

Swiss Science Briefing

Academic Freedom: an essential value for progress and prosperity

26 October 2023, 16:00-17:45 & Apéro until 19:00

Palais des Académies, Room Roi Baudouin, Rue Ducale 1, Brussels

Summary

Academic freedom is increasingly coming under pressure in the wake of strained political, legal and other developments in different world regions in the last couple of years.

Academic freedom is a basic tenet that underpins scientific progress and encompasses the freedom to teach, study and pursue research without unreasonable interference. It is a value whereby societal interests are best served with education and knowledge. Recognising the importance of academic freedom, it is enshrined in nearly 100 national constitutions, according to an International Science Council (ISC) 2017 survey. Even though, it is under attack in various ways around the globe. For 2022 alone, the "Academic Freedom Monitoring Project" of the global non-governmental organisation Scholars at Risk records violations at the individual level – 98 unlawful detentions and prosecutions, 181 killings, acts of violence and disappearances, 41 losses of employment, 4 travel restrictions – and 67 attacks on higher education institutions.

In Europe, political stakeholders took action to uphold and foster academic freedom. The **European Parliament recommended** in 2018 to defend academic freedom in the EU's external action and last year founded a **Forum for Academic Freedom**. In 2020, the European Research Area (ERA) Ministerial Conference adopted the "**Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research**" and dedicated **ERA Policy Action 6** to academic freedom.

What is the state of affairs of academic freedom in Europe and globally? How can science communities contribute to prevent a further erosion of academic freedom? What are the implications on international scientific cooperation involving nations with different value systems? These and further issues will be addressed at this event.

Agenda

From 15:45 **Arrival of participants**

16:00 Welcome

Part I: Keynote Presentations

Moderator: Angelika Kalt

Director of the Swiss National Science Foundation SNSF

16:05 Academic freedom: an overview and challenges
Martina Caroni
Professor of International, Constitutional and Comparative Law at the University of Lucerne

16:25 Academic freedom in the European Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation
Gosse Vuijk
Head of Parliamentary Affairs for the Member of the European Parliament Christian Ehler

Part II: Panel Discussion

Moderator: Roger Pfister

Head of International Cooperation at the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences

16:45 **Jan Willem Duyvendak**
Director of the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences

Katrin Kinzelbach

Professor for International Politics of Human Rights at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität in Erlangen-Nürnberg

Koen Lemmens

Professor of Human Rights Law at the KU Leuven

Slaven Misljencevic

Policy Officer, DG RTD, European Commission

17:45 **Apéro**

19:00 **End of event**

Speakers

Martina Caroni, Professor and Vice-Rector for Teaching and International Relations at the University of Lucerne, serves as President of the Swiss National Commission on the Prevention of Torture and as Delegate for Human Rights of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences.

Gosse Vuijk is Head of Parliamentary Affairs for Dr Christian Ehler and his Adviser on science, research, innovation and industrial policy. He has been working on European R&I policy in Brussels since 2016.

Jan Willem Duyvendak, also Professor of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam, is a Member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and of its Committee for Academic Freedom.

Katrin Kinzelbach is Principal Investigator of the Academic Freedom Index, which assesses de-facto levels of academic freedom worldwide. She is also a member of the International Studies Association's Academic Freedom Committee.

Koen Lemmens is co-author of the advice paper "Challenges to academic freedom as a fundamental right" that the League of European Research Universities (LERU) published in April 2023.

Slaven Misljencevic is Policy Officer at the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (RTD) at the European Commission and responsible for ERA Action 6 on Academic Freedom.

Moderators

Angelika Kalt, is also Vice-President of Science Europe, the association of Europe's research funding organisations. She was formerly a professor of petrology and geodynamics at the University of Neuchâtel.

Roger Pfister, with a PhD in International Relations, chairs the Swiss Section of Scholars at Risk (SAR) and served as Executive Secretary of the Committee for Freedom and Responsibility in Science at the International Science Council (ISC, 2010-16).