranked as 16th of the EU Member States in the 2021 AFI index, and the 2017 EUA autonomy scorecard scores indicating that institutional autonomy in Lithuania was at a medium-high level in Europe. As presented in section 2 of this report, the current state of academic freedom in Lithuania has been assessed as being under pressure. The score for Lithuania in the AFI 2024 update (0.82, implying Lithuania is in the top 30–40% of countries worldwide, but still has status A) is lower than in 2021 (0.93), and marked red, implying that it has significantly and substantially declined over the last decade. The AFI score can be interpreted as a medium-high score globally, with Lithuania ranked 22nd among EU countries in the AFI 2024 update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024), while the autonomy score is medium-high with Lithuania ranked 11th among 27 included countries/regions in the 2023 EUA autonomy scorecard (Pruvot et al., 2023). The 2024 AFI score for Lithuania raises the question if there are any specific factors that have caused the significant decrease in the academic freedom score. This question will be addressed in this country report.

The Lithuanian higher education system has several specific features that have to be taken into account for getting a better understanding of the state of academic freedom. It consists of a rather large number of institutions relative to the number of inhabitants (2.9 million), that is, 36 higher education institutions (17 universities and 19 colleges)¹⁰⁶. Another relevant feature of the higher education system is that the number of students at Lithuanian universities and colleges has almost halved compared to 15 years¹⁰⁷ with worries about the survival of various institutions. Along with the decline in the number of students, there is also a decline in the number of academic staff (Anilionytė, 2023). The latter issue was also discussed in the pilot study as one of the worries for the further development of higher education and its commitment to fundamental values such as academic freedom. Another worry addressed was the relatively low salary level for academic staff (Maassen et al., 2023).

Although proved to be a difficult task due to competition, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are looking abroad to attract more students, to tackle the challenges regarding decreasing student numbers (Anilionytė, 2023). To attract students the government has offered scholarships to foreigners with Lithuanian decent, in hopes that it will motivate the students to finish their studies in Lithuania (LRT, 2023).

The pilot study indicated that the Constitution and legislation on higher education in Lithuania have provided a solid basis for promoting and safeguarding academic freedom and institutional autonomy since the early 1990s. Overall, there were few discussions and publicly expressed worries about academic freedom (Maassen et al. 2023). At the same time, institutional autonomy was not as consistently respected and protected by the government as one might expect, with seemingly rather arbitrary combinations of respecting institutional autonomy with government interference aimed especially at stimulating the performance and relevance of higher education and science. In addition, the relatively low levels of public investments in higher education and research contributed to brain drain and low numbers of international students and staff in Lithuanian higher education institutions. Therefore, while overall the situation with respect to academic freedom and institutional

¹⁰⁶ See: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20241120073418531>

¹⁰⁷ See: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2072191/lithuanian-universities-fight-for-survival-as-student-numbers-shrink>

autonomy was positive in the country, there were growing worries about the development of *de facto* academic freedom. These worries seemed to have materialised to some extent since 2022, given the decreasing scores for academic freedom in the AFI. However, as is discussed in this section, there is no clear evidence of structural threats to or specific violations of academic freedom in Lithuania in the monitoring period from other sources than the AFI.

Government and politics

The pilot study expressed worries about "... inconsistent government interpretation and use of formal responsibilities in its governance relationships with the higher education institutions" (Maassen et al., 2023). The pilot study also identified worries regarding financial conditions and the low level of investment in higher education and research (Maassen et al., 2023)¹⁰⁸. These worries have continued in the monitoring period. The financial situation for the Lithuanian universities and colleges has also been affected by the decrease in student numbers in higher education which have dropped almost 50% over the last 15 years.

Institutional leadership and management

The pilot study mentioned some worries regarding "inconsistent government interpretation and use of its formal responsibilities in its governance relationships with the higher education institutions" (Maassen et al., 2023). Since 2022, there have been some cases in which the leadership of higher education institutions tried to silence academic staff or expell students for using their academic freedom for expressing certain ideas or opinions. Among the cases that attracted media attention were those of professor Birutė Obelenienė (Platūkytė, 2024) and of the student Tatjana Borisova (Zverko, 2024). Obelenienė, a professor of the Theology Department and senior researcher of the Research center on Marriage and Family in Vytautas Magnus University (VDU), received harsh critique both in media and in the Seimas (Parliament) for a lecture she gave on sexual education at VDU. Even though her views on sexual education might be controversial from a religious, political or social point of view, efforts to silence her must be seen as an attack on academic freedom. After being criticised in an article she responded both in an article and in several media outlets, before she wrote a strong appeal to the president of Lithuania, as well as several committees and unions within the Lithuanian higher education sector (Obelenienė, 2024). Obelenienė viewed the attacks against her within her institution, from civil society and in the media as attempts to restrict academic freedom in the country (Obelenienė, 2024). She has argued in the dispute that the attacks on her are part of an effort to silence everyone in academia who does not adhere to the worldview of one dominant group. The second case concerns the expulsion of Tatjana Borisova from the European Humanities University by the University leadership, in response to the way she protested against the University's handling of her complaint about harassment by a teacher (Zverko, 2024).

Both cases do not necessarily form an indication of structural violations of academic freedom by institutional leadership and management in Lithuania. However, they might be part of a broader trend of restricting the freedom of academic expression which might have contributed to the deterioration of academic freedom as assessed by experts in the AFI. Therefore, these and other cases require careful monitoring for a better understanding of the extent to which the institutional leadership of Lithuanian higher education institutions contribute to the promotion and protection of academic freedom in their institutions or to the erosion of academic freedom.

Academic community

¹⁰⁸ An OECD report (2021) showed, for example, that total expenditure per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student in public HEIs in Lithuania, expressed in US dollars converted for purchasing power parity (PPP) is less than half of the average level in public and government-dependent private HEIs in OECD countries.

When it comes to possible threats to academic freedom from within the academic community, we can refer to the two cases mentioned in the previous section. These cases could indicate a broader trend consisting of efforts from various sides, including from within the academic community, to silence voices that do not adhere to the views of a dominant group, or voices that criticise university leadership. As argued above, the cases referred to do not necessarily form an indication of structural violations of academic freedom within the academic community in Lithuania. However, they might be part of a broader trend of efforts to restrict the freedom of academic expression which might have contributed to the deterioration of academic freedom as assessed by experts in the AFI. Therefore, these and other cases require careful monitoring for getting a better understanding of the extent to which recent trends within the academic community in Lithuania contribute to the erosion of academic freedom in the country.

Civil society

When it comes to possible threats to academic freedom from civil society, we can refer to the cases of Birutė Obelenienė and Tatjana Borisova mentioned in the section on Institutional leadership and management. These cases could indicate a broader trend consisting of efforts from various sides, including civil society, to silence voices that do not adhere to the worldview of a dominant group, or voices that criticise university leadership. As argued above, the cases referred to do not necessarily form an indication of structural violations of academic freedom from actors in civil society in Lithuania. However, they might be part of a broader trend of restricting the freedom of academic expression which might have contributed to the deterioration of academic freedom as assessed by experts in the AFI. Therefore, these and other cases require careful monitoring for getting a better understanding of the extent to which attacks from civil society on members of the academic community in Lithuania contribute to the erosion of academic freedom in the country.

Private sector actors

In the monitoring period, the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by private sector actors beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Lithuania of specific actions of private sector actors additional empirical research would be necessary.

Security policies and concerns

In the monitoring period, the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by national security policies and concerns beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Lithuania of specific initiatives and intentions in the area of national security, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Conclusion

The available sources of information analysed indicate that there were few public debates and cases around academic freedom in Lithuania in the monitoring period. At the same time, the AFI 2024 update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024) suggests that the *de facto* state of academic freedom in Lithuania is deteriorating faster than in most other EU Member States. The individual cases referred to in this section may indicate a structural trend in which institutional leadership and management, academic colleagues and students, and civil society groups and actors seek to silence dissenting voices in academia, or to silence criticism on institutional leadership, resulting, for example, in an increase in academic self-censorship. In addition to this possible trend, and as also indicated in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023), it is worrying that the current government also does not appear to be prioritising higher education and research, in a situation with significantly declining student numbers

and relatively low salary levels for academic staff. However, the available information did not provide evidence for an in-depth assessment of the extent to which a structural negative trend in academic freedom in Lithuania occurs. Therefore, it can be recommended to closely monitor the state of *de facto* academic freedom in Lithuania in the coming period.

3.3.8. Luxembourg

Introduction

In the 2022/23 pilot study on the state of play of academic freedom in the EU Member States commissioned by the European Parliament STOA Panel (Maassen et al., 2023), Luxembourg was indicated to have a very strong *de facto* academic freedom. The Academic Freedom Index score of Luxembourg was characterised as stable with Luxembourg ranked as 7th of the EU Member States in the 2021 AFI index, and the 2017 EUA autonomy scorecard scores indicating that institutional autonomy in Luxembourg was at a medium-high level in Europe. As presented in section 2 of this report, also the current state of academic freedom in Luxembourg has in general been assessed as very positive, and stable over the last 10–15 years. For example, the score for Luxembourg in the AFI 2024 update (0.94, implying Luxembourg has status A) is identical to 2021 and among the top 10% in the world, while the 2023 EU autonomy scorecard score for Luxembourg (79%) is slightly higher than the 2017 score. The AFI score can be interpreted as a high score, with Luxembourg ranked 5th among EU Member States in the AFI 2024 update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024), while the autonomy score is high with Luxembourg ranked 3rd among 27 included countries/regions in the 2023 EUA autonomy scorecard (Privot et al., 2023).

Luxembourg stands out in the EU by having only one public higher education institution, the University of Luxembourg (Maassen et al., 2023). The country's higher education system is regulated by two laws, The Law on the Organisation of Higher Education and The organisation of the University of Luxembourg (Maassen et al., 2023). Based on their special higher education system, the pilot study raised worries regarding self-governance in practice (Maassen et al., 2023). Luxembourg's small size does also raise some worries regarding institutional autonomy based on close contacts between some of the academic staff at the University of Luxembourg and national politicians (Maassen et al., 2023). Other than these two points, the pilot study raised no further concerns or worries regarding the respect for academic freedom in the country.

Luxembourg increased its public budget for higher education from €1.44 billion in 2018–2021 to €1.7 billion for 2022–2025. This puts Luxembourg at the top in the EU when it comes to per capita investments in R&D (Maassen et al., 2023). The higher budget generally enhances the financial room to manoeuvre for both academic staff at the University of Luxembourg and research staff at non-university research institutes. This in turn can be assumed to have a positive effect on one of the key conditions for academic freedom to be exercised in the country (Maassen et al., 2023).

In short, Luxembourg is still in the highest tier as regards the state of *de facto* academic freedom. As indicated in the remainder of this country section, no significant new concerns and worries about academic freedom have been identified in the monitoring period. This section therefore only refers to a few academic freedom related issues that might need closer attention in the coming years.

Government and politics

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom from government and politics in Luxembourg beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Luxembourg of specific actions from government and politics, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Institutional leadership and management

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom from institutional leadership and management in Luxembourg beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Luxembourg of specific actions from government and politics, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Academic community

The available sources of information did not reveal any specific new worries about infringements on academic freedom from within the academic community. However, as presented in the pilot study, the close contact between some academic staff and national politicians might "undermine, in some respect, the autonomy of the University" (Maassen et al., 2023). Responding to some worries expressed in this regard, the Minister of Higher Education and Research, Stéphanie Obertin, has publicly assured that the Luxembourgian higher education system is firmly anchored in principles and commitments of the Bologna process and is "committed to defending fundamental values including academic freedom, institutional autonomy..." (The Luxembourg Government, 2024).

Furthermore, on a positive note, the high level of public investments in the higher education and research system in Luxembourg implies that academic freedom can be exercised in very positive financial-economic conditions compared to most other EU Member States. The pilot study also mentioned that the academic labour conditions were "comparatively positive at the University of Luxembourg" (Maassen et al., 2023) and the available sources of information did not indicate that these conditions had deteriorated since 2022.

