



Fundamental Academic Values in the European Higher Education Area

Strengthening Cooperation through Fundamental Academic Values?

28 October 2021

Publisher

Nationale Agentur für Erasmus+ Hochschulzusammenarbeit
Erasmus+ National Agency Higher Education
DAAD – Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service
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Layout

DITHO Design GmbH, Cologne
www.dithodesign.de

Edition

online – April 2022

Photo credits

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This publication was supported with funding from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

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Fundamental academic values have steadily gained in importance in the policy dialogue in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in recent years and the Bologna Ministers made it one of the central themes of their latest ministerial communiqué. With organising the online conference “Fundamental Academic Values in the EHEA—Strengthening Cooperation through Fundamental Academic Values?” on 28 October 2021, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) paid heed to this development. The conference addressed the increasing importance of fundamental academic values in the EHEA and the potential contribution to these values by the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) and higher education institutions (HEIs). It aimed at sensitising all actors to the topic as well as building a peer support network.

The event took place under the umbrella of the “bologna hub” project, which offers policy makers and important higher education actors in the German and European higher education landscape thematic platforms for exchanging experiences to support the internationalisation activities of universities. Contributing to ongoing debates within the EHEA is part of the “bologna hub’s” mandate and fundamental academic values are one of the most intensely discussed topics in higher education at the European level today. As threats to democracies continue to emerge around the world, particular focus is put on clearly defining the role of universities in democratic societies and the necessity to promote critical thinking among students.

More than 100 education professionals, policy experts and higher education administrators representing 24 European countries plus the United States had come together to discuss the latest developments regarding fundamental academic values in the EHEA. The questions were raised whether fundamental academic values should serve as a basic prerequisite for international cooperation and how to deal with experiences of restrictions on fundamental academic values in international cooperation or mobility. Additionally, the debate revolved around what the framework of the BFUG Working Group on Fundamental Values on implementing and monitoring fundamental academic values should look like.



OPENING

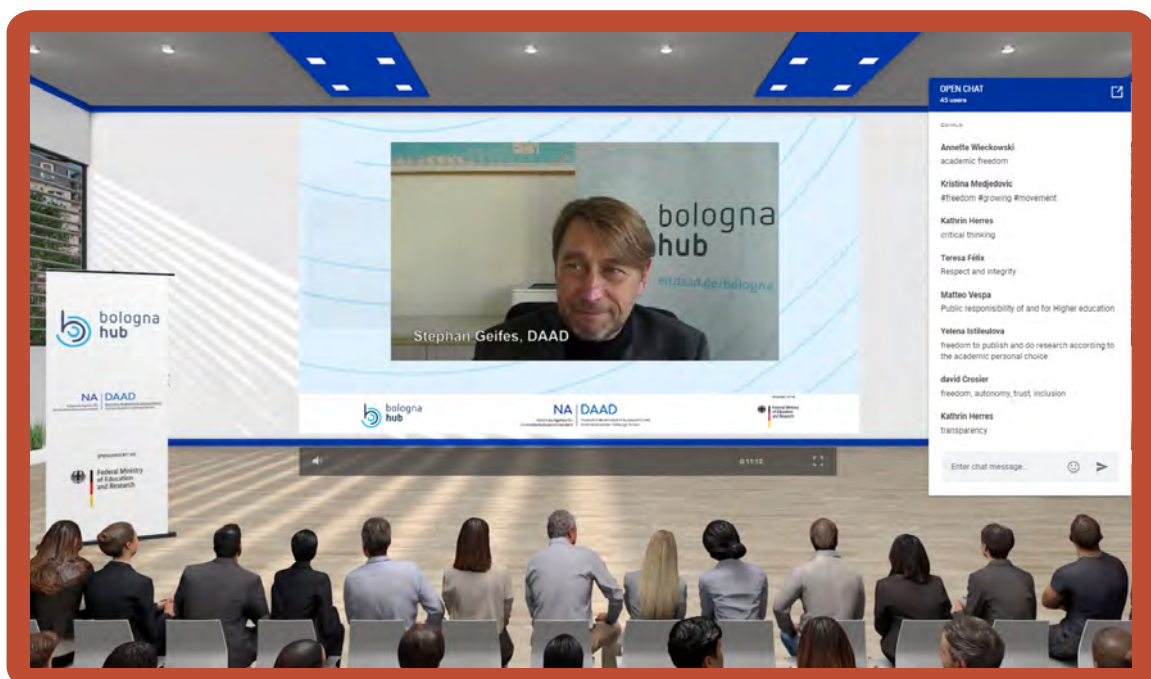
“Our democracies are coming under increased pressure and our universities must therefore continue to be home to academic freedom and democratic values, free speech, gender equality and fundamental rights. These principles must be cherished and nurtured, today more than ever, as they are threatened across the globe.”

