

Question for written answer E-002528/2022
to the Commission
Rule 138
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Subject: On the protection of academic freedom and the autonomy of universities' governance

Europe has a long tradition regarding the governance of universities, which enjoy autonomy in governance. Autonomy in the governance of universities is crucial, as it ensures academic freedom, as well as decision-making by those who have scientific expertise in matters of research and curricula.

However, worrying phenomena have been observed in the Union lately. For example, in Hungary, university departments of gender studies have been abolished by the central government¹, obviously with no scientific reasoning involved, since gender studies are flourishing everywhere and research is produced in this domain.

Another example is the new bill on tertiary education prepared by the Greek Ministry of Education. It provides that the ministry can decide on the abolition of any department without the university's consent. Other articles of the bill also transfer decision-making on specific issues to the ministry, and alter the existing democratic election of the universities' leadership. The Hellenic Federation of University Teachers' Associations rejected the bill unanimously and several Greek universities, as well as 740 distinguished academics and researchers from 50 countries have expressed their disagreement², as have 1 000 academics and distinguished Greeks³.

1. What does the Commission plan to do in order to ensure academic freedom, which is directly linked to freedom of expression?
2. Will it consider including universities' democratic and autonomous governance in the funding conditions of European programmes?

¹ <https://theconversation.com/gender-studies-banned-at-university-the-hungarian-governments-latest-attack-on-equality-103150>

² https://www.alfavita.gr/ekpaideysi/383909_neo-diethnes-rapisma-kerameos-sebasteite-ta-ellinika-aei-zitoyn-740-dianooymenoi, https://www.alfavita.gr/ekpaideysi/383661_aei-apanota-adeiasmata-kerameos-apo-syglitoys-gia-nomo-plaisio

³ <https://m.naftemporiki.gr/story/1874474/paideia-epistoli-katapeltis-stin-kerameos-apo-1000-panepistimiakous-gia-to-neo-nsx>