



Centralised Support to the Network of Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE)

SPHERE Seminar:

**Towards the 2024 Tirana Ministerial Conference:
Implications and points of interest for higher education systems in Partner Countries neighbouring the EU**

7-8 November 2023

Session 6 - Workshop 2

Academic freedom and other values

Bologna Process

- based on values

European higher education institutions, for their part, have accepted the challenge and taken up a main role in constructing the European area of higher education, also in the wake of the fundamental principles laid down in the Bologna **Magna Charta Universitatum** of 1988. This is of the highest importance, given that **Universities' independence** and **autonomy** ensure that higher education and research systems continuously adapt to changing needs, society's demands and advances in scientific knowledge.

The **importance of education and educational co-operation** in the development and strengthening of **stable, peaceful and democratic societies** is universally acknowledged as paramount, the more so in view of the **situation in South East Europe**.

[Bologna Declaration, 1999](#)

Fundamental values

- Discussions start in 2015
 - “public responsibility for higher education, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and commitment to integrity”
 - “democratic and civic values, in order to strengthen European and global citizenship and lay the foundations for inclusive societies.”
- 2015 Accession of Belarus to the Bologna Process

The practice of direct Presidential or governmental responsibility for appointing and dismissing higher education leaders is not compatible with the values of the EHEA, and of democratic higher education¹.

The draft Education Code mentions neither the terms “academic freedom” nor “institutional autonomy”. Moreover, the draft Education Code fails to elucidate the fundamental students’ or academic staff rights while it also does not explicitly restrict these rights.

There is no structured consultation with stakeholders (students, staff, employer organisations, trade unions) on higher education reform.

[SUPPORT FOR
THE BELARUS ROADMAP
Final Report \(2018\)](#)

Consequently, there are no significant improvements in the higher education institutional, organisational autonomy of staff or students.

Fundamental values – work in progress

2018-2020 - Task Force (as part of WG “implementation monitoring”)

- Definition of academic freedom

Fundamental Values

2020 Rome Communiqué

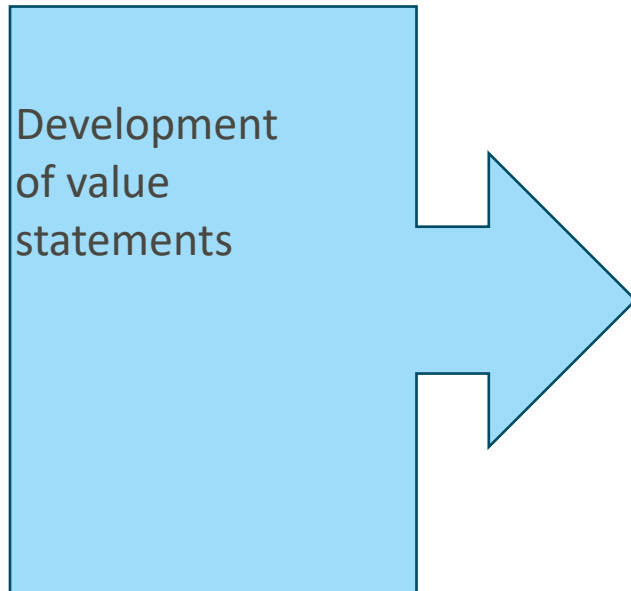


We reaffirm our commitment to promoting and protecting **our shared fundamental values in the entire EHEA through intensified political dialogue and cooperation** as the necessary basis for quality learning, teaching and research as well as for democratic societies. We commit to upholding institutional autonomy, academic freedom and integrity, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education.

2021-2024 “Working Group on Fundamental Values

1. Define “fundamental values”
2. Fundamental values” working group de jure and de facto monitoring
3. Promote university values: “foster constructive dialogue and peer-learning”

Fundamental Values: what are they?

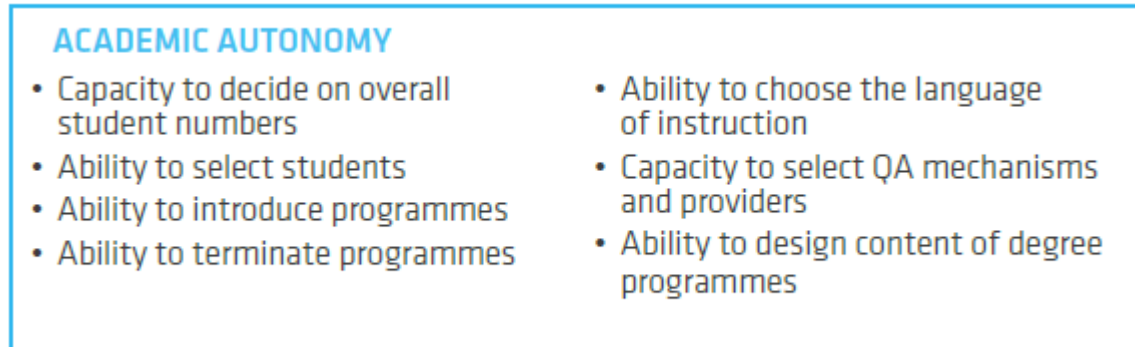
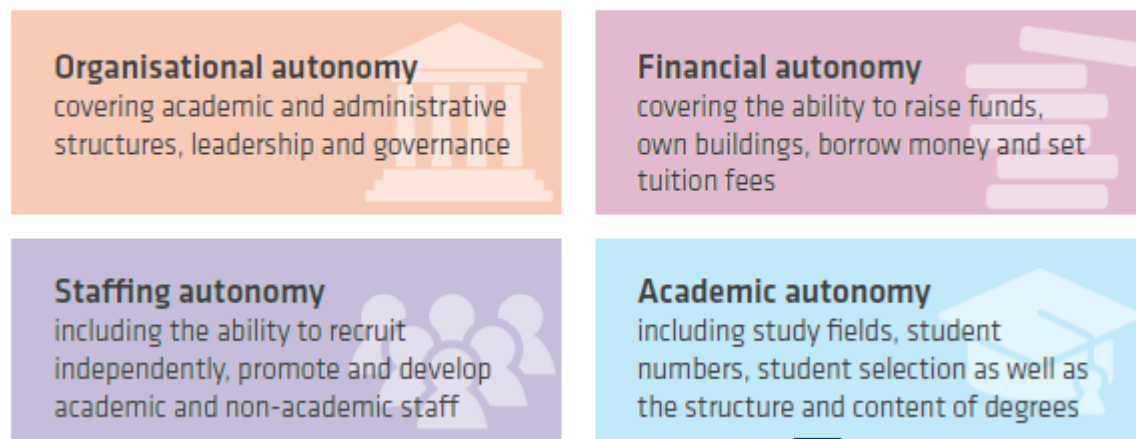