Civil society

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom from civil society in Luxembourg beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Luxembourg of specific actions from civil society, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Private sector actors

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by the private sector in Luxembourg beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Luxembourg of specific actions from private sector actors, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Security policies and concerns

Like in most other EU Member States, also in Luxembourg there are concerns about national security. One case worth mentioning that has received some media attention in the country refers to possible foreign interference from China. In recent years, concerns have arisen in several EU Member States countries about the spread of and possible threats of foreign interference emanating from the Confucius Institutes, which were established by the Chinese government in many countries with the formal aim to promote Chinese culture. Due to concerns about possible foreign interference through these Institutes, a number of them have been closed in several European countries (Martin, 2023). One of these Institutes is located at the University of Luxembourg and after a Confucius Institute was closed in Belgium, Luxembourg's Minister of Education, Claude Meisch, made a statement on the matter (Martin, 2023). He assured that no attempts have been made to gain influence through this Institute and that the University is "vigilant with regard to academic freedom, scientific rigor, an

environment without discrimination and military, religious or political neutrality" in all its partnerships (Martin, 2023). As indicated, this is an issue that will require close monitoring in the coming years, even if the current government does not express concerns about foreign interference in its science system.

Furthermore, in March 2024, the Minister of Defence (Yuriko Backes), the Minister of the Economy, SME, Energy and Tourism (Lex Delles), and the Minister for Research and Higher Education (Stéphanie Obertin), launched a new joint call for research and development (R&D) projects in the field of defence as a follow up to the first joint call from 2022¹⁰⁹. The focus of the call is on dual-use capabilities that can be used for both civilian and military purposes. While one of the goals of this call is to create synergies between sectors, it remains to be seen how the procedures and regulations governing its implementation will affect the balance between national security considerations and academic freedom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the available information sources during the monitoring period have not revealed any specific new concerns or infringements on academic freedom in Luxembourg since the EP Academic Freedom Monitor pilot study was conducted (Maassen et al., 2023). Luxembourg still scores high in international monitors when it comes to the state of *de facto* academic freedom in the country and there have not been new developments regarding the worries presented in the pilot study nor in any other areas (Maassen et al., 2023). Higher education and research are still relatively well-supported in the country which can be seen in the level of public investments for the period 2022–2025. Overall, Luxembourg is among the most positive cases of *de facto* academic freedom in the EU.

¹⁰⁹ See: https://mesr.gouvernement.lu/en/actualites.gouvernement2024%2Ben%2Bactualites%2Btoutes_actualites%2Bcom_muniques%2B2024%2B03-mars%2B18-backes-delles-obertin-rd-defense.html

3.3.9. Slovakia

Introduction

The 2022/23 pilot study on the state of academic freedom in the EU Member States, commissioned by the European Parliament STOA Panel (Maassen et al., 2023), indicated that Slovakia had a very strong *de facto* academic freedom. The Academic Freedom Index score of Slovakia was characterised as stable with Slovakia ranked as 4th of the EU Member States in the 2021 AFI index. On the other hand, the 2017 EUA autonomy scorecard scores indicated that institutional autonomy in Slovakia was at a medium-low level in Europe, with Slovakia being ranked 22nd among 29 countries/regions included.

As presented in section 2 of this report, the current state of academic freedom in Slovakia is generally assessed as being under pressure. For example, the score for Slovakia in the AFI 2024 update (0.88, still Status A) is lower than in 2021 and no longer among the top 10% in the world (top 10–20% instead). The AFI score can be interpreted as a medium-high score globally, with Slovakia ranked 17th among EU countries in the AFI 2024 update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024). The 2023 EU autonomy scorecard score for Slovakia (62.5%) is slightly higher than the 2017 score, but can still be characterised as medium-low with Slovakia ranked 19th among 27 included countries/regions in the 2023 EUA autonomy scorecard (Pruvot et al., 2023).

The pilot study pointed to the relatively strong post-democratisation commitment of Slovakia to academic freedom as illustrated by the legal protection of and institutional commitment to academic freedom. This was reflected in the high AFI score in the early 2020s. At the same time, the pilot study discussed worries with respect to the 2022 university reform, consisting of an amendment to the Higher Education Act. The reform was formally passed by Parliament in March 2022, with some adaptations in the final version in response to criticism from the academic community expressing worries about the attempts to strengthen political control over higher education (Maassen et al., 2023). The most significant changes introduced by the reform were the introduction of a board of directors with internal and external members, and performance contracts as a condition for public funding for institutions. The then Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sports has argued that the reforms will give institutions an incentive to improve quality and retain more students, as well as increase institutions' responsiveness to the needs of society and the labor market (TASR, 2021).

In the monitoring period, the discussions about the governance of higher education and research in Slovakia have focused, amongst other things, on the public funding, both the relatively low level of public funding and the link of funding to performance, and in relation to this the brain drain of students and scholars from Slovakia. Furthermore, the relatively fragile state of the Slovakian democracy has led to new worries about the state of academic freedom. The political programme of the government installed in 2023 does not reflect a strong commitment to higher education and research and their fundamental values, such as academic freedom, and also the close relationship between the Slovakian and Hungarian government is seen by many in the academic community as a possible indication that the promotion and protection of academic freedom by the Slovakian government might be less strong than it has been until recently. When it comes to the trends in academic freedom in the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific infringements on academic freedom by the current government. Nonetheless, the information available did suggest that, as indicated by the AFI 2024 score for Slovakia, academic freedom is under pressure in the country. It can therefore be recommended to closely monitor the development of *de facto* academic freedom in the country in order to identify whether Slovakia will remain among the 26 EU Member States where academic freedom is still largely respected and

protected, even though it is in most countries slowly eroding, or develop in the direction of Hungary where academic freedom is structurally violated (Craciun et al., 2024; Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

Government and politics

In their study on Slovak MPs' response to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Lintner et al. (2023) have argued that the values and opinions of Slovak society do not necessarily reflect the formally pro-Western and pro-democratic political system. They refer to the Eurobarometer 97 and a special Eurobarometer report (Lintner et al. 2023, p. 2), which suggest that Slovakia is ranked among the EU Member States with the lowest citizen satisfaction in the country's level of democracy and the lowest trust in the national government (European Commission, 2022), and that Slovakia is among the EU Member States with the highest proportion of the population believing in conspiracy theories (European Commission, 2021). This relates to the relatively fragile and highly fragmented political landscape in Slovakia, which according to Lintner et al. (2023, p. 2) is marked by the instability of political parties and dominated by populist parties. In this situation, it is feared that the current three-party coalition government led by Robert Fico could steer Slovakia away from its pro-Western orientation towards something more like the authoritarian, EU-sceptic path Hungary has taken under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (Euronews, 2024). This fear, which is based on the close relationship between the current Slovakian and Hungarian governments, might explain why the traditionally high score on the state of *de facto* academic freedom for Slovakia in the AFI is decreasing.

An illustration of the direction the government might be taking can be found in the abolishment of the Special Prosecutor's Office, which officially closed in March 2024 (Domin, 2024). This office oversaw the country's most serious cases of not only corruption, but also terrorism and extremism (Silenská, 2024). The general public and the academic community, as well as student representatives and the European Commission have voiced their dissatisfaction with this decision (Jochecová, 2023). A somewhat peculiar case in relation to the closure of the Special Prosecutor's Office attracted a lot of attention in the country. It started when a student voiced his criticism about the support for the closure of the Office by the dean of the law faculty where this student was studying (Paulovic, 2023). Unexpectedly, Prime Minister Fico responded to the student's criticism on a social media post claiming, amongst other things, that the student was, 'absolutely irrelevant' (Paulovic, 2023). Furthermore, Prime Minister Fico stated that he also has been a law student, but "that he knew where his place was". Referring to the media coverage the student received, Fico argued, "What the anti-Slovak media is doing today is a gross insult to authority and education" (Paulovic, 2023). The student in question got support from, amongst others, the European Students' Union and the Student Council of Higher Education in Slovakia. In a joint statement, they described the Prime Minister's social media statement as an attack on both the student and academic freedom (ESU, 2024). In the same statement, they claimed that this was an escalation of other worrisome trends in Slovakia related to academic freedom, rule of law and student participation pursued by the government (ESU, 2024).

Furthermore, Slovakia is experiencing relatively high levels of brain drain, and this intensified after the 2023 elections (Bauerova, 2024; Benova, 2024). About 20% of the Slovakian university students are currently studying abroad, which is a relatively high figure compared to the 4% average in the EU Member States (Nagy, 2024). A large number of these students are staying abroad after graduation, especially in Czechia (Bauerova, 2024). Among the possible causes for the relatively high level of current brain drain is the lack of attractive academic career opportunities in Slovakia (Benova, 2024), which is, amongst other things, related to the current state of public funding of higher education and research. The state of public funding of higher education and research in Slovakia is characterised by its low overall level of public funding, at least in comparison to most other EU Member States, and its strong performance orientation. Concerning the latter, a study by Plaček et al. (2024) shows that while the performance funding system has increased the number of scientific publications produced by Slovakian scholars, at the same time this system has created a number of

"notorious problems" (Plaček et al., 2024, p. 2648). In the first place, using performance funding tools in higher education and research systems such as in Slovakia which are "without a solid ethical foundation and with organisations lacking sufficient capacity for such implementation" leads to forms of administrative gaming that counter the intentions of the performance tools. Instead of enhanced scientific quality and prioritisation, this gaming leads in many cases e.g. to the establishment of internal performance schemes that are driven by maximising income and securing certain interests instead of promoting quality (Plaček et al., 2024, p. 2648–49). In addition, the use of performance funding tools is argued to reduce the social responsibility of academic researchers in Slovakia (Plaček et al., 2024). Consequently, the further development and the use of performance funding tools in higher education and research require careful monitoring in order to get a better understanding of the extent to which these tools will be adapted over time with the aim to reduce their negative impacts. If the latter is not realised, performance funding tools might have a long term negative impact, for example, on academic career opportunities for especially young scholars and their academic freedom to follow their own research agenda.

Finally, an indication of the possible direction *de facto* academic freedom of expression might take in Slovakia is the growing pressure on media freedom. The Slovakian parliament approved in June 2024 a government bill that replaced the public service broadcaster with a politicised entity (Watson, 2024). This development has received criticism from opposition politicians, employees and abroad, e.g. the German Journalists Association, who argued that "the current parliamentary decision is a serious violation of the fundamental values of the European Union" (Watson, 2024). Media advocacy groups have warned that the bill is part of the 'Orbanisation' of the media in Slovakia. It is therefore important to monitor the further development of government efforts to control the media, and the extent to which this development will also include efforts of the government to control the academic freedom of expression.

Institutional leadership and management

In the monitoring period, the available sources of information did not reveal any structural violations of academic freedom by institutional leadership and management beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). In general, the leadership of universities in Slovakia remains committed to promoting and protecting academic freedom within their institutions. At the law school referred to in the previous section where a student criticised the abolition of the Office of the Special Prosecutor, a public debate was organised on the issue. In general, it seemed that the right to academic expression was largely respected within the institution. Nonetheless, it can be recommended to monitor carefully whether institutional leadership can remain independent of the government in the protection of academic freedom or whether institutional leadership comes under the control of the ruling government with a negative impact on *de facto* academic freedom, as has been the trend in Hungary over the last decade.

Academic community

In the monitoring period, the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom from within the academic community beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Slovakia of specific actions from within the academic community and the extent to which this results in self-censorship, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Civil society

As mentioned above, both the abolishment of the Special Prosecutor's Office and the high level of academic brain drain from Slovakia, can be argued to relate to the development of the overall

political order and the higher education and research system in Slovakia. While the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or violations of academic freedom from civil society in the monitoring period, the above mentioned specific features of the Slovakian society and the low level of trust in democracy and the government can be argued to require careful monitoring in order to identify whether the attacks from civil society on the academic community are growing or not.

Private sector actors

In the monitoring period, the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by private sector actors beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023). However, for a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Slovakia of specific actions of private sector actors additional empirical research would be necessary.