Charles Michel, President of the European Council speaking at the 2021 European University Association Conference

In his opening remarks Stephan Geifes, Director of the Erasmus+ National Agency Higher Education, quoted Charles Michel pointing out the importance of academic values for democracies. Geifes also cited the 2020 Academic Freedom Index (AFI) which assesses levels of scholarly autonomy in 175 territories. Only about 20 percent of the world’s population live in countries where academic freedom is well protected. In certain countries, declines in campus integrity could be observed, since on-campus surveillance and security infringements have increased in the past year.

Underlining the need to promote and protect shared fundamental values and to combat violations, Geifes referred to the many programmes, initiatives, ministries and higher educational organisations across the EHEA that are committed to standing up for fundamental values. One example for such an initiative is the Eberbach Statement on “European Values in Higher Education” by ACA and DAAD – written and signed by a number of scholars and academic policy makers.

In closing, Stephan Geifes thanked the many experts from across Europe who contributed to the sessions and, wishing the group fruitful discussions, he added, “May we all continue to value our values.”



2 KEYNOTE PRESENTATION: STATE OF PLAY IN THE EHEA

Sjur Bergan, Head of Education Department, Council of Europe

In an effort to address the multi-faceted issues concerning fundamental academic values and the challenges it brings to the EHEA, the conference was divided into a series of keynote presentations, panel discussions and break-out working groups. The sessions resulted in rich debate, input from different perspectives, exchange of experiences from different countries and updates on current initiatives.

Sjur Bergan, Head of Education Department, Council of Europe, opened the conference with a summary of the latest developments in the EHEA. Bergan started out by looking at how fundamental values are defined within the EHEA'S own communique, going on to describe how they have evolved over time. According to the latest authoritative statement by the ministers of the EHEA, which is the Rome Ministerial Communiqué from November 2020, fundamental academic values are:

- Institutional autonomy
- Academic freedom and integrity
- Participation of students and staff in higher education governance
- Public responsibility for and of higher education



Much more attention is focussed on fundamental values today than it was when the EHEA was established, or even when the Bologna Process was launched. Bergan points out this is for good reasons, and bad. What's good, is the increased awareness and further development of fundamental values. The bad reason is that they are being violated with increasing frequency.

Bergan cited recent obvious and high-profile examples of political and academic repression but referred to lower profile issues that concern every EHEA member country. Many of those concerns are clearly linked to finding the right relationship between public authorities and higher education institutions which is, in a broader sense, the higher education community. Where should public authorities play a role in developing higher education? How far should they, or can they go in establishing educational institutions? This is where the grey zone lies, dotted with tricky issues that need further understanding.

Part of the reason why the fundamental values are so difficult is because they are intimately linked to political systems. Even a democracy, for example, would not want to admit there are issues with the way academic freedom, institutional autonomy or integrity are implemented.

Bergan called this development a "backsliding of democracy", an expression used by the Council of Europe. Basic values that were previously unquestioned are not only not being implemented but also challenged. The role of public authorities must be taken into consideration, but the role of civil society, including the higher education community as actors in broader societal conflicts must also be considered. What's more, critical thinking, which is not only

finding fault but offering viable alternatives, must be included when the Council of Europe develops the reference framework for competencies in a democratic culture. The focus has to be on how the implementation of our fundamental values can be encouraged under conditions that threaten democracy.

At the core of that discussion is the difficult issue of how to deal with blatant violations.

Bergan posed these questions as food for thought for the conference: What are the concerns when we might react against public authorities? What would the consequences be for the academic community in that country? Is it more important to draw a line than to look at possible consequences internally? Bergan expressed his hope that these debates will lead to not only a verbal commitment but a practical commitment within the EHEA to the implementation and monitoring of fundamental academic values, its link to quality assurance at universities and the safeguarding of values to nurture and protect a culture of democracy.



PANEL DISCUSSION: POLICY DIALOGUE

Fundamental Academic Values as a Precondition for International Cooperation?

Participants:

- Kinga Szuly, Head of Sector Higher Education Policy at DG-EAC, European Commission
- Peter Greisler, Head of Directorate Higher Education, German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
- Michael Gaebel, Director for Higher Education Policy, European University Association (EUA)
- Martina Darmanin, President, European Students' Union (ESU)
- Cezar Mihai Hâj, Co-Chair, BFUG Working Group on Fundamental Values

Facilitator: Irina Ferencz, Director, Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) Brussels

From policies to practice and programmes, the panel approached a multitude of issues regarding the role of fundamental academic values in international cooperation. The exchange included sharing experiences, confronting obstacles and the potential for future cooperation from the perspective of HEIs. Furthermore, the impact of the COVID crisis on academic freedom, programme quality and institutional autonomy was also addressed.

Irina Ferencz, as Director of the Academic Cooperation Association in Brussels, (ACA) and the panel facilitator, opened the discussion for the first round by posing one key question to the five distinguished members of the panel, as well as to the online participants of more than 100 experts representing HEIs, ministries of education, science and economy, student organisations and members of the BFUG:

Should fundamental academic values be a pre-condition for international cooperation?

