

(English version)

Question for written answer E-001446/22
to the Commission
Christian Ehler (PPE)
(12 April 2022)

Subject: Reaction to the report of the French Senate on academic freedom

On 14 January 2022, the French Senate adopted European resolution No 282 drafted by Senator André Gattolin on the need to support academic freedom in Europe. In this resolution, the Senate calls on the EU, and in particular on the Commission, to take specific actions to protect academic freedom in Europe.

1. Which of the actions proposed/recommended in the resolution will the Commission take?
2. How will it act on those proposals/recommendations?
3. If any of the proposals/recommendations have not been taken up by the Commission, could it explain why it decided not to act on them?

Answer given by Ms Gabriel on behalf of the European Commission
(17 June 2022)

The Commission fully supports the report of the French Senate on academic freedom. Respect for academic freedom is enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (Article 13). Ensuring academic freedom in higher education institutions is therefore at the core of all higher education policies developed at EU level.

Academic freedom and integrity are notably included in the new Erasmus Charter for Higher Education and the Erasmus Student Charter ⁽¹⁾ and these principles are being monitored.

It is also a key objective of the European Strategy for Universities ⁽²⁾ presented in January 2022, to propose in 2024 guiding principles on protecting fundamental academic values.

These principles will be based on the Rome Communiqué and dedicated Statement on Academic Freedom adopted by the Bologna Process Ministerial Meeting of November 2020 ⁽³⁾, which aims at developing an action plan for protecting academic freedom and the freedom of scientific research in Europe.

It will also be based on the Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research adopted by the EU Research Ministers in October 2020 ⁽⁴⁾.

Freedom of scientific research is also suggested as a principle of the Pact for Research & Innovation. As for foreign interference, the Commission has published a toolkit to help mitigate foreign interference in research and innovation ⁽⁵⁾ in January 2022.

The Commission cooperates closely with Member States to encourage their follow-up on a national level. A Bologna Process working group on fundamental values has been established to work towards a framework that will monitor the respect of fundamental values and foster a transnational discussion on this issue.

⁽¹⁾ Which are respectively a prerequisite to receive any Erasmus+ funding and present the rights and responsibilities of Erasmus+ students while on mobility.
⁽²⁾ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/communication-european-strategy-for-universities-graphic-version.pdf#:~:text=The%20European%20strategy%20for%20universities%20aims%20at%20supporting,higher%20education%20institutions%20across%20Europe%20to%20join%20forces>
⁽³⁾ <http://www.ehea.info/page-ministerial-conference-rome-2020>
⁽⁴⁾ https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/shreddocs/downloads/files/_drp-efr-bonner_erklaerung_en_with-signatures_maerz_2021.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1
⁽⁵⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/commission-publishes-toolkit-help-mitigate-foreign-interference-research-and-innovation-2022-jan-18_en