Security policies and concerns

Obviously, given that Slovakia is one of the neighbouring countries of Ukraine, the Russian invasion of Ukraine "became a subject of much political discussion with large number of MPs openly advocating Russian interests" (Lintner et al., 2023). While these MPs were largely member of opposition parties at the time of the invasion, opposition parties won the 2023 elections, and the current three-party coalition government represents a much more 'Russian-friendly' foreign affairs and security policy than the previous government, most other EU Member States, and the European Commission. How the current government's security policies will impact higher education and research, and *de facto* academic freedom is too early to tell, but requires careful monitoring and additional empirical research.

Conclusion

While Slovakia has been among the EU Member States with the strongest status of *de facto* academic freedom in recent decades, the state of academic freedom has clearly eroded during the monitoring period. The emerging threats to academic freedom are mainly related to developments in the country's political system and the public governance of higher education and research. Regarding the latter, there are growing concerns about the impact of the public funding system on academic freedom, both the relatively low level of public funding and the impact of the use of performance funding instruments. One impact is that more and more of students and academics are leaving the country due to deteriorating working conditions and limited academic career opportunities, and the lack of attractiveness of the higher education system for Slovakian students.

3.3.10. Sweden

Introduction

In the 2022/23 pilot study on the state of play of academic freedom in the EU Member States commissioned by the European Parliament STOA Panel (Maassen et al., 2023), Sweden was indicated to have a very strong *de facto* academic freedom. The Academic Freedom Index score of Sweden was characterised as stable with Sweden ranked as 5th of the EU Member States in the 2021 with a score of 0.95. While the score for Sweden in the AFI 2024 update (0.94, implying Sweden has status A) is slightly lower than in 2021, it is still among the top 10% in the world, with Sweden ranked 7th among EU countries in the AFI 2024 update (Kinzelbach et al., 2024).

The pilot study (Maassen et al., 2023) discussed how in the early 2020s the legal protection of academic freedom was strengthened by its integration into the Swedish Higher Education Act (högskolelagen) in 2021 (Sveriges Riksdag, 2021). While this integration received widespread support, some critical questions were raised about the implementation in practice and the lack of specificity around how to achieve greater *de facto* academic freedom. Nonetheless, enhanced legal protection reflects the overall commitment of the Swedish academic community and the universities and colleges to academic freedom as can be observed. Therefore, despite some concerns about the implementation, the integration of academic freedom in the Higher Education Act was seen as a welcome development.

The pilot study referred to a number of incidents with respect to academic freedom, such as a controversy around a Covid-19 researcher questioning some measures introduced to control the pandemic, and the interference of a member of parliament with the responsibility of the academic community for the academic content of its study programmes and courses. With respect to both cases university leadership and other actors raised concerns about political interference in academic freedom and the safety of academics which threatened to lead to "the possible omission or suppression of research results and course content in higher education" (Maassen et al., 2023).

While Sweden is among the highest ranked EU Member States in the AFI (Kinzelbach et al., 2024), debates about the state of *de facto* academic freedom in Sweden have persisted throughout the monitoring period. The previous Minister of Education, Mats Persson, has expressed his worries about the impact on academic freedom of a 'cancel culture'¹¹⁰ in Swedish universities, and growing international security risks affecting the functioning of university boards. At the same time, university leaders, academic staff and student unions as well as prominent academics have expressed their concerns about the impact on academic freedom of political interference, e.g. in course management and institutional governance and of the level of research funding.

This situation, where Sweden is consistently one of the highest scoring countries in the AFI and has relatively strong legal protection of academic freedom and is strongly committed to this freedom politically, socially and academically, while at the same time there is a fairly intense public debate going on, inspired by various kinds of concerns about the actual state of academic freedom in the country, makes Sweden an extremely interesting case within the EU. Unlike Denmark (Craciun et al., 2024), which is characterised by intense debates about the state of *de facto* academic freedom, the concerns in the academic community in Sweden are not related to a significant dissatisfaction with a specific university reform. Instead, in Sweden the impact of various (New Public Management) reforms and the tendency of the government and individual politicians to increasingly interfere with the academic system are argued by a large part of the academic community to be major threats to academic freedom. At the same time, the previous Swedish Minister of Education, Mats Persson,

¹¹⁰ The UKÄ study (Tovatt et al., 2024) refers to the following definition of cancel culture by Norris (2023, p. 148): "collective strategies by activists using social pressures to achieve cultural ostracism of targets (someone or something) accused of offensive words or deeds".

positioned an important threat to academic freedom, that is, a 'cancel culture' within the academic community. These two opposing interpretations of the main threats in the country to academic freedom can be interpreted as unique features of the Swedish case. However, it can also be argued that the basic features of the Swedish case resemble in many respects the situation with respect to academic freedom in other EU Member States, in the sense that there is an ongoing debate in which the main political, academic and social actors agree that academic freedom is eroding, but each of them is emphasising different kinds of threats in the public discussions on academic freedom.

Overall, in the monitoring period no major incidents with respect to academic freedom have been identified in Sweden. Instead, the Swedish case is characterised by a rather intense debate on the state of academic freedom, which is stimulated and enriched by various studies (e.g. Ahlbäck Öberg, 2023; Tovatt et al., 2024; Nordic Academic Trade Unions, 2024) and regular seminars, workshops and conferences dedicated to academic freedom.

Government and politics

The current state of the debates on *de facto* academic freedom in Sweden can be illustrated by responses to a report on the work of higher education institutions to promote and protect academic freedom mandated by the government and conducted by UKÄ (*Universitetskanslersämbetet*, in English the Swedish Higher Education Authority) (Tovatt et al., 2024). The then Minister of Education, Mats Persson, argued that the report confirms his suspicion about the impact on academic freedom of the cancel culture in universities. Persson argued in an interview with Svenska Dagbladet¹¹¹ that the results of the study were "worse than [he] had anticipated". In his view, "Many scientists describe ... that a culture of silencing exists. This huge and important report that is building on a survey sent to [over] 10,000 teachers and researchers, finds that every second teacher, doctorate student and researcher reports that academic freedom at Swedish higher education institutions is challenged today. And three quarters of these think that this has led to some form of change in their behaviour." He continues by stating that, "Few of them seek support from their institution when their academic freedom is threatened and only one-fifth of them report having received sufficient support". This interpretation of the UKÄ study by then minister Persson is challenged by various members from the academic community and also by journalists who argue that the study shows that the main threats to academic freedom are political interference, the research funding system, and attacks from civil society (Myklebust, 2024b).

In a report mandated by SULF, the Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers, Ahlbäck Öberg (2023) makes a plea for stronger formal regulations for promoting and protecting academic freedom in Sweden. Furthermore, the report proposes to strengthen the constitutional protections of academic freedom.

A comparative report produced by the Nordic academic trade unions (2024, pp. 44-49) on the state of academic freedom in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden concludes with respect to Sweden that the country has a "solid legal framework for the protection of academic freedom". However, it is argued that "significant challenges persist, particularly due to political and economic pressures, precarious employment, and insufficient institutional support for those facing threats or harassment."

A case that illustrates the nature of the discussions on academic freedom between the then Minister of Education and the higher education sector is the Minister's criticism of free-standing courses offered by the universities in Sweden. These types of courses, which can vary from 7.5 to 30 ECTS, fall outside a university's formal programme structure and can be used by students to obtain a

¹¹¹ See: <https://www.svd.se/a/OopAM1/ny-rapport-om-hoten-mot-akademisk-frihet>, (interview by Andreas Ericson with the researchers responsible for the report, Caroline Tovatt and Martin Bergman, and the then Minister Persson).

degree without enrolling in a formal study programme. The then Minister referred in public interviews to these courses as 'hobby-like' and claimed that half of the students starting free-standing courses never finish. He announced that the government would seek to reduce the increase of freestanding courses and courses offered as distance education¹¹². The responses from the sector to the then Minister's statements on and plans for freestanding courses have been negative (Myklebust 2024a) and include the criticism that "we are very disappointed with the minister now wanting to sharpen political control over higher education which normally is regarded as the responsibility of the universities" (president of the National Union of Students)¹¹³, "the Minister has not understood the higher education system," (rectors of Lund University and Uppsala University)¹¹⁴, "the government now intends to step in and control the range of courses offered, thus encroaching upon the autonomy of Sweden's HEIs"¹¹⁵ (vice-president Stockholm University), and "the minister is provoking the sector he has been appointed to govern" (past member of Swedish government's Research Advisory Board)¹¹⁶.

These types of discussions and disagreements between the then Minister and the sector raise the question about the extent to which the protection of academic freedom in Sweden is sufficiently strong for dealing effectively with attempts of political interference, for example, when it comes to the planning of academic programmes and courses.

Institutional leadership and management

Two issues with respect to the possible impact from institutional leadership and management on academic freedom are first the dismantling of academic self-governance (or collegial decision-making) as a result of the autonomy reform of 2011 (Nordic academic trade unions, 2024, p. 47). Higher education institutions are argued in this report to have experienced a centralisation of decision-making and a shift from decisions in collegial bodies to university management decisions. This has overall reduced the influence of academic staff and students in decision making processes on academic matters, in other words, self-governance as a condition for exercising academic freedom has eroded significantly.

Second, recent reports and studies claim that support structures at higher education institutions for academics and students whose academic freedom has been violated or threatened are in place at virtually all institutions. However, this support structure is not always adequate, sometimes difficult to access, and not known to all staff and students (Ahlbäck Öberg, 2023; Nordic academic trade unions, 2024, p. 48-49; Tovatt et al., 2024, pp. 51-52, pp. 103-104). Furthermore, one survey shows that those academic staff, including doctoral students, who are familiar with their university's support structure for academic freedom in general choose not to use it when their academic freedom has been challenged (Tovatt et al., 2024, p. 149). In relation to this the report in question concludes that, "It is a challenge for higher education institutions and their work environment work that it does not come to their attention when the academic freedom of researchers, teachers and doctoral students is challenged" (Tovatt et al., 2024, p. 149).

Academic community

The results of a survey in 2024 by the academic staff union SULF among its active members regarding threats, hatred, and improper influence suggest relatively high levels of threats and hatred

¹¹² See: Myklebust (2024a) and Svenska Dagbladet (<https://www.svd.se/tagg/mats-persson-politiker>)

¹¹³ See: Myklebust (2024a).

¹¹⁴ See: <https://www.svd.se/a/GMv456/manga-missforstand-fran-utbildningsminister-mats-persson-skriver-reaktorerna-for-uppsala-och-lund>

¹¹⁵ See: <https://medarbetare.su.se/en/our-su/staff-information/staff-news/news-archive/2024-04-29-clas-hattestrand-freestanding-courses---how-big-is-the-problem>

¹¹⁶ See: Myklebust (2024a)

originating from within the academic community (Nordic academic trade unions, 2024, p. 48). The results of the survey have to be interpreted carefully given that the respondents are all active union members, and the response rate to the survey was relatively low. Nonetheless, nearly half of the respondents have been subjected to threats, hatred or improper influence, and in more than half of these cases, the threats, hatred and improper influence came from within the academic community. We can also refer here to the UKÄ study (Tovatt et al., 2024, pp. 90–92) where it is indicated that, "Many have also cited conformism, homogeneity of opinion or lack of discussion as a challenge to academic freedom. It may be that certain issues or perspectives cannot be raised in the workplace, that they are ignored and pushed aside". The results of the SULF survey and the UKÄ study suggest that the issue of the impact of academic conflicts, disagreements, tensions, etc. on academic freedom in Sweden deserve more attention and should be investigated and monitored more thoroughly.

Civil society

The above-mentioned survey (Nordic academic trade unions, 2024), and the UKÄ study (Tovatt et al., 2024) both suggest that in addition to threats against and violations of academic freedom originating within the academic community many academics also experience harassment and hatred in relation to their academic work from civil society. For example, in the SULF survey 121 respondents 'reported being victimised by a member of the general public' (Nordic academic staff unions, 2024, p. 48). The most common forms of victimisation were 'threatening digital or physical messages' and 'inappropriate or distressing appeals for empathy or loyalty'. Also the UKÄ report presents various examples of attacks on academics from civil society and the way in which the victims of these attacks are supported by their institutions (see e.g. Tovatt et al., 2024, pp. 45–47).