The online survey revealed a clear yes—78 percent agreed that fundamental values must be a pre-condition for international cooperation whereby 22 percent disagreed.

Roughly 80 percent of the world's population live in countries where academic and scientific freedom are restricted. Kinga Szuly, Head of Sector Higher Education Policy at DG-EAC, European Commission, pointed to how the EU and the European Commission have been stepping up their efforts in recent years to protect academic freedom as can be seen in declarations, Commission action plans and joint strategies and programmes.

Fundamental values were also expected to serve as the backbone for the new European University Strategy. It was anticipated to include academic freedom, institutional autonomy, academic integrity, student and staff participation in decision making, as well as fights against fraud in the academic sphere. The European strategy was to address the promotion and protection of European and humanistic values in a joint approach that brings together research and education and the role of knowledge in science and society.

Peter Greisler, from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) provided a provocative “no” to the question at hand and was surprised the majority said “yes” to values as a pre-condition to cooperation. He emphasized the necessity of pursuing relationships with countries, scientists and universities who do not respect fundamental values, because not to do so would be a contradiction of the EHEA’s own values by excluding many countries; the focus should remain on cooperation with all countries, but the question remains as to how this can be achieved.

Michael Gaebel, from the European University Association, agreed with Peter Greisler, adding that international collaboration is crucial for universities, for shifting the frontiers of knowledge and for contributing to solving global challenges. Ideally, this would be done on the basis of shared values, openness and trust. However, the panel agrees that this is not the realities we’re facing. On the other hand, international partners cannot be excluded because they come from a system which doesn’t align with our values.

Martina Darmanin, President of the European Students’ Union, brought up the issue of “crossing the red line” when protests and demonstrations were going on in Belarus. Student unions stood together and took a stance and appealed to their ministries and leaders of HEIs asking them to stop cooperation with higher education leaders in Belarus who played a role in the repression of academics and students. Once again, this highlights the dilemma faced in HEI’s efforts to keep doors open for cooperation and collaboration.

Co-chair of the BFUG Working Group, Cezar Mihai Hâj, pointed out that the most important steps forward have in fact been made thanks to international cooperation. Hâj firmly believes it is important not to isolate the academic communities, which includes the students in need, but rather the leaders who break our principles. At the same time, fundamental values need to be addressed even if it raises sensitive issues.

The range of perspectives from the panel members clearly illustrated the dilemmas that higher education is facing at the policy level, but also in terms of cooperation among universities. Without exception, the panel agreed that shying away from complexities inherent in the topic is not an option when it comes to fundamental academic values and international cooperation. >

ILLUSION OF A GLOBAL WORLD



AM I ALLOWED TO COOPERATE?

INCLUSION & DIVERSITY ALSO IN TERMS OF VALUES...

Should FUNDAMENTAL ACADEMIC VALUES BE A PRECONDITION FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION?

PROBLEMS ALSO WITHIN EUROPE...

KEEP COOPERATION ON HIGH LEVEL

YES! IT'S THE BACKBONE

NO! WE COULD NOT COOPERATE WITH MANY COUNTRIES

IN GERMANY THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES ARE FUNDAMENTAL!

WE DON'T HAVE TO GO FAR TO FIND PROBLEMS

WE ARE GETTING BETTER

ISOLATE THOSE WHO CROSS THE RED LINE.

CEZAR MIHAI HAJ

IRINA FERENCZ

PANEL DISCUSSION

IT'S SCARY!

MARTINA DARMANN

WHERE IS THE RED LINE?

YES... RAISE AWARENESS

MICHAEL SIFFERT-WAGNER

GABRIEL

PETER GREISLER

KNINA STOLY

FUNDAMENTAL ACADEMIC VALUES

INTEGRITY RESPONSIBILITY

DIVERSITY

SOLIDARITY

WORK TOGETHER

INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY

ACADEMIC FREEDOM & INTEGRITY

COLLABORATION

SUSTAINABILITY IS AN ISSUE



POLITICAL REPRESSION



BALANCE

IT'S A TRICKY SITUATION

BACKSLIDING OF DEMOCRACY



SCIENTIFIC DECISIONS BY SCIENCE, NOT BY POLITICS

THE PANDEMIC HAS CHALLENGED US...



PANDEMIC IS NOT AN EXCUSE TO VIOLATE ACADEMIC FREEDOM!

DENMARK ?

MOLDOVA ?

ACADEMIC FREEDOM IS A UNIVERSAL RIGHT!

CONCERNED ABOUT THE WEAKENING OF A.F.

AFI

USE THE RIGHT TOOLS



HISTORY IN MIND...

THE PANDEMIC BROUGHT NEW DEBATES...



