

Action 6: Deepening the ERA through protecting academic freedom in Europe	
<i>Contact point: Claudio FATTORETTO (A.3), Slaven MISLJENCEVIC (A.3), Dario CAPEZZUTO (A.3)</i>	
1. Description	<p>Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research are safeguarded by art. 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.</p> <p>Action 6 consists of two main strands: (i) developing an Action Plan to monitor academic freedom in Europe while further analysing the concept of research security and (ii) supporting Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) in recognising and tackling R&I foreign interference.</p> <p>The statement on academic freedom annexed to the November 2020 EHEA Rome Ministerial Communiqué, defines it as freedom of academic staff and students to engage in research, teaching, learning and communication in and with society without interference nor fear of reprisal. The aspiration is to include academic freedom more explicitly than hitherto into Erasmus+ governance (the Charter). The new European Education Area has produced a European Strategy for Universities with provisions in this area. One of the Strategy's outputs will be guidelines to reinforce academic freedom, which universities perceive under threat.</p> <p>The Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research adopted at the October 2020 Ministerial Conference on the European Research Area states that freedom of scientific research is related to freedom of expression, freedom of association, the freedom of movement and the right to education, among other rights. Freedom of scientific research is one element of the more broader term academic freedom.</p> <p>The European Parliament has also shown keen interest in monitoring academic freedom in Europe, enforcing necessary measures and strengthening the legal basis and mechanisms in the Treaties. The EP is envisaging a possible own initiative report on this matter.</p> <p>In reference to research security and R&I foreign interference, the EU's approach is based on a positive agenda of partnership coupled with the constructive management of differences.</p> <p>In recent decades, R&I have increasingly expanded beyond national borders to become fully internationalised. In this context, HEIs and RPOs have been facing new challenges to their free and rights-based operation. Therefore, a new set of tools need to be developed to better support EU's shared values enshrined in the Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights.</p> <p>As mentioned in the EC Staff Working Document (SWD) on tackling R&I foreign interference, one of possible mitigation measure that can help HEIs and RPOs to protect their academic freedom is to identify countries and partner institutions where academic freedom is at risk. This could be done in consultation with, and with the support of, local and national authorities or of relevant national stakeholders if</p>

	<p>appropriate.</p> <p>This action will also be aligned with and contribute to the G7 Working Group on the Security and Integrity of the Global Research Ecosystem (SIGRE), which is working on research security and will develop best practices and principles as well proposal for the Virtual Academy and Toolkit.</p> <p>Against this background, Action 6 will aim at addressing all the above-mentioned issues with three main outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitate the development of a policy and monitoring approach to safeguard the freedom of scientific research in Europe, based on the Bonn declaration on freedom of scientific research, while further analysing the concept of research security and; - Support interested organisations in implementing the recommendations of the SWD on tackling R&I foreign interference; - Publication of a first European monitoring report on the freedom of scientific research.
2. Actors	<p>Action 6 should be implemented by strongly engaging with all Member States. Main actors would also be the stakeholders of the ERA including RPOs, research funding organisations, HEIs with their European and international alliances, research and technology infrastructures and industry in practising and fostering international R&I cooperation at Union and Member State level.</p> <p>Particular attention should be given to national actors that, in some cases, can better capture the specific nature of the issues in relation with academic freedom at national level and assure coherence with ongoing national approaches.</p> <p>To ensure openness in international R&I cooperation, to promote EU's shared values and secure EU's interests, third countries should also be involved in line with the guiding principle acknowledged by the Council Conclusions on Global approach to Research and Innovation¹ 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary.'</p>
3. Timing and milestones	<p>(Q1 2022) Publication of SWD "Tackling R&I foreign interference"</p> <p>(Q1 2022) 1st consultation with stakeholders on the main elements of the Action Plan to implement Action 6</p> <p>(Q1/Q3 2022) Setting up of a group of external experts that will work based on indications from the 1st stakeholders' consultation</p> <p>(Q3 2022) Key outline of the Action Plan and monitoring mechanism</p> <p>(Q4 2022) 2nd consultations with stakeholders on the key outline and monitoring mechanism</p> <p>(Q1 2023) Launch of the pilot phase for monitoring and</p>

¹ [12301/21](#), Council conclusions (adopted on 28 September 2021)

	<p>implementation of the Action Plan</p> <p>(Q4 2023) Publication of the Action Plan and 1st European monitoring report on freedom of scientific research</p> <p>(Q1 2024) 1st assessment of the pilot phase</p>
4. Funding	<p>For this action, funding will depend on the kind of activities that will be put in place following consultations with stakeholders.</p> <p>EU funding may be needed for the establishment of a group of external experts on academic freedom.</p>
5. Expected impact	<p>The general expected impact is to improve and safeguard academic freedom in Europe while developing a collective understanding of the concept of research security.</p> <p>More in details, the action aims at increasing the level of awareness and vigilance regarding academic freedom and research security by all members of the academic community.</p> <p>Moreover, through the monitoring mechanism that will be designed, a comprehensive and coherent assessment of the European situation will be completed, which will allow the development of an efficient policy and strategic approach.</p>
6. Monitoring	<p>The aim is to implement a top-down bottom-up approach composed by consultations with stakeholders, a pilot phase and a first assessment of the Action Plan in 2024.</p> <p>In addition, one of the deliverables of this Action is the development of a new monitoring approach for academic freedom that will transparency and early warning on limits to academic freedom in Europe and potential participation international partners</p>
7. Communication	<p>(Q1 2022) Publication of the SWD “Tackling R&I foreign interference” – Commission</p> <p>(Q1 2022) French Presidency’s international conference on R&I in Marseille (8-9 March) – National public authority and Commission</p> <p>(Q4 2023) Publication of the first European monitoring report on freedom of scientific research - Commission</p> <p>(Throughout 2022 and 2023) Workshops/Roadshow with Member States and stakeholders – National public authorities and stakeholders</p>
8. Additional information	