The attacks on academics from civil society seem to have grown in Sweden since the pandemic. For getting a better understanding of the nature and frequency of the attacks, and the impact it has on the victims in academia, long-term follow-up research to the SULF survey, the UKÄ study and other recent studies is needed, preferably allowing for more thorough comparisons among EU countries. This research is also needed to find ways of enhancing the effectiveness of support structures at the Swedish higher education institutions.

Private sector actors

In the monitoring period the available sources of information did not reveal any specific worries about or infringements on academic freedom by the private sector in Sweden beyond what was mentioned in the pilot study, which included the worries in the academic community about the relatively low level of basic public funding for research and the growing involvement of private sector actors in the funding of academic activities (Maassen et al., 2023). Here we can also refer to the UKÄ study which discusses various aspects of the private funding and commercialisation of research in Sweden (Tovatt et al., 2024, p. 138–139), however, without presenting empirical examples of cases where private sector actors violated academic freedom. Therefore, for getting a comprehensive understanding of the possible impact on academic freedom in Sweden of specific actions from private sector actors, additional empirical research would be necessary.

Security policies and concerns

The UKÄ study discusses several aspects of the possible impact of the recently emerging security concerns of the Swedish public authorities in relation to growing geopolitical conflicts and tensions. In the study's report (Tovatt et al., 2024, p. 138) it states, for example, that, "Several reports highlight that there are real [security] risks with certain types of research. There is also a risk that academic freedom is questioned when researchers give the impression that they are not handling these risks responsibly way or refrain from informing about these risks." However, the report does not provide empirical examples of how *de facto* academic freedom is affected in Sweden by security risks and

concerns. Instead, it indicates that Swedish export control of military equipment applies to cases in relation to dual use of research, and where technology developed for civilian use might be used militarily (Tovatt et al., 2024, p. 128). Furthermore, the study emphasises that the individual researcher is responsible for keeping track of what applies. As indicated by Tovatt et al (2024, p. 128). "This can seem inhibiting on academic freedom if the researcher does not know what applies and therefore perhaps refrains from researching a particular research problem or theme".

A specific case illustrating how security risks in relation geopolitical tensions and the international security situation can affect academic freedom concerns the decision in 2023 of the then Minister Mats Persson to shorten the terms of university board members from three years to 17 months. In a televised interview the minister indicated that the decision was taken in relation to the international security situation. Persson argued that the threat from China, in particular, necessitated new security measures also at universities. This was further elaborated by the then minister in an interview in Svenska Dagbladet in which he stated that "the security situation demands that more extensive background checks of the board members of Swedish universities have to be undertaken before selection and the ministry is working on establishing new criteria and procedures". One of the elements of his decision was the intention to appoint security experts as university boards members, and halving the terms of the incoming external board members would enhance the opportunity for the ministry to do so (Upton, 2023). This can, e.g., be derived from the indication by then State secretary Maria Nilsson that shortening members' terms was "an extraordinary decision, which was not taken lightly". She said terms would return to three years after the next wave of appointments, which would include security experts (Upton, 2023).

His decision led to what has been referred to as a 'media storm' (Myklebust 2023) in which the decision of the minister has sparked critical reactions from the sector¹¹⁷. In an open letter, 37 rectors of Swedish higher education institutions argued that the government's decision can only be understood as 'mistrust' of the competence of boards and the process to select their members. They argue in the letter that, "The decision is a threat to the independence of the higher education institutions and furthermore to the opportunity to critically search for new knowledge and hence it is a threat against academic freedom"¹¹⁸. The rectors especially criticised the political interference in governance matters that should be the responsibility of the institutions. Another criticism came from Dr Agneta Bladh, immediate past chair of the Swedish Research Council and former State Secretary, who said: "This decision by the new government is hard to understand as the governing boards decide on broad issues and are not supposed to influence what kind of research and research collaboration will take place, [nor] which students to accept.... As the decision is hard to understand for those who know the system, it is worrying what kind of authority might be given to the governing boards" (Myklebust, 2023). Hans Adolfsson, rector of Umeå University and chair of the Swedish rectors' conference, said the move to increase control over boards was unprecedented and brought Sweden closer to Hungary's system (Upton, 2023). The European University Association (EUA) condemned the decision by the Minister to shorten the mandate of external members of university boards. The EUA argued that, "the decision represents undue interference in the institutional governance of universities, with the government unilaterally changing a well-established process regulating the nomination of external members on university boards... EUA therefore calls on the Swedish government to reconsider its decision and to develop more appropriate tools to address security threats – in discussion and collaboration with the Swedish university sector, rather than through misguided and unilateral action"¹¹⁹. The intensity of the criticisms on the Minister's decision

¹¹⁷ See, e.g. the response from Karolinska Institute's President, Annika Östman Wernerson: <https://news.ki.se/government-decision-to-shorten-term-of-office-for-university-board-comes-under-fire>

¹¹⁸ See: <https://suhf.se/app/uploads/2023/04/Till-regeringen-Utb-Land-Skrivelse-angaende-styrelserna-SUHF-SU-850-0024-23-REV.pdf>

¹¹⁹ See: <https://www.eua.eu/news/eua-news/eua-supports-swedish-universities-call-to-protect-institutional-autonomy.html#>

reflect the potential far reaching consequences for institutional autonomy and academic freedom of the decision.

Conclusion

From a global perspective the state of academic freedom in Sweden is generally assessed as very positive, but as this section shows, recent debates and studies on academic freedom signal that there are major concerns about current trends in academic freedom in the country. These concerns relate to the impact of the level of political interference in institutional governance and academic responsibilities, the state of public research funding, precarious working conditions, growing intolerance for dissenting voices and ideas within academia ('cancel culture'), increasing attacks on academics from civil society, the involvement of private actors in the funding and the commercialisation of research, and growing concerns about how national policies for addressing international security risks will affect academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The worries are addressed in various studies and reports, which provides Sweden and its academic community with a comparatively positive foundation for addressing and countering these worries. With reference to the SULF report the state of *de facto* academic freedom in Sweden can be described as follows: "... from a global perspective, Sweden must still be regarded as enjoying a high degree of academic freedom. The question is whether we can settle for that. Academic freedom in Sweden rests on the assumption of the self-restraint and moderation of politicians rather than on robust institutional structures. This is not enough these days. Institutions must be built to withstand difficult tests and trying times. Regulation is required in order to reinforce the guardrails that protect academic freedom" (Ahlbäck Öberg 2023, p. 39).

From this perspective it can be recommended that in the coming period all major political, socio-economic, and academic stakeholders involved in the debates on academic freedom discuss jointly how appropriate measures and new regulations for enhancing the protection of academic freedom in Sweden can be developed, building on the strong commitment to the promotion and protection of academic freedom that can be argued to characterise both the academic community and all major external stakeholders involved.

4. Conclusions

The initiative of the European Parliament to establish an Academic Freedom Monitor was driven, amongst other things, by observations of Members of Parliament and stakeholders from the academic community that academic freedom was increasingly coming under pressure in the EU. Various studies undertaken since 2022 for the EP Academic Freedom Monitor confirmed these observations and provided relevant insights into the main threats to the state of *de jure* and *de facto* academic freedom in the EU Member States. These studies indicated that the threats were coming from different sources at the same time, the most important of which were government and politics, institutional leadership and management, internal academic tensions and conflicts, civil society, private sector, and security policies, concerns and risks (Kovats and Ronay, 2023; Maassen et al. 2023; Craciun, et al. 2024).

The study presented in this report builds on the previous EP Academic Freedom Monitor studies in its production of an updated synthesis of measurements of the state of *de facto* academic freedom in 2024 in the 27 EU Member States. Furthermore, it analysed recent trends in academic freedom in ten European Union Member States (2022-24), Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia, and Sweden. For the presentation of the latter part of the study the six identified main sources of threats to academic freedom were used to structure the 10 country reports.

The results from this study indicate that the state of *de facto* academic freedom continues to erode slowly throughout the EU. While systemic and structural infringements of academic freedom only take place in Hungary, in most other EU Member States various threats to academic freedom are being identified and discussed. The most serious recent threats have come from political interference and the impact of security policies and concerns, including foreign interference. Furthermore, a growing number of threats to academic freedom from institutional leadership and management are being reported, while concerns about the impact on academic freedom of attacks on dissenting voices and victimisation within the academic community are increasing. In addition, attacks by civil society on academia have grown since the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing not only on vaccine scientists, but also on academics in other fields, such as climate change, migration studies, and gender studies. Finally, while the growing involvement of the private sector in academia is seen as positive overall, there is broad agreement that this involvement requires more transparent regulations and procedures, preferably at the European level.

Next to the common trends in *de facto* academic freedom, important differences between EU Member States can be identified. For example, governmental and political impact on academic freedom takes place in different ways throughout the EU and can consist of direct interference with key responsibilities of higher education institutions, such as the management of study programmes, or indirect influence through changes in public funding, institutional governance or labour conditions. Furthermore, the impact of institutional leadership and management on academic freedom is different in Western European countries that introduced university governance reforms in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, such as Sweden, compared to Central and Eastern European countries, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, where university governance reforms are more recent. Another example concerns the impact of the private sector on academic freedom, with important variations among European countries regarding the level of public funding of higher education and research, the main characteristics of the private sector, the role of private foundations in funding academic activities, and the traditions in private-academic collaboration. There are also important differences across European countries when it comes to the nature of the threats to academic freedom in the other four categories.

While this study confirms that the concerns about the state of academic freedom in the EU are justified, to develop appropriate measures to counter the erosion of academic freedom in the EU,

the knowledge base with respect to the main academic freedom trends and threats needs to be further strengthened. This is addressed in the set of policy options proposed on the basis of the two studies. The aim of these policy options is to prevent the further erosion of academic freedom in Europe, enhance its legal protection and raise awareness of the importance of academic freedom within the academic community and society as a whole. The proposed policy options include setting up a European Platform for Academic Freedom; integrating academic freedom more effectively and consistently into EU higher education, research, development, and innovation programmes; and establishing a European clearing house for the meta-analysis of existing academic freedom studies and data. For the successful further development and implementation of these policy options both at European and national level, active involvement of the academic community in the further development of the EP Academic Freedom Monitor will be crucial.

Country-specific references

Austria

Freedom House (2022). *Austria: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/austria/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Austria: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/austria/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Austria: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/austria/freedom-world/2024>.

Belgium

Freedom House (2022). *Belgium: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/belgium/freedom-world/2022>. Freedom House (2023).
Belgium: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/belgium/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Belgium: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/belgium/freedom-world/2024>.

Bulgaria

Beiter, K.D., Karran, T. and Appiagyei-Atua, K (2016). Academic Freedom and Its Protection in the Law of European States Measuring an International Human Right. *European Journal of Comparative Law and Governance*, 3, 254-345.

Bulgarian National Television (2024). *Universities threatened to close doors in protest, government urgently allocated funds*. BTN, 15.05.2024; <https://bnt.bg/news/universities-threatened-to-close-doors-in-protest-government-urgently-allocated-funds-329008news.html>.

Corbett, A. (2023). State of play of academic freedom in Europe – A political choice. *University World News*, 11 April 2023. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20230411083503394>.

Filipova, N. (2022, February 3). Universities to Merge under One Name, with One Management and Pool of Professors and Facilities – Minister. Retrieved from *Bulgarian News Agency*:
<https://www.bta.bg/en/news/bulgaria/225603-universities-to-merge-under-one-name-with-one-management-and-pool-of-professo>.

Freedom House (2022). *Bulgaria: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/bulgaria/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Bulgaria: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/bulgaria/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Bulgaria: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/bulgaria/freedom-world/2024>.

Georgieva, S. (2022, September 25). Реформата във висшето образование се отлага [The reform in higher education is postponed]. Retrieved from *CEFA*: <https://www.segabg.com/hot/category-education/reformata-vuv-vissheto-obrazovanie-se-otlaga>.