SELF-REPORTING IS NOT RELIABLE

KATRIN KINZELBACH

WE CAN NOT DEMOCRATIZE WITHOUT ACADEMIC FREEDOM

FUTURE ACTIONS (DE JURE, DE FACTO, COOPERATE WITH... SYSTEM?, OR... INDIVIDUAL?, CONCERNS ABOUT INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY, STATE CONTROL OVER Money)

WELCOME! DAVID AKRAMI FLORES

STAND UP FOR OUR VALUES! MAY WE ALL CONTINUE TO VALUE OUR VALUES

STRONG NEED FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

STEPHAN GERES

ONLY 20% WORLDWIDE LIVE IN DEMOCRATIC FREEDOM

How Do you GET THE INFORMATION FOR MEMORANDUMS F.V.

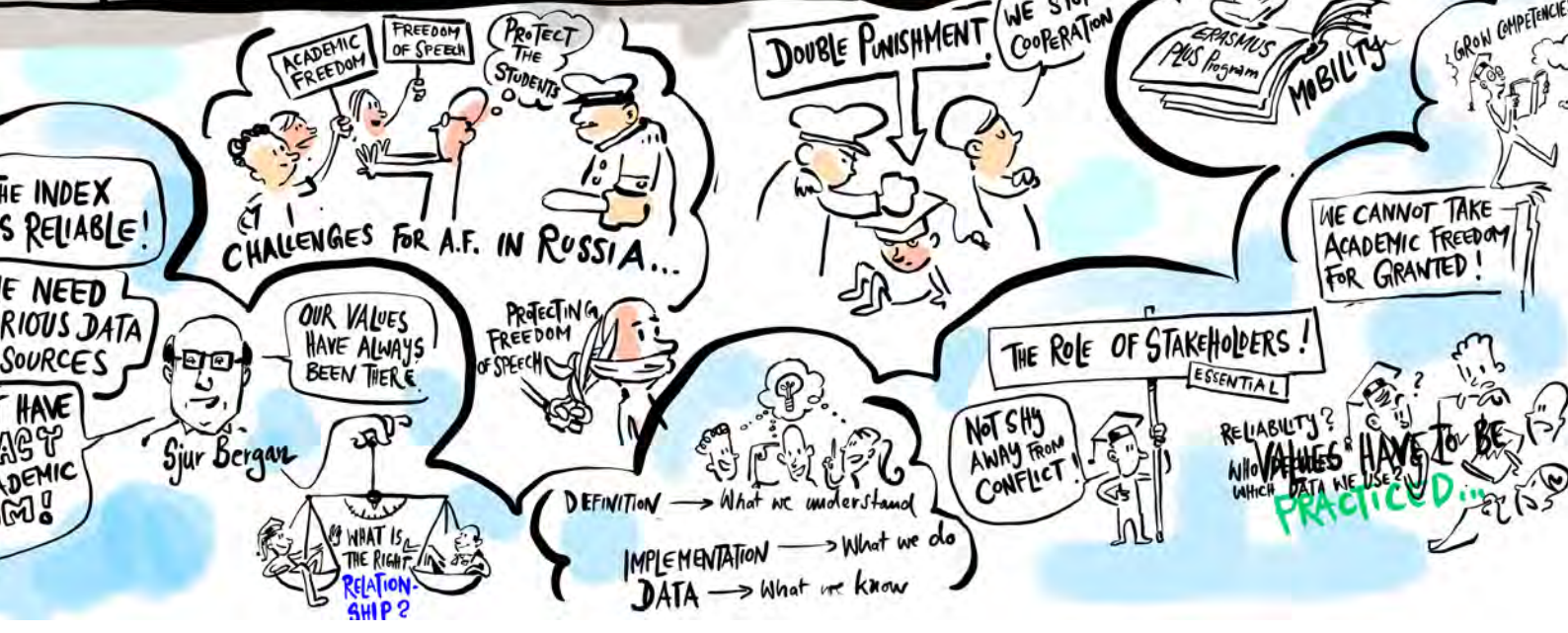
EXCELLENT SCIENTISTS WILL NOT STAY

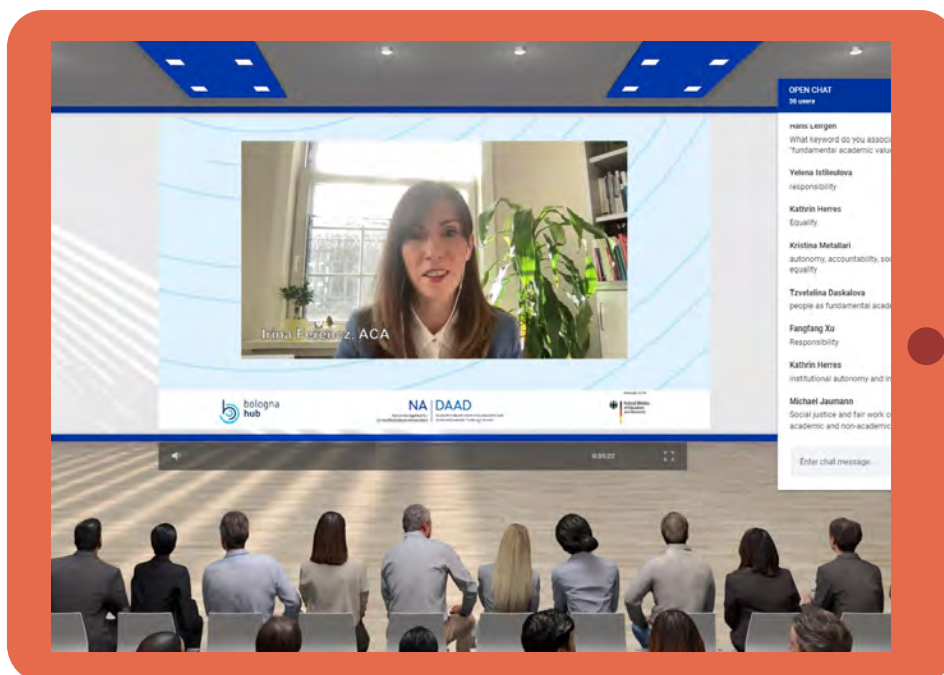
EXCHANGE

GROW COMPETENCE

WE CANNOT TAKE ACADEMIC FREEDOM FOR GRANTED!

ACADEMIC VALUES IN THE EHEA





Panel Discussion: Policy Dialogue Part II

The next series of questions presented to each member of the panel turned to policy level, within the EU and the EHEA but also at country levels.

Reflecting on the situation in Germany, Peter Greisler believes fundamental academic values are firmly rooted and safeguarded in the German constitution and in the minds of its people based on the country's historical experience. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research has always been very active in defence of fundamental academic values and initiated the Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research, which was adopted in 2020 at the Ministerial Conference on the European Research Area by 28 signatories. The right to fundamental values is also beneficial in the sense that it makes a country attractive to researchers and scientists. Greisler maintains excellent science is not possible without a nation's upholding of these values. This also clearly indicates the correlation of values with the quality of education.

This is what governments and institutions need to realise and this should be a clear objective of international cooperation. The thinking and behaviour in countries where values are threatened can only be positively influenced through cooperation. The DAAD also has played a significant role in this regard, achieving cooperation with higher education institutions, and safeguarding the rights of students and scientists in spite of the challenges posed at the political level.

To that end, the BFUG Working Group is developing a framework to advance the monitoring and implementation of fundamental academic values of the EHEA in the higher education systems of its members. The comprehensive framework envisaged would make it possible to assess the degree to which those values are honoured and implemented in HEIs, according to Cezar Mihai Hâj, Co-Chair of the working group.

On the basis of consulting with international academic experts and relevant stakeholder organisations, EHEA members will agree to a common understanding of fundamental values, a methodology for reporting on the issues will be determined and indicators of fundamental values, evidence required to assess them and the source of such evidence will be laid out in the BFUG framework. Input from the conference will feed into the group's work on the development of the framework.

