

Action title <i>(Please use as a maximum two lines.)</i>	Promoting and Protecting Freedom of Scientific Research in Europe
Description of the action <i>(Please explain the proposed action in a simple, clear and communicable narrative.)</i>	<p>This initiative aligns with the current ERA Policy Agenda Action 6. Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research are protected under Article 13 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and are detailed in the 2020 Bonn Declaration and the EHEA Rome Ministerial Communiqué. While a report to monitor freedom of scientific research in EU Member States is in progress, its effectiveness depends on follow-up initiatives and comprehensive implementation.</p> <p>The goal is to develop and implement a comprehensive EU policy to protect and enhance the freedom of scientific research in Europe. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding Against Internal Pressures: Addressing issues such as self-censorship within academic institutions through awareness-raising campaigns and the appointment of an ombudsperson for researchers on Freedom of Scientific Research. • Ensuring Scientist Safety: Protecting scientists from both physical and psychological threats, online and offline. • Ongoing Monitoring: Continuously assessing the state of freedom of scientific research in Europe and deciding, and perhaps implementing, a monitoring system at EU level. • Maintaining Research Integrity: Implementing policies that ensure the integrity of researchers and transparent funding practices • Addressing the legal and administrative barriers that limit scientific research freedom. Constraints in cross-border collaboration within the European Research Area (ERA) due to different national administrative requirements can be a limitation to academic freedom. Therefore, reducing such bureaucratic hurdles in research cooperation is a priority for this EU-wide action. A potential action could be to establish a working group on harmonizing administrative requirements and developing science-friendly solutions.
Actors <i>(Please explain who would take part in the action and who would benefit from it.)</i>	<p>The initiative for a common approach to academic freedom will primarily involve the Commission and Member States. Key participants also include stakeholders of the ERA such as Research Performing Organizations (RPOs), Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and Research and Technology Organizations (RTOs) at both European and national level.</p>

	<p>The development of this action will be a collaborative effort with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) actors, who are currently establishing indicators for academic freedom and other fundamental academic values. Efforts will be made to harmonize this system with the EHEA's to minimize the data collection burden on Member States.</p> <p>Engagement with all Member States is crucial for this action, and efforts should extend, where possible, to Associated Countries.</p>
<p>Expected impact</p> <p><i>(Please describe the expected impact of the action (including outside the scientific community), paying attention to the fact that it needs to focus on concrete results and reachable deliverables.)</i></p>	<p>Establishing a robust monitoring system paves the way for further policy development.</p> <p>Strengthening freedom of scientific research raises awareness and builds a positive culture around this issue, addressing both internal pressures and external interference.</p> <p>This initiative positions the EU as a leader in academic freedom and freedom of scientific research, enhancing its ability to attract top global academic talent and supporting research that addresses global challenges.</p> <p>It also promotes trust in science at the societal level. Beyond the scientific community, it strengthens democratic societies and creates an environment where science, emerging technologies, and innovation can flourish within competitive and democratic frameworks.</p>
<p>Why do we need this action?</p> <p><i>(Please indicate the need for this action in view of implementing the <u>Pact for R&I</u> and <u>achieving the ERA objectives</u> and explain why its <u>objective cannot be reached through existing programmes/ activities</u>. What is the action's <u>added value</u> at national and European level as well as for stakeholders? How does it <u>make a change</u> and how is <u>co-creation</u> ensured?)</i></p>	<p>The development of a coherent EU-wide approach to better protect the de facto implementation of Freedom of Scientific Research requires a continued effort. We need to protect and promote freedom for scientific research to avoid the fragmentation of the European Research Area and the European legal order, thus undermining the scientific potential for excellence.</p> <p>Therefore, a continuation of ERA-action 6 is necessary.</p> <p>Preserving the intellectual freedom of scientific researchers entails also protecting them and the environment in which they operate from undue influences on their independent judgement and activities. To reduce restrictions for freedom of scientific research in frameworks, clear guidance for RPOs, HEIs, RTOs (at European and national levels) is vital to provide researchers with the greatest possible freedom.</p> <p>Taken together, eliminating hurdles and restrictions to Freedom of Scientific Research is paramount to achieve key objectives and priorities of the ERA and the Pact for R&I, such as the continued work towards deepening the Single Market for Knowledge and enhancing access to excellence in Europe.</p>
Additional information	

(For example, timing and milestones, which already could be envisaged, can be indicated.)