OHCHR (2024) *Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression in educational institutions (Bulgaria)*. Report to the Special Rapporteur on the right to education by the NGO Innovative Trans-border Solutions Association Bulgaria.
<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ohchr.org%2Fsites%2F>

default%2Ffiles%2Fdocuments%2Fissues%2Feducation%2Fcfis%2Fcfi-expression%2Fsubm-academic-freedom-cso-innovativ-bulgaria-aria.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK.

Vögtle, E.M. and Windzio, M. (2024). Does academic freedom matter for global student mobility? Results from longitudinal network data 2009–2017. *Higher Education*, 87: 433–452. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-023-01015-x>.

Croatia

Debeljak, H. (2024, March 15). Rektori i dekani ocjenjivat će profesore po novom Zakonu: 'Svake godine prijeti nam opasnost od otkaza' [Rectors and deans will evaluate professors according to the new law: 'Every year we are threatened with dismissal']. Retrieved from Srednja: <https://www.srednja.hr/faks/rektori-i-dekani-ocjenjivat-ce-profesore-po-novom-zakonu-svake-godine-prijeti-nam-opasnost-od-otkaza/>.

Editorial – Akademski.hr. (2024, November 8). Akademske slobode štite nastavnike i znanstvenike [Academic freedoms protect teachers and scientists]. Retrieved from Akademski: <https://www.akademski.hr/akademske-slobode-stite-nastavnike-i-znanstvenike/>.

Editorial – N1 Zagreb. (2024, July 12). Academic freedom under fire: Gender studies programme rejected in Zagreb. Retrieved from N1info.hr: <https://n1info.hr/english/news/academic-freedom-under-fire-gender-studies-programme-rejected-in-zagreb/>.

Gelenčir, M. (2024a, July 7). Ustavna stručnjakinja o pobuni oko Rodnih studija: 'Riječ je o dubokom nepoznavanju akademskih sloboda' [Constitutional expert on the rebellion surrounding gender studies: 'It's about a deep ignorance of academic freedom']. Retrieved from Srednja.hr: <https://www.srednja.hr/faks/ustavna-strucnjakinja-o-pobuni-oko-rodnih-studija-rijec-je-o-dubokom-nepoznavanju-akademskih-sloboda/>.

Gelenčir, M. (2024b, July 10). Bizaran istup biskupa [Bizarre statement by the bishop]. Retrieved from Srednja.hr: <https://www.srednja.hr/faks/bizaran-istup-biskupa-misle-da-drzava-moze-za-braniti-studije-koji-nisu-u-skladu-s-uvjerenjima-vecine-gradana/>.

Freedom House (2022). *Croatia: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/croatia/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Croatia: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/croatia/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Croatia: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/croatia/freedom-world/2024>.

Independent Union of Science and Higher Education. (2022, November 6). Razočarani smo novim zakonom, propuštena je prilika za hrabrije iskorake [We are disappointed with the new law, an opportunity for bolder steps was missed]. Retrieved from Nezavisni Sindikat Znanosti i Visokog Obrazovanja [Independent Union of Science and Higher Education]: https://www.nsz.hr/novosti-i-obavijesti/vijesti_iz_znanosti_i_obrazovanja/razocarani-smo-novim-zakonom-propustena-je-prilika-za-hrabrije-iskorake/.

Independent Union of Science and Higher Education. (2024a, January 26). Sindikat poslao Vladi upozorenje zbog katastrofe s koeficijentima [The union sent a warning to the Government due to the disaster with the coefficients]. Retrieved from Nezavisni Sindikat Znanosti i Visokog Obrazovanja [Independent Union of Science and Higher Education]: https://www.nsz.hr/novosti-i-obavijesti/zakonski-okviri_i_kolektivno_pregovaranje/sindikato-poslao-vladi-upozorenje-zbog-katastrofe-s-koeficijentima/.

Independent Union of Science and Higher Education. (2024b, February 20). Ministarstvo 12 dana šuti! Gdje su odgovori na naše zahtjeve? [The Ministry is silent for 12 days! Where are the answers to our

requests?]. Retrieved from Nezavisni Sindikat Znanosti i Visokog Obrazovanja [Independent Union of Science and Higher Education]: https://www.nsz.hr/novosti-i-obavijesti/zakonski-okviri_i_kolektivno_pregovaranje/vlada-ne-moze-birati-s-kojim-ce-sindikatom-sjesti-za-stol-a-s-kojima-ne/.

Independent Union of Science and Higher Education. (2024c, March 22). Prevođenje radnih mjesta je kaotično jer je Uredba puna rupa, a naknadne upute stvaraju nove probleme [The translation of jobs is chaotic because the Regulation is full of loopholes, and subsequent instructions create new problems]. Retrieved from Nezavisni Sindikat Znanosti i Visokog Obrazovanja [Independent Union of Science and Higher Education]: https://www.nsz.hr/novosti-i-obavijesti/zakonski-okviri_i_kolektivno_pregovaranje/prevodenje-radnih-mjesta-je-kaoticno-jer-je-uredba-puna-rupa-a-naknadne-upute-stvaraju-nove-probleme/.

Independent Union of Science and Higher Education. (2024d, April 5). Tražimo adekvatan ispravak i ispriku Ministarstva za falsificiranje volje Sindikata [We demand an adequate correction and an apology from the Ministry for falsifying the will of the Trade Union]. Retrieved from Nezavisni Sindikat Znanosti i Visokog Obrazovanja [Independent Union of Science and Higher Education]: https://www.nsz.hr/novosti-i-obavijesti/zakonski-okviri_i_kolektivno_pregovaranje/trazimo-adekvatan-ispravak-i-ispriku-ministarstva-za-falsificiranje-volje-sindikata/.

Kruljak, I. (2024, March 19). Strah nastavnika od ocjenjivanja: 'Čelnici se mogu rješavati nepodobnih zaposlenika' [Teachers' fear of evaluation: 'Leaders can get rid of unsuitable employees']. Retrieved from Srednja: <https://www.srednja.hr/zbornica/strah-nastavnika-od-ocjenjivanja-celnici-se-mogu-rjesavati-nepodobnih-zaposlenika/>.

Obadić, I. (2024a, February 19). IVAN OBADIĆ: 'Ako su naše visoko obrazovanje i znanost temelj budućnosti, onda nam ta budućnost nije svijetla' [IVAN OBADIĆ: 'If our higher education and science are the foundation of the future, then that future is not bright for us']. (D. Đurić, Interviewer).

Obadić, I. (2024b, May 2). Razbijanje Sveučilišta u Zagrebu [Breaking the University of Zagreb]. Retrieved from Autograf.hr: <https://autograf.hr/razbijanje-sveucilista-u-zagrebu/>.

The Academic Union. (2024, September 10). Prosvjed zbog nepoštivanja kolektivnog ugovora za znanost i visoko obrazovanje [Protest due to non-observance of the collective agreement for science and higher education]. Retrieved from Akademski sindikat [Academic Union]: <https://akademskisindikat.hr/prosvjed-zbog-nepostivanja-kolektivnoga-ugovora-za-znanost-i-visoko-obrazovanje/>.

Zakon o visokom obrazovanju i znanstvenoj djelatnosti [Law on Higher Education and Scientific Activity]. (2022, October 12). Retrieved from *Narodne Novine - Službeni List Republike Hrvatske* [Narodne Novine - The Official Newspaper of The Republic of Croatia: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2022_10_119_1834.html].

Cyprus

Freedom House (2022). *Cyprus: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/cyprus/freedom-world/2022> .

Freedom House (2023). *Cyprus: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/cyprus/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Cyprus: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/cyprus/freedom-world/2024>.

Czechia

Freedom House (2022). *Czech Republic: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/czech-republic/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Czech Republic: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/czech-republic/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Czech Republic: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/czechia/freedom-world/2024>.

Denmark

Freedom House (2022). *Denmark: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/denmark/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Denmark: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/denmark/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Denmark: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/denmark/freedom-world/2024>.

Estonia

Freedom House (2022). *Estonia: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/estonia/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Estonia: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/estonia/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Estonia: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/estonia/freedom-world/2024>.

Finland

Freedom House (2022). *Finland: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/finland/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Finland: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/finland/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Finland: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/finland/freedom-world/2024>.

France

Freedom House (2022). *France: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/france/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *France: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/france/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *France: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/france/freedom-world/2024>.

SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic*. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-04-29-sorbonne-university/>.

SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic*. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-04-05-university-of-cologne-the-new-school/>.

Germany

Blümel, C., and Just, A. (2024). *Anfeindungen gegen Forschende. Eine repräsentative Studie des Projektes KAPAZ Kurzdossier für die Berichterstattung*. [Hostility towards researchers]. Hannover: Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul und Wissenschaftsforschung (DZHW). Retrieved from https://www.hiig.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Erste-Ergebnisse_Umfrage-zu-Anfeindungen-gegen-Forschende.pdf.

Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung (2024). *Akademischen Redefreiheit. Kurzbericht zu einer empirischen Studie an deutschen Hochschulen*. ["Academic freedom of speech. Short report on an empirical study at German universities"] Zeit Stiftung Bucerius and DZHW. Retrieved from: https://read.zeit-stiftung.com/report_akademischeredefreiheit/.

Freedom House (2022). *Germany: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/germany/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Germany: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/germany/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Germany: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/germany/freedom-world/2024>.

Gardner, M. (2024, 23 April). Government seeks to lift restrictions on military research. *UWN*.
<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20240423203348462>.

Seeger, C., Frischlich, L., Obermaier, M., Schmid, U.K., and Schulze H. (2024). *Hate Speech und Angriffe auf Wissenschaftler*innen. Ein Forschungsüberblick*. ["Hate speech and attacks on scientists. A research overview"]. Berlin: Transfer Unit Wissenschaftskommunikation. Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Retrieved from: https://wissenschaft-im-dialog.de/documents/217/TransferUnit_Forschungsueberblick_Hatespeech.pdf.

Sharma, Y. (2023, 20 July). German university ends ties with China scholarship scheme. *UWN*.
Retrieved from: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20230720113914406>.

Sharma, Y. (2024, 22 October). De-risking of research becomes harder as 'grey' zones emerge. *UWN*,
Retrieved from: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20241022100141257>.

Greece

Choli-Papadopoulou, R. T., and Chrysafis, K. (2023, February 2). Απόφαση Γενικής Συνέλευσης ΕΣΔΕΠ [Decision of the UATRS General Assembly]. Retrieved from <https://forum.aegean.gr/download/file.php?id=32405>.