Shifting the focus to the EU level, the panel learned more about the upcoming European strategy for universities. According to Kinga Szuly from the European Commission, the strategy is expected to address fundamental values from two key angles. One is the global role of Europe: how to use the “soft power” of Europe to advance the cause of fundamental academic values when cooperating with countries where academic and scientific freedom is restricted? To achieve results, it’s crucial to team up with member states and move in the same direction, using the ‘Team Europe’ approach. It is also important to assess what level of cooperation is the most advisable under the circumstances: system level, institutional level, or individual level. Helping students or scholars at risk is a key responsibility for democratic societies.

The strategy will also tackle the problems we are facing within Europe for fundamental values. When it comes to transnational cooperation, experience from the European Universities Initiative reveals the challenges inherent in setting up joint university networks across the EU that enable students to combine studies in several EU countries. It is indeed a key challenge if, for example, one university exercises much broader academic freedom or wider autonomy locally than another university or have different governing structures that impact decision making at the university level. This is why the strategy is proposing to develop a framework for fundamental academic values and to monitor closely the implementation of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education and the Erasmus Student Charter.

Universities are at the centre for teaching democratic values and developing democratic citizens for the future. The European strategy for universities acknowledges and builds on this role.

As the Director for Higher Education Policy at the EUA, Michael Gaebel shared a few value-related takeaways from the association’s vision. Earlier this year, the EUA published *Universities Without Walls*. A vision for 2030, which is a broader vision set out for the higher education sector and in which values featured prominently as well.

However, it addresses a wider range of values such as curiosity, creativity, diversity of opinions, respect for evidence and rigor and their importance for society. Academic freedom and autonomy are needed in order to protect those broader values and to ensure universities have the freedom to operate.

Gaebel agrees that higher education institutions in the EHEA are getting better at developing approaches to address values. For example, a survey among members indicated the importance of responsibility for society when it comes to sustainability and the greening of their organisations. As a student or academic, the choice of institution is therefore already becoming a value statement. This example reaffirms the need to address values at different levels, under different conditions for different reasons and to connect the different levels.

As President of the ESU, Martina Darmanin provided insight from the students’ perspective into the question regarding safeguarding fundamental academic values and the developments at policy level in both the EU and the wider EHEA. In light of the ongoing developments within the EU and the EHEA, such as a new common definition, the creation of a monitoring framework, Rule of Law reports and the new strategy of the Conference on the Future of Europe, among others, she believes the time for further action is now, calling these developments unique windows of opportunity for all stakeholders to have a say in policies that reflect the need for the protection of their academic freedom and fundamental values. The ESU is advocating for Norway’s Students at Risk programme (StAR) to be implemented across Europe. After years of pushing for this development, it is now at EU level for consideration and creation of a European approach or framework based on the Norwegian experience. >

In terms of the monitoring framework and the development of new indicators, Darmanin stresses the importance of not only having an expert view on this, but also the views of academics and students on the ground. She cited the example of Belarus again, pointing out that if local unions, civil society organisations and human rights defenders had not been reporting to the ESU, the severity of the situation would not have been fully exposed. Action must be taken from both the top level and also from a bottom-up approach to incorporate the essential views and experiences of staff, academics and students.

Throughout the panel discussion, audience participation was made possible via an open chat function where the more than 100 participants could post comments or ask questions. Most of the postings covered the issues already addressed by the panel.

However, the panel did have additional responses to a question that came up referring to the COVID-19 pandemic:

The COVID 19 pandemic has impacted many aspects of our personal and professional lives. Do you see, though, any concrete impact of the pandemic on the discussions, all the approaches we take at different levels for safeguarding fundamental academic values? Has it revealed any new areas of action, any priorities?

Peter Greisler said that the corona virus pandemic has challenged us in many ways, and has shown the enormous relevance of scientific advice, political decisions much more based on state-of-the art science. According to him civil rights, including the freedom to teach, the freedom to learn and the autonomy of higher education institutions were impacted by the pandemic due to temporary restrictions. He stressed that we must make sure that crises are not used as an excuse to violate those values.



Michael Gaebel mentioned that in a certain way it has strengthened the role of universities by showing why higher education and research are important. It also brought the insight that research is not absolute truth, but it's the only way that we have of moving forward, he added. For him the pandemic highlighted the whole issue of a digital environment, data ownership and security and the challenges and threats inherent in technology.

The issue of tackling misinformation has become even more important during the pandemic, was **Kinga Szuly**'s opinion. She explained that it is already part of the Digital Education Action Plan, which was issued by the Commission in September last year. Universities have a key role to play in tackling misinformation, not only from the research side, but also from the education side. It's important to show people how to interpret and understand research data, and to bring research more into the whole education process, Szuly added.



For **Martina Darmanin** the pandemic has had a big impact on student participation and the whole student population. She said that we have seen many students questioning their future, their careers, many students falling into worse and worse socio-economic conditions, putting them at further disadvantage in not being able to participate in extracurricular activities, in student unions. Student participation is a fundamental value and a key element to supporting democratic societies, Darmanin stressed. She was of the opinion that when students participate in student governments they get the training they need to take on leadership positions in the future.



Cezar Mihai Hâj saw that the pandemic has brought up new debates on fundamental values. To him it is always good to have new debates on institutional autonomy, on academic freedom and whether or not, for example, blocking the access of students and staff that are unvaccinated on campus is an infringement of academic freedom or not. These debates, he said, will help countries better understand the values and ways to implement better policies.

Policy and Practice

Facilitator Irina Ferencz presented the panel with the issue of bridging the gaps between policy and practice. On one hand, the dialogue on values and a greater commitment is enhanced at different policy levels, but on the other hand, the reality is often very different.

Implementing fundamental values is not only about formal provisions or legal regulations, according to Martina Darmanin. It requires continuous resources and efforts in order not to take these laws for granted. From the student union perspective, the framework must take many questions into consideration: how do you assess implementation day-to-day, not only every three years? Is there a role that the European standards and guidelines can play now to assist with the implementation of the fundamental academic values?

The Erasmus+ programme was mentioned by Kinga Szuly as a tool to bridge policy and practice: it supports student and staff mobility and helps students develop openness to the world. It also supports international cooperation of institutions: the new European Universities Initiative is an example of shared values and goals as a basis for cooperation.

When it comes to bridging the gap between policy and practice, the panel agreed on the importance of stakeholder input and feedback on the framework, to ensure that issues not raised by governments will be brought up by stakeholders. The voice of students also plays a critical role so cooperating governments see there is pressure from many sides and not just from a governmental or organisation's point of view.

The panel agreed that different tools were needed to approach the safeguarding, monitoring and implementation of fundamental academic values. The panellists also confirmed the view that values are linked to the quality of both research and education. Above all, the panel was unanimous in the need to confront the challenges and contradictions and not shy away from conflict.