- Esos.gr. (2024a, February 14). Κατατέθηκαν 442 Σχόλια στη διαβούλευση επί του πολυνομοσχεδίου του υπ. Παιδείας [442 Comments were submitted in the consultation on the multiple bill of the minister. Education]. Retrieved from esos.gr - Καθημερινή Ηλεκτρονική Εφημερίδα για την Παιδεία [esos.gr - Daily Electronic Newspaper for Education]: <https://www.esos.gr/arthra/86875/katatethikan-442-sholia-sti-diabouleysi-epi-toy-polynomoshedioy-toy-yp-paideias>.
- Esos.gr. (2024b, February 14). Συνολικά 87 αλλαγές στο νόμο "Κεραμέως" για τα ΑΕΙ κάνει το πολυνομοσχέδιο που βρίσκεται σε δημόσια διαβούλευση [A total of 87 changes to the "Kerameos" law for HEIs make the multi-legislation currently in public consultation]. Retrieved from esos.gr - Καθημερινή Ηλεκτρονική Εφημερίδα για την Παιδεία [esos.gr - Daily Electronic Newspaper for Education]: <https://www.esos.gr/arthra/86876/synolika-87-allages-sto-nomo-kerameos-gia-ta-aei-kanei-polynomoshedio-poy-brisketai-se>.
- Foititikanea.gr. (2024, March 8). "Βουλιάζει η Αθήνα" κόντρα στα Ιδιωτικά Πανεπιστήμια / 195 Φοιτητικοί Σύλλογοι συμμετέχουν στο πανελλαδικό συλλαλητήριο ["Athens is sinking" against Private Universities / 195 Student Associations participate in the nationwide rally]. Retrieved from Φοιτητικά Νέα - Foititikanea.gr [Student News - Foititikanea.gr]: <https://www.foititikanea.gr/φοιτητής/31267-phs-aurio-tha-bouliaxei-e-athena-kontra-sta-idiotika-panepistemiaouliaxei-e-athena-kontra-sta-idiotika-panepistemia>.
- Freedom House (2022). *Greece: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/greece/freedom-world/2022>.
- Freedom House (2023). *Greece: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/greece/freedom-world/2023>.
- Freedom House (2024). *Greece: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/greece/freedom-world/2024>.
- Greek City Times (2024, 28 May). Greece to Deport Foreign Students Engaged in Anti-Israel Protests. Retrieved from Greek City Times: <https://greekcitytimes.com/2024/05/28/greece-to-deport-foreign-students-engaged-in-anti-israel-protests/>.
- Liberal.gr. (2024, March 16). ΕΛ.ΑΣ.: "Ανοχή τέλος στις καταλήψεις" [EL.AS: "End of tolerance for squatting"]. Retrieved from Liberal.gr - Ελεύθερη Ενημέρωση [Liberal.gr - Free Information]: <https://www.liberal.gr/ellada/elas-anohi-telos-stis-katalipseis>.
- Naftemporiki.gr. (2023, July 7). Στο προσκήνιο η ίδρυση ιδιωτικών πανεπιστημίων: Ο σχεδιασμός της κυβέρνησης και η προαναγγελία για διακρατικές συμφωνίες [In the foreground of the establishment of private universities: The planning of the government and the announcement of interstate agreements.] Retrieved from Η Ναυτεμπορική - Ειδήσεις από την Ελλάδα και τον Κόσμο [Naftemporiki - News from Greece and the World]: <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/politics/1491497/sto-proskinio-i-idrysi-idiotikon-panepistimion-o-schediasmos-tis-kyvernisis-kai-i-proanaggelia-gia-diakratikes-symfonies/>.
- Niaoti, I. (2024, November 15). New era of private universities, foreign campuses beckons. Retrieved from University World News: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20241114182923519>.
- Peoples Dispatch (2022, September 11). Greek students and teachers protest deployment of 'University Police' on campuses. Retrieved from Peoples Dispatch: <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2022/09/11/greek-students-and-teachers-protest-deployment-of-university-police-on-campuses/>.
- ProtoThema.gr. (2024, October 10). AUTH crisis: students lock in rector, police force intervened. Retrieved from ProtoThema English: <https://en.protothema.gr/2024/10/10/auth-crisis-students-lock-in-rector-police-force-intervened/>.

- SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic*. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-01-15-national-technical-university-of-athens/>.
- SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic*. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. [https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-01-16-national-technical-university-of-athens/Schengen News \(2024, May 31\). 9 EU and UK Students in Greece to Be Deported After Participating in Anti-Israel Demonstrations](https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-01-16-national-technical-university-of-athens/Schengen%20News%20(2024,%20May%2031).%209%20EU%20and%20UK%20Students%20in%20Greece%20to%20Be%20Deported%20After%20Participating%20in%20Anti-Israel%20Demonstrations). Retrieved from Schengen News: <https://schengen.news/9-eu-uk-students-in-greece-to-be-deported-after-participating-in-anti-israel-demonstrations/>.
- Secretariat of the Senate of the University of Ioannina. (2024, February 27). Ανακοίνωση της Συγκλήτου του Πανεπιστημίου μας για το σχέδιο νόμου του Υπουργείου Παιδείας, Θρησκευμάτων και Αθλητισμού [Announcement of the Senate of our University on the draft law of the Ministry of Education, Religions and Sports]. Retrieved from Πανεπιστήμιο Ιωαννίνων [University of Ioannina]: [https://uoi.gr/prytaneias/anakoinosi-tis-sygklitou-tou-panepistimiou-ioanninon_polynomoschedio/](https://uoi.gr/prytaneias/anakoinosi-tis-sygklitou-tou-panepistimiou-ioanninon-polynomoschedio/).
- Seimenis, I., and Litsardakis, G. (2022, October 17). Απόφαση Αδ ιέξοδα στην εφαρμογή του νόμου 4957 για τα ΑΕΙ [Decision - Impasses in the implementation of Law 4957 on HEIs]. Athens.
- Seimenis, I., and Litsardakis, G. (2024, November 6). Απόφαση για τα προβλήματα δημοκρατικής λειτουργίας και διαφάνειας στα ΑΕΙ [Decision on the problems of democratic functioning and transparency in HEIs]. Athens. Retrieved from https://www.posdep.gr/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=3322&Itemid=445.
- Senate of AUTH. (2024, March 1). Ομόφωνη απόφαση της Συγκλήτου του ΑΠΘ σχετικά με το σχέδιο νόμου του Υπουργείου Παιδείας, Θρησκευμάτων και Αθλητισμού [Unanimous decision of the AUTH Senate regarding the draft law of the Ministry of Education, Religion and Sports]. Retrieved from Αριστοτελείο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης [Aristotle University Of Thessaloniki]: <https://www.auth.gr/press/omofoni-apofasi-tis-sygklitoy-toy-apth/>.
- Senate of the University of Patras. (2024, February 16). Ομόφωνο Ψήφισμα της Συγκλήτου του Πανεπιστημίου Πατρών (υπ' αριθμ. 231/15-2-2024 συνεδρίαση) [Unanimous Resolution of the Senate of the University of Patras (meeting no. 231/15-2-2024)]. Retrieved from Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρών [University of Patras]: <https://www.upatras.gr/deltio-tyrou-psifisma-tis-sygklitou-tou-panepistimiou-patron/>.
- Senate of the University of the Aegean. (2024, February 15). Ανακοίνωση Συγκλήτου του Πανεπιστημίου Αιγαίου [Announcement of the Senate of the University of the Aegean]. Retrieved from Πανεπιστήμιο Αιγαίου [University of the Aegean]: <https://www.aegean.gr/announcement/ανακοίνωση-συγκλήτου-πανεπιστημιου-αιγαίου-15-2-2024>.
- Stamatis, D., and Adamilis, P. (2022, November 3). Απόφαση της Γενικής Συνέλευσης του ΕΣΔΕΠ [Decision of the General Assembly of ESDEP]. Retrieved from https://www.posdep.gr/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=2965&Itemid=480.
- Stilianidou, C. (2021, February 26). Legislation establishes continuous and permanent police presence in universities. Retrieved from Govwatch: <https://govwatch.gr/en/astynomia-sta-panepistimia-omades-prostasias-panepistimiakon-idrymaton-kai-provlimatismoi/>.
- Tezaris, M. (2024, November 13). Βεντέτα αντιεξουσιαστών με πρύτανη στου Ζωγράφου – Το αποτυχημένο πείραμα της Πανεπιστημιακής Αστυνομίας [Anti-authoritarian vendetta with dean at Zografou – The failed experiment of the University Police]. Retrieved from Lawandorder.gr – Ειδήσεις και νέα για τα Σώματα Ασφαλείας [Lawandorder.gr – News and news about the Security Forces]: <https://lawandorder.gr/antiexousiastes-zografou-panepistimiaki-astynomia/>.

The Aegean University Faculty Association. (2023, March 21). Εκλογές για εσωτερικά μέλη Συμβουλίου Διοίκησης [Elections for internal members of the Board of Directors]. Retrieved from https://www.posdep.gr/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=207&task=doc_download&gid=3064.

Unified Association of Teaching and Research Staff of IHU. (2022, November 3). Απόφαση της Γενικής Συνέλευσης του ΕΣΔΕΠ [Decision of the General Assembly of ESDEP]. Thessaloniki. Retrieved from http://www.posdep.gr/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_details&gid=2965&tmpl=component&Itemid=157.

University World News (2024, 31 May). Deportation of Gaza protesters to be challenged in court. Retrieved from University World News: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20240531084022251>.

Νόμος 4777/2021 [Law 4777/2021]. (2021, February 17). Retrieved November 10, 2024, from [kodiko.gr](https://www.kodiko.gr) - Ελληνική νομοθεσία [kodiko.gr - Greek legislation]: <https://www.kodiko.gr/nomothesia/document/670464/nomos-4777-2021>.

Νόμος 4957/2022 [Law 4957/2022]. (2022, July 21). Retrieved November 10, 2024, from [kodiko.gr](https://www.kodiko.gr) - Ελληνική νομοθεσία [kodiko.gr - Greek legislation]: <https://www.kodiko.gr/nomothesia/document/807164/nomos-4957-2022>.

Νόμος 5094/2024 [Law 5094/2024]. (2024, March 13). Retrieved from [kodiko.gr](https://www.kodiko.gr) - Ελληνική νομοθεσία [kodiko.gr - Greek legislation]: <https://www.kodiko.gr/nomothesia/document/983677/nomos-5094-2024>.

Φιλοσοφική ΕΚΠΑ / Καθηγήτρια σε ανοιχτό μέτωπο με τους φοιτητές - Γιατί ζητούν παραίτησή της [Faculty of Philosophy / Professor in an open front with the students - Why are they asking for her resignation]. (2023, March 27). Retrieved from Αυγή [Avgi]: https://www.avgi.gr/koinonia/443481_kathigitria-se-anoihto-metopo-me-toys-foitites-giati-zitoy-n-paraitisi-tis?amp.

Hungary

Freedom House (2022). *Hungary: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/hungary/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Hungary: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/hungary/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Hungary: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/hungary/freedom-world/2024>.

Ireland

About Academics For Academic Freedom (AFAF). (n.d.). Academics For Academic Freedom. Retrieved 12 July 2024, from <https://www.afaf.org.uk/about/>.

Athena Swan Charter. (n.d.). Higher Education Authority. Retrieved 11 July 2024, from <https://hea.ie/policy/gender/athena-swan/>.

Casey, J. (2022, September 19). Higher Education Bill 'essentially a Government takeover of academia', researchers warn. *Irish Examiner*. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40964672.html>.

Conneely, S. (2024, April 22). Free speech group host event in Trinity, cite "university politicisation" as threat. *Trinity News*. Retrieved from: <https://trinitynews.ie/2024/04/free-speech-group-host-event-in-trinity-cite-university-politicisation-as-threat/>.

- Freedom House (2022). *Ireland: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/ireland/freedom-world/2022>.
- Freedom House (2023). *Ireland: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/ireland/freedom-world/2023>.
- Freedom House (2024). *Ireland: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*.
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/ireland/freedom-world/2024> .
- Government of Ireland (2024). *National Risk Assessment 2024 Overview of Strategic Risks*.
<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/448eb-national-risk-assessment-2024-overview-of-strategic-risks/#strategic-risks-for-ireland-for-2024>.
- Gov.ie. (2022, January 14). Higher Education Authority Bill: Your questions answered. Gov.ie.
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0da13-higher-education-authority-bill-your-questions-answered/>.
- Higher Education Authority (2022). Higher Education Authority Act 2022.
<https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/HEA-Act-2022.pdf>.
- Madden, F. (2022, September 23). HEA Bill Passes With Amendments Securing Student Union Representation. *University Times*. <https://universitytimes.ie/2022/09/hea-bill-passes-with-amendments-securing-student-union-representation/>.
- Molnarfi, L. and Scanlon, G. (2022). HEA Bill 2022: Implications and Consequences.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363520934_HEA_Bill_2022_Implications_and_Consequences.
- O'Brien, C. (2024, February 27). Staff requirement to promote 'gender ideology' is threat to academic freedom, say lecturers. *The Irish Times*.
<https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/education/2024/02/27/staff-requirement-to-promote-gender-ideology-is-threat-to-academic-freedom-say-lecturers/>.
- SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic*. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-05-02-trinity-college-dublin/>.
- Walshe, J. (2024, May 9). Trinity students claim victory with agreement to divest. *University World News*. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20240509183913811>.