4

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM – INDICATORS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EHEA

Katrin Kinzelbach, Professor for International Politics of Human Rights, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg

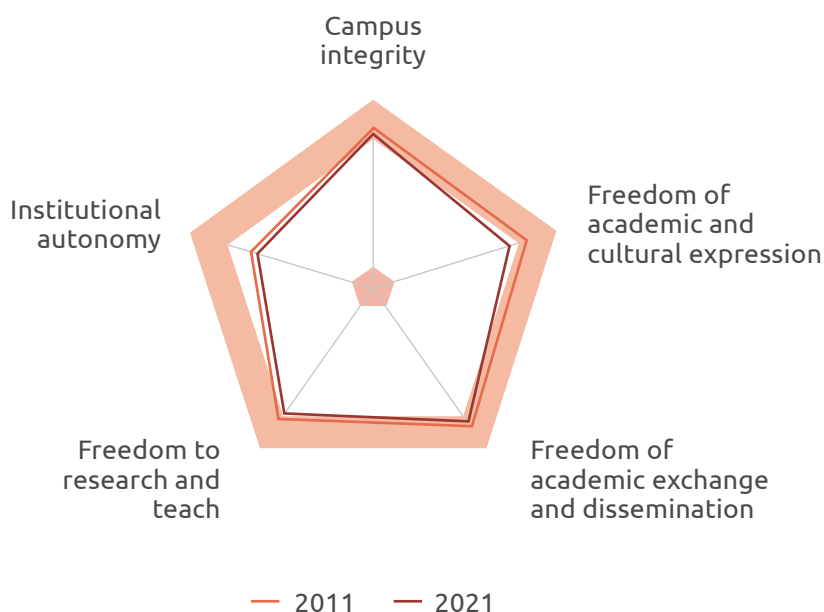
Every year, the Academic Freedom Index (AFI) provides information on the state of academic freedom in almost every country in the world. Professor Katrin Kinzelbach (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg) and Professor Staffan I. Lindberg (V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg) coordinate the project. It receives funding from the German Volkswagen Foundation.

The Academic Freedom Index aggregates five indicators:

- Freedom to research and teach
- Freedom of academic exchange and dissemination
- Institutional autonomy
- Campus integrity (the absence of surveillance on campus and digital education platforms)
- Freedom of academic and cultural expression



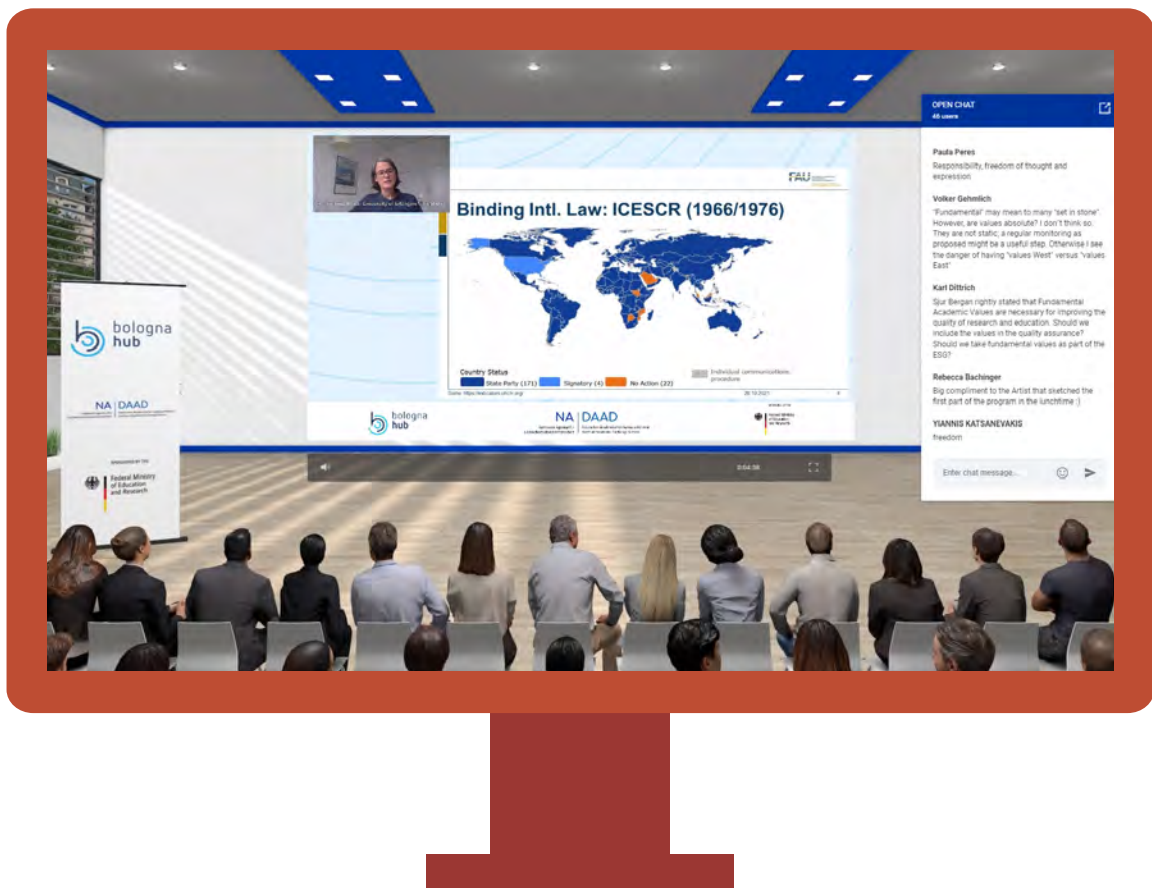
Europe



The findings of the Index reflect the expert assessments of researchers who typically reside in the country they are assessing. To date, more than 2,050 experts from around the world have contributed to the AFI's vast database.

The AFI project provides time series data that portrays developments since 1900. The data can reveal both improvement and deterioration of academic freedom. According to Kinzelbach, systematic monitoring can not only flag situations of concern but also help to discover improving situations where support can then be made to consolidate and further that improvement.

Overall, when comparing today's situation to that of one decade ago, the indicator under the greatest strain in Europe is the freedom of academic and cultural expression; it is also noteworthy that institutional autonomy fares worse on average than the other indicators—an important finding that must be addressed.



PARALLEL PEER LEARNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Conference participants could choose to join one of two parallel sessions bringing together professionals from the policy level, experts and HEI administrators

SESSION A:

BFUG Working Group on Fundamental Values: Framework for the Enhancement of Fundamental Academic Values

The task of the working group is to develop a comprehensive framework to further the monitoring and implementation of the EHEA's fundamental values in the higher education systems of its members. The systems should foster self-reflection, constructive dialogue and peer learning while also making it possible to assess the degree to which these fundamental values are honoured and implemented in the EHEA. The discussions and results of the conference will feed into the working group's development of the framework. To kick off the session, David Crosier presented the indicators of fundamental values that have been covered in four previous editions of the Bologna Process Implementation Report and provided a brief overview of the reporting since 2012.

Facilitator: Tone Flood Strøm, Senior Advisor at Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and Co-Chair, BFUG Working Group

Input for Session A:

Indicators in the Bologna Process Implementation Report

David Crosier, Higher Education Policy Analyst, Eurydice

SESSION B:

Fundamental Academic Values: Activities, Challenges and Opportunities—From Different Countries Perspectives

The second breakout session welcomed three panellists who presented their experience with employing fundamental values to promote international cooperation in higher education or, as Liviu Matei pointed out, employing international academic cooperation to promote the fundamental values in higher education. First from an institutional perspective, in the case of the Free University Berlin, country examples from Ireland and Russia followed.

Facilitator: Liviu Matei, Provost, Central European University

Input for Session B:

Internationalisation and Academic Freedom—Freie Universität's Principles of International Cooperation

Florian Kohstall, Head of Academics in Solidarity, Center for International Cooperation, Free University of Berlin

Academic Freedom in Ireland

Elizaveta Potapova, Researcher, Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI)

Academic Freedom in Russia

Katarzyna Kaczmarek, Lecturer in Politics and International Relations, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

Rose Anne Cuschieri, Co-Chair, BFUG Working Group on Fundamental Values, CEO of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

While lack of ethics in higher education is not a new phenomenon, its unprecedented dimensions and the growing challenge of mitigating and preventing it, are rather new and they have become a serious reality. This is why the BFUG Working Group on Fundamental Academic Values has been asked to develop a framework for measuring and monitoring the degree of academic freedom and potential violations.

The working group has six key objectives:

- To determine how fundamental values can be clearly understood
- To establish values which can be easily inferred
- To find a method by which progress can be calculated and reported, if there is progress
- To propose indicators on the presence or absence of values
- How those values can be assessed
- How these values can be present in all EHEA countries

What's crucial in this process is the development of a de jure and de facto implementation of academic freedom and integrity as defined in the Rome Communiqué. The group must start by finding a common understanding of this concept and move on to developing related indicators both de jure and de facto. The working group will collaborate with academic researchers in order to gain a better understanding of academic freedom worldwide and the factors that support or threaten it. Therefore, there needs to be a consensus on the values to be achieved.

7 CLOSING OF THE CONFERENCE

David Akrami Flores, Head of section “Erasmus+ Policy Support” in the National Agency Higher Education within the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), reflected on the presentations and discussions:

During the conference, it became clear that it is a particular challenge for policy makers not only to demand compliance with fundamental values, but also to be able to monitor them. In the Bologna context there seems to be a common will to act. The coherent framework for measuring and monitoring the degree of academic freedom and violations, which will be developed by the Working Group on Fundamental Values, is an important step towards implementing shared fundamental academic values.

Furthermore, it became obvious that European decision-makers must stand up for principles and values even with difficult partners, while maintaining a dialogue at the same time. Especially those scientists and students who suffer from repressive systems need support from the European community.

It was generally emphasised to continue to work together on this important challenge and referring to what Stephan Geifes said in his welcome address, during the conference participants definitely valued the values and will continue to do so in the future.