Italy

- Candito, A., De Riccardis, S., De Vito, L., Filetto, G., Lignana, M., Palazzolo, S., . . . Zunino, C. (2022, May 29). Processo all'università: la ragnatela dei concorsi pilotati. Sotto inchiesta 191 docenti da Milano a Palermo [Trial at the university: the web of piloted competitions. Under investigation 191 teachers from Milan to Palermo]. Retrieved from *La Repubblica*:
https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2022/05/28/news/processo_alluniversita_la_ragnatela_dei_concorsi_pilotati_sotto_inchiesta_191_docenti_in_nove_citta-351586005/.
- Civera, A., Lehmann, E. E., Meoli, M. and Paleari, S. (2023). The Attractiveness of European HE Systems: A Comparative Analysis of Faculty Remuneration and Career Paths. *Research & Occasional Paper Series: CSHE.1.2023*, UC Berkeley. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/08x00432>.
- Dionisi, B. (2023). EU takes Italy to court again over foreign lecturers' pay. Retrieved from *University World News* (24 July 2023),
<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20230724081825742>.
- Dionisi, B. (2024). Milan deal offers hope in foreign lecturer pay dispute. *University World News* (29 January 2024), <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20240129212320808>.

- Formiche (2024, November 11). Sicurezza della ricerca. Ecco il modello a cui pensa il governo italiano [Research security. This is the model the Italian government is thinking about]. retrieved from Formiche: <https://formiche.net/2024/11/piano-nazionale-anti-ingerenze-straniere-universita/#content>.
- Freedom House (2022). *Italy: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/italy/freedom-world/2022>.
- Freedom House (2023). *Italy: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/italy/freedom-world/2023>.
- Freedom House (2024). *Italy: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/italy/freedom-world/2024>.
- Gallina, P., Lolli, F., Gallo, O. et al. (2023). Italian academic system disregards scientific merit in faculty hiring processes. *International Journal of Education Integrety*, 19, 24; <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-023-00145-0>.
- Guglielmi, G. (2022). What Italy's far-right election victory means for science. *Nature* 610, 245. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-022-03127-3>.
- Matthews, D. (2019, May 28). Italian academics fear for freedom after League attack on book. Retrieved from Times Higher Education: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/italian-academics-fear-freedom-after-league-attack-book>.
- Matthews, D. (2024). Far-right governments seek to cut billions of euros from research in Europe. *Nature* 635, 15-16. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-024-03506-y>.
- Paltrinieri, G. (2019, April 10). Università Bologna. Lega contro libro di testo anti-Salvini: "Facoltà non siano luoghi di propaganda politica" [Bologna University. Lega against anti-Salvini textbook: "Faculties are not places of political propaganda"]. Retrieved from Assemblea legislativa. Regione Emilia-Romagna: https://www.assemblea.emr.it/tutti-i-comunicati/@comunicatodettaglio_view?codComunicato=95876.
- Paterlini, M. (2024) Funds for top neuroscience centre have disappeared from Italy's budget law. *Nature Italy* (11 January 2024), doi: <https://doi.org/10.1038/d43978-024-00007-4>.
- Università Ca' Foscari Venezia. (2022, November 10). Prevenzione della corruzione [Corruption prevention]. Retrieved from Università Ca' Foscari Venezia: <https://www.unive.it/pag/10981/>.
- Università degli Studi di Milano. (2022, June 30). Prevenzione della Corruzione [Corruption Prevention]. Retrieved from Università degli Studi di Milano Statale: <https://www.unimi.it/it/ateneo/amministrazione-trasparente/altri-contenuti/prevenzione-della-corruzione>.
- University of Bologna. (2014, October 1). Code of Ethics and Conduct. Retrieved from <https://www.unibo.it/en/university/who-we-are/ethical-code-of-behaviour>.
- University of Bologna. (2022, July 28). Piano Integrato di attività e organizzazione 2022-2024 [Integrated plan of activities and organisation 2022-2024]. Retrieved from University of Bologna: <https://www.unibo.it/it/ateneo/amministrazione-trasparente/disposizioni-general/piano-integrato-di-attivita-e-organizzazione-2022-2024>.
- University of Genoa. (2019). Prevenzione della corruzione [Corruption prevention]. Retrieved from UniGe: <https://unige.it/trasparenza/anticorruzione.html>.
- University of Naples. (2022, June 30). Piano di prevenzione della corruzione [Corruption prevention plan]. Retrieved from Università Federico II: <http://www.unina.it/statuto-e-normativa/piano-di-prevenzione-della-corruzione>.

Upton, B. (2022, April 30). Leaders suspended as police investigate Italian campus corruption. Times Higher Education. Retrieved from: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/leaders-suspended-police-investigate-italian-campus-corruption>.

Latvia

Freedom House (2022). *Latvia: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/latvia/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Latvia: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/latvia/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Latvia: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/latvia/freedom-world/2024>.

Lithuania

Anilionytė, J. (2023, September 8). *Lithuanian universities fight for survival as student numbers shrink*. Lrt.Lt. <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2072191/lithuanian-universities-fight-for-survival-as-student-numbers-shrink>.

Freedom House (2022). *Lithuania: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/lithuania/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Lithuania: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/lithuania/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Lithuania: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/lithuania/freedom-world/2024>.

LRT. (2023, November 6). Foreigners of Lithuanian descent receive grants for studies in Lithuania. Lrt.Lt. <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2114690/foreigners-of-lithuanian-descent-receive-grants-for-studies-in-lithuania>.

Malinauskaitė, G. (2022, September 22). 'We drive taxis after work.' Low-paid lecturers in Lithuania say they cannot survive on idealism. Lrt.Lt. <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1782817/we-drive-taxis-after-work-low-paid-lecturers-in-lithuania-say-they-cannot-survive-on-idealism>.

Obelenienė, B. (2024, May 15). Prof. Dr. Birutė Obelenienė. Atviras kreipimasis dėl siekimo apriboti akademinę laisvę, sąžinės, religijos ir žodžio laisvę. Kauniečiams Kasdienės Naujienos. <https://kaunieciams.lt/prof-dr-birute-obeleniene-atviras-kreipimasis-del-siekimo-apriboti-akademine-laisve-sazines-religijos-ir-zodzio-laisve/>.

OECD (2021). *Institutional missions and profiles in higher education in Lithuania*. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/09/institutional-missions-and-profiles-in-higher-education-in-lithuania_66bd2bbb/286832a7-en.pdf.

Platūkytė, D. (2024, April 12). „Vyrų linke į prievartą, o moters kūnas – vartojimo objektas“? Po VDU dėstytojos teiginių – aštri kritika. [“Men are prone to abuse, and women's bodies are an object of consumption”? The VDU lecturer's statements were followed by sharp criticism"] Lrt.Lt. <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2248648/vyrai-linke-i-prievarta-o-moters-kunas-vartojimo-objektas-po-vdu-destytojos-teiginiu-astri-kritika;>

Zverko, N. (2024, February 27). „Suteršiau universiteto reputaciją“: Už ką buvo pašalinta dėstytoja priekabiavimu apkaltinusi studentę? [“I tarnished the reputation of the university”: why was the student who accused the teacher of harassment expelled?"] Lrt.Lt.

<https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2206455/sutersiau-universiteto-reputacija-uz-ka-buvo-pasalinta-destytoja-priekabiavimu-apkaltinusi-studente>.

Luxembourg

Academic Freedom Index. (n.d.). *Academic Freedom Index*. Retrieved 8 August 2024, from <https://academic-freedom-index.net/>.

Freedom House (2022). *Luxembourg: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/luxembourg/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Luxembourg: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/luxembourg/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Luxembourg: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/luxembourg/freedom-world/2024>.

Kinzelbach, K., Lindeberg, S. I., and Lott, L. (2024). *Academic Freedom Index 2024 Update*. https://academic-freedom-index.net/research/Academic_Freedom_Index_Update_2024.pdf.

Martin, S. (2023, August 24). Malgré des craintes d'espionnage, l'Institut Confucius à l'Uni n'est pas menacé. *Virgule*. <https://www.virgule.lu/luxembourg/malgre-des-craintes-despionnage-linstitut-confucius-a-luni-nest-pas-menace/2544284.html>.

The Luxembourg Government (2024). *Stéphanie Obertin a participé à la conférence ministérielle de l'Espace européen de l'enseignement supérieur*. (2024, May 30). [Text].. http://gouvernement.lu/fr/actualites/toutes_actualites/communiqués/2024/05-mai/30-obertin-tirana.html.

Malta

Freedom House (2022). *Malta: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/malta/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Malta: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/malta/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Malta: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/malta/freedom-world/2024>.

Netherlands

Freedom House (2022). *Netherlands: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/netherlands/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Netherlands: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/netherlands/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Netherlands: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/netherlands/freedom-world/2024>.

SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think*. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2023-12-13-university-of-groningen/>.

SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think*. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-03-19-university-of-groningen/>.

SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think*. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic. Appendix 2: Table of incidents <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-04-13-university-of-groningen/>.

SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think*. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-04-25-university-of-groningen/>.

SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think*. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-06-09-university-of-groningen/>.

SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think*. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-06-12-university-of-groningen/>.

SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think*. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-05-07-university-of-amsterdam/>.

Poland

Freedom House (2022). *Poland: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/poland/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Poland: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/poland/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Poland: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/poland/freedom-world/2024>.

Portugal

Freedom House (2022). *Portugal: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/portugal/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Portugal: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/portugal/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Portugal: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/portugal/freedom-world/2024>.

Romania

Freedom House (2022). *Romania: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/romania/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Romania: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/romania/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Romania: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/romania/freedom-world/2024>.

Slovakia

Bauerova, L. (2024, March 30). Slovakia's brain drain 'picks up pace' under populist leader Robert Fico. *The Observer*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/30/slovakia-brain-drain-populist-leader-robert-fico>.

- Benova, M. (2024, 14 November). Mnohí utečú z krajiny preč, lebo žijeme v dobe, ktorá je rýchla a nikto nemá na Slovensku čas čakať na zázraky, hovorí režisérka Yvonne Vavrová. [Many will flee the country because we live in a time that is fast and nobody in Slovakia has time to wait for miracles, says director Yvonne Vavrová]. *Aktuality.Sk*. <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/BIQ8m5J/mnohi-utecu-z-krajiny-prec-lebo-zijeme-v-dobe-ktora-je-rychla-a-nikto-nema-na-slovensku-cas-cakat-na-zazraky-hovori-reziserka-yvonne-vavrova/>.
- Domin, M. (2024, February 26). Abolition of the Special Prosecutor's Office in Slovakia: Violation of the Rule of Law in the Name of Protecting Human Rights? *ConstitutionNet*. <http://constitutionnet.org/news/voices/abolition-special-prosecutor-office-slovakia-violation-rule-law>.
- ESU. (2024, January 22). *Joint statement by ESU and ŠRVŠ against the attacks on students of the Slovak government*. <https://esu-online.org/joint-statement-by-esu-and-srvs-against-the-attacks-on-students-of-the-slovak-government/>.
- European Commission (2021). *European citizens' knowledge and attitudes towards science and technology*. Brussels: Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2775/303708>.
- European Commission (2022). *Standard Eurobarometer 97 – Summer 2022*. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2693>.
- Euronews. (2024, February 8). Protests in Slovakia against government's plan to amend penal code. *Euronews*. <https://www.euronews.com/2024/02/08/thousands-protest-in-slovakia-claiming-government-is-softening-on-corruption>.
- Freedom House (2022). *Slovakia: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/slovakia/freedom-world/2022>.
- Freedom House (2023). *Slovakia: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/slovakia/freedom-world/2022>.
- Freedom House (2024). *Slovakia: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/slovakia/freedom-world/2024>.
- Jochecová, K. (2023, December 7). Slovakia's plan to scrap prosecutor's office prompts rule-of-law concerns in Brussels. *POLITICO*. <https://www.politico.eu/article/slovakia-pm-fico-rule-of-law-concern-smer-party-eu-brussels-over-plan-scrap-special-prosecutors-office/>.
- Lintner, T., Diviák, T., Nekardová, B., Lehotský, L., and Vašečka, M. (2023). Slovak MPs' response to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine in light of conspiracy theories and the polarization of political discourse. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10, 758. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02276-8>.
- Nagy, M. (2024, January 29). Nízke platy a zlá reputácia. Vysoké školy spustili opatrenia proti odlivu mozgov. <https://www.noviny.sk/slovensko/884542-nizke-platy-a-zla-reputacia-vysoke-skoly-spustili-opatrenia-proti-odlivu-mozgov>.
- Paulovic, M. (2023, December 21). Premiér Fico zaútočil na študenta práva. Ospravedlňte sa. Ukončite tieto praktiky, odkázali mu študenti. [Prime Minister Fico attacked a law student. Excuse me. End these practices, the students told him] *Aktuality.Sk*. <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/g4d6dbD/premier-fico-zautocil-na-studenta-prava-ospravednte-sa-ukoncite-tieto-praktiky-odkazali-mu-studenti/>.
- Plaček, M., Nemeč, J., Jahoda R., and Malý, I. (2024). Performance funding of universities and its impacts on accountability: the case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, *Public Management Review*, 26(9): 2630–2652, DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2023.2253463.
- Silenská, N. (2024, March 20). Slovakia's Special Prosecutor's Office disbands amid controversial Criminal Code reform. *Www.Euractiv.Com*.

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/slovakias-special-prosecutors-office-disbands-amid-controversial-criminal-code-reform/>.

TASR. (2021, October 22). B. Gröhling: Reforma prinesie kvalitnejšie a otvorenejšie vysoké školy [B. Gröhling: The reform will bring higher quality and more open universities]. Retrieved from Tlačová agentúra Slovenskej republiky [Press Agency of the Slovak Republic].

Watson, N. (2024, June 21). Critics Slam Passing of Slovak Government Bill to Dissolve Public Broadcaster. *Balkan Insight*. <https://balkaninsight.com/2024/06/21/critics-slam-passing-of-slovak-government-bill-to-dissolve-public-broadcaster/>.

Slovenia

Freedom House (2022). *Slovenia: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/slovenia/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). *Slovenia: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/slovenia/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). *Slovenia: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/slovenia/freedom-world/2024>.

Spain

Freedom House (2022). Spain: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/spain/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). Spain: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/spain/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). Spain: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/spain/freedom-world/2024>.

SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic. Appendix 2: Table of incidents <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-06-10-university-of-seville/>.

Sweden

Ahlbäck Öberg, S. (2023). On Academic Freedom. *SULF's article series XLIII*, English version. Stockholm: SULF, the Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers. Retrieved from: https://sulf.se/app/uploads/2023/04/Skrift_akademiskfrihet_2023_engelska_web.pdf.

Freedom House (2022). Sweden: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sweden/freedom-world/2022>.

Freedom House (2023). Sweden: Freedom in the World 2023 Country Report. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sweden/freedom-world/2023>.

Freedom House (2024). Sweden: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sweden/freedom-world/2024>.

Myklebust (2023, 20 May). Academics hit back over interference in university boards. *UWN*. Retrieved from: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20230519150323626>.

Myklebust, J. (2024a, 27 April). Minister's criticism of freestanding courses sparks row. *UWN*. Retrieved from: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20240426184748849>.

- Myklebust, J. P. (2024b, 23 May). Biggest threats to academic freedom are political – Report. *University World News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20240523124744172>.
- Nordic academic trade unions (2024). *Academic Freedom in the Nordics: Legislation, Practice, Challenges. A report from the Nordic academic trade unions*. Retrieved from: https://www.forskerforbundet.no/dokumenter/notater/Academic_Freedom_in_the_Nordics_2024.pdf.
- Norris, P. (2023). Cancel Culture: Myth or Reality? *Political Studies*, Vol 71(1): 145-174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211037023>.
- Persson, M. (2022, November 9). DEBATT: Universiteten ska inte förbjuda känsliga ord. *Expressen.se*. <https://www.expressen.se/debatt/universiteten-ska-inte-forbjuda-kansliga-ord/>.
- Sveriges Riksdag. (2021, April 21). Forskning, frihet, framtid – kunskap och innovation för Sverige [Research, freedom, future – knowledge and innovation for Sweden] Education Committee Report 2020_21_UbU16 – Riksdagen]. Retrieved from Riksdagen: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/betankande/forskning-frihet-framtid-kunskap-och_h801ubu16/.
- Tovatt, C., Bergmann, M., Braunerhielm, M., Ejsing, C., Hellberg, L., and Sundberg, K. (2024). *Akademisk frihet i Sverige—Regeringsuppdrag om lärosätenas arbete med att främja och värna akademisk frihet*. ["Academic freedom in Sweden—Government assignment on the work of higher education institutions to promote and protect academic freedom"]. Johanneshov, Sweden: Universitetskanslersämbetet. Retrieved from: <https://www.uka.se/download/18.427c7de418f38533f7357/1715751054520/Akademisk%20frihet%20i%20Sverige.pdf>.
- Upton, B. (2023, 8 May). Swedish alarm over ministry-ordered security experts on boards. *Times Higher Education*. Retrieved from: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/swedish-alarm-over-ministry-ordered-security-experts-boards>.

General references

- Beaud, O. (2022). Academic Freedom in France: a Concept neglected and liberties under threat. In I. De Gennaro, H. Hofmeister, and R. Lüfter (Eds.), *Academic Freedom in the European Context: Legal, Philosophical and Institutional Perspectives* (pp. 205-241). Palgrave MacMillian.
- Bergan, S. Gallagher, T. and Harkavy, I. (Eds.) (2020). *Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and The Future of Democracy*. Council of Europe Higher Education Series No. 24. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Cole, J. R. (2017) Academic Freedom as an Indicator of a Liberal Democracy, *Globalizations*, 14:6, 862-868, DOI: 10.1080/14747731.2017.1325169.
- Coppedge, M. et al. (2024). "V-Dem Country-Year Dataset Version 14". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. doi: <https://doi.org/10.23696/mcwt-fr58>.
- Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Knutsen, C.H., Lindberg, S. I., Teorell, J., Altman, D., Bernhard, M. et al. (2023). "V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v13" Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds23>.
- Crăciun, D. (2022) The link between quality assurance and fundamental values: Understanding academic freedom in a wider reference framework. *TH&MA Magazine*.
- Crăciun, D., Van der Meulen, B., Elken, M., Maassen, P., Jungblut, J., Martinsen, D., and Griffith, R. (2024). *EP Academic Freedom Monitor 2023*. Brussels: Report at the request of the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA), European Parliament. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2861/393533>.
- Deketelaere, K. (2022). *In the media: in defence of academic freedom*. League of European Research Universities. <https://www.leru.org/news/in-defence-of-freedom>.
- Draghi, M. (2024a). *The Future of European Competitiveness. Part A: A Competitiveness Strategy for Europe*. Retrieved from: https://commission.europa.eu/topics/strengthening-european-competitiveness/eu-competitiveness-looking-ahead_en.
- Draghi, M. (2024b). *The Future of European Competitiveness. Part B: In-depth Analysis and Recommendations*. Retrieved from: https://commission.europa.eu/topics/strengthening-european-competitiveness/eu-competitiveness-looking-ahead_en.
- FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute (2023). *Academic Freedom Index*. <https://academic-freedom-index.net/>.
- Freedom House (2024). *Countries and territories*. Retrieved from: <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>.
- Graaf, A. van der., Evers, G., Bastiaansen, V., Veldt, B. van der, and Ploeg, M. (2023). *Onderzoek naar zelfcensuur in het hoger onderwijs en wetenschap. Eindrapport*. Technopolis <https://app.1848.nl/static/pdf/bc/0f/bc0f78df96a54eb2a956678e1411b559a5337385.pdf>.
- Karran, T. (2007). Academic freedom in Europe: A preliminary comparative analysis. *Higher Education Policy*, 20, 289-313.
- Kinzelbach, K. (Ed.) (2020). *Researching Academic Freedom. Guidelines and Sample Case Studies*. FAU University Press.
- Kinzelbach, K., Lindberg, S. I., Pelke, L., and Spannagel, J. (2023). *Academic Freedom Index 2023 Update*. FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute. DOI: 10.25593/opus4-fau-21630.

- Kinzelbach, K., Lindberg, S.I., and Lott, L. (2024). *Academic Freedom Index 2024 Update*. FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute. DOI:10.25593/open-fau-405.
- Kosta, V. and Ceran, O. (2024). A Way Forward?: Protecting Academic and Scientific Freedom in the EU. *VerfBlog*, 2024/1/29, <https://verfassungsblog.de/a-way-forward/>, DOI: 10.59704/46f0c07d9225d61d.
- Kosta, V. and Ceran, O. (2025). *Overview of de jure academic freedom protection*. Brussels: Report at the request of the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA), European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2025/765776/EPRS_STU\(2025\)765776_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2025/765776/EPRS_STU(2025)765776_EN.pdf)
- Kováts, G. and Ronáy, Z. (2023) *How academic freedom is monitored. Overview of methods and procedures*. Report at the request of the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA), European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/740228/EPRS_STU\(2023\)740228_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/740228/EPRS_STU(2023)740228_EN.pdf).
- Maassen, P., Martinsen, D., Elken, M., Jungblut, J., and Lackner, E. (2023). *State of play of academic freedom in the EU Member States - Overview of de facto trends and developments*. Brussels: Report at the request of the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA), European Parliament. doi:10.2861/466486.
- Metzger, W.P. (1978). Academic freedom and scientific freedom. *Daedalus*, 107(2), pp. 93–114.
- Pruvot, E. B. and Estermann, T. (2017). *University Autonomy in Europe III: The Scorecard 2017*. Brussels: European University Association.
- Pruvot, E. B., Estermann, T., and Popkhadze, N. (2023). *University Autonomy in Europe IV: The Scorecard 2023*. Brussels: European University Association.
- SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think*. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/free-to-think-2024/>.
- SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think*. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-04-12-university-of-glasgow/>.
- SAR (Scholars at Risk) (2024). *Freedom Monitoring Project Free to Think*. Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic. Appendix 2: Table of incidents. <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/report/2024-02-07-max-planck-institute-for-social-anthropology/>.
- Spannagel, J. (2020). The Perks and Hazards of Data Sources on Academic Freedom: an Inventory. In K. Kinzelbach (Ed.), *Researching Academic Freedom. Guidelines and Sample Case Studies* (pp. 175–222). Erlangen: FAU University Press.
- Spannagel, J., and Kinzelbach, K. (2022). The Academic Freedom Index and its indicators: Introduction to new global time-series V-Dem data. *Quality & Quantity*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-022-01544-0>.
- Stachowiak-Kudła, M. (2021). Academic freedom as a source of rights' violations: a European perspective. *Higher Education*, 82(5), 1031–1048.
- Tovatt, C., Bergmann, M., Braunerhielm, M., Ejsing, C., Hellberg, L., & Sundberg, K. (2024). *Akademisk frihet i Sverige—Regeringsuppdrag om lärosätenas arbete med att främja och värna akademisk frihet*. ["Academic freedom in Sweden—Government assignment on the work of higher education institutions to promote and protect academic freedom"]. Johanneshov, Sweden: Universitetskanslersämbetet. Retrieved from:

<https://www.uka.se/download/18.427c7de418f38533f7357/1715751054520/Akademisk%20frihet%20i%20Sverige.pdf>

Academic freedom is widely recognised as a fundamental value of contemporary higher education and science, and as a prerequisite for well-functioning democratic societies. However, in recent years, major concerns have been expressed by various stakeholders about the state of academic freedom in the European Union. The European Parliament launched an annual EP Academic Freedom Monitor in 2022, to help improve the promotion and protection of academic freedom in the European Union. This report presents one of the two studies conducted in the 2024 edition.

This study firstly provides an updated overview of recent country-specific measurements of academic freedom across the EU. Secondly, it provides a country-specific analysis of the de facto state of academic freedom in 10 EU Member States. The study was conducted as a qualitative analysis of various data, with input from stakeholder organisations and academic experts.

On the basis of both studies, this report proposes EU-level policy options for possible legislative and non-legislative initiatives to support academic freedom in the EU.

This is a publication of the Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA)
EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service

This document is prepared for, and addressed to, the Members and staff of the European Parliament as background material to assist them in their parliamentary work. The content of the document is the sole responsibility of its author(s) and any opinions expressed herein should not be taken to represent an official position of the Parliament.