- Academic Freedom
 - distinct, fundamental democratic right
 - freedom of thought, opinion and expression
 - framed by rigorous scientific and professional standards,
 - respect for the rights of others, ethical conduct
 - awareness of the impact of research on humans and their environment.
- Academic Integrity
- Institutional Autonomy
- Responsibility of Higher Education
- Responsibility for Higher Education
- Participation of students and staff

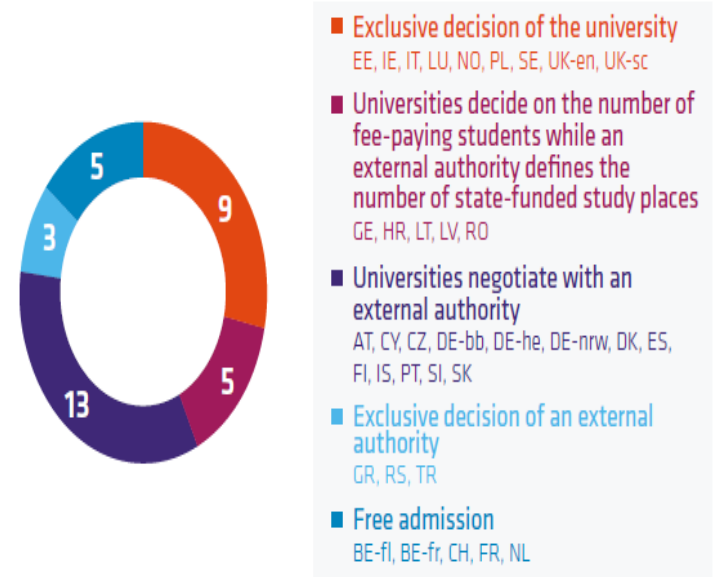


Measuring values: EUA's Autonomy Scorecard 2023

The Scorecard is based on more than 30 different core indicators in four key dimensions of autonomy. These include:



Graph 17 Overall student numbers



Measuring values: 2023 Academic Freedom Index

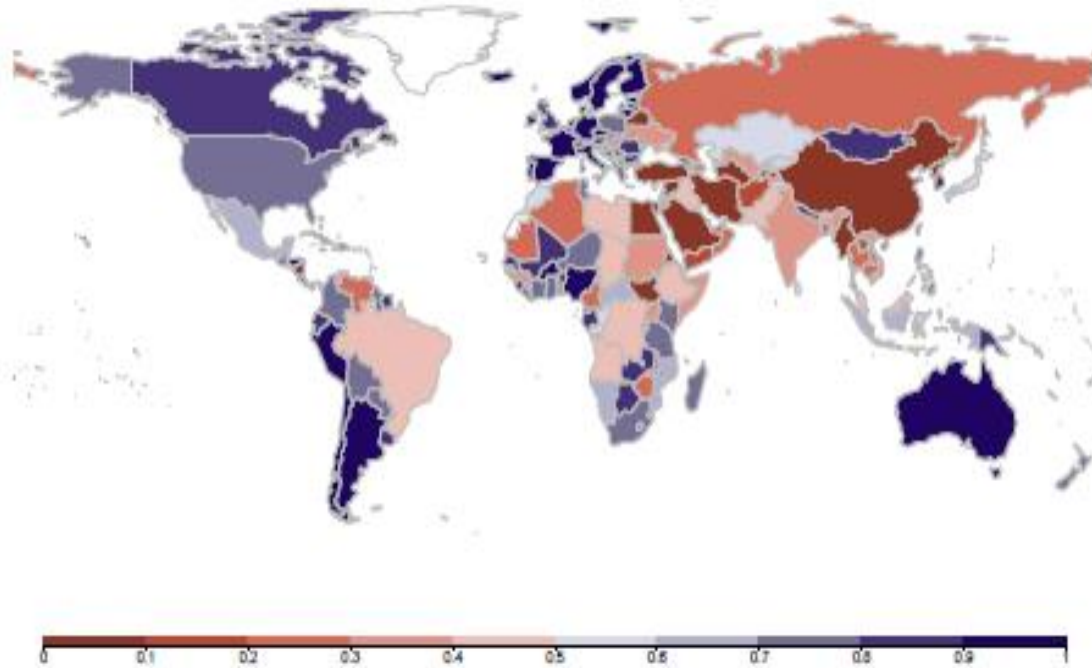


Figure 1: The state of academic freedom in 2022 (0-1, low to high)

de facto levels of academic freedom

- freedom to research and teach
- freedom of academic exchange and dissemination
- institutional autonomy
- campus integrity
- freedom of academic and cultural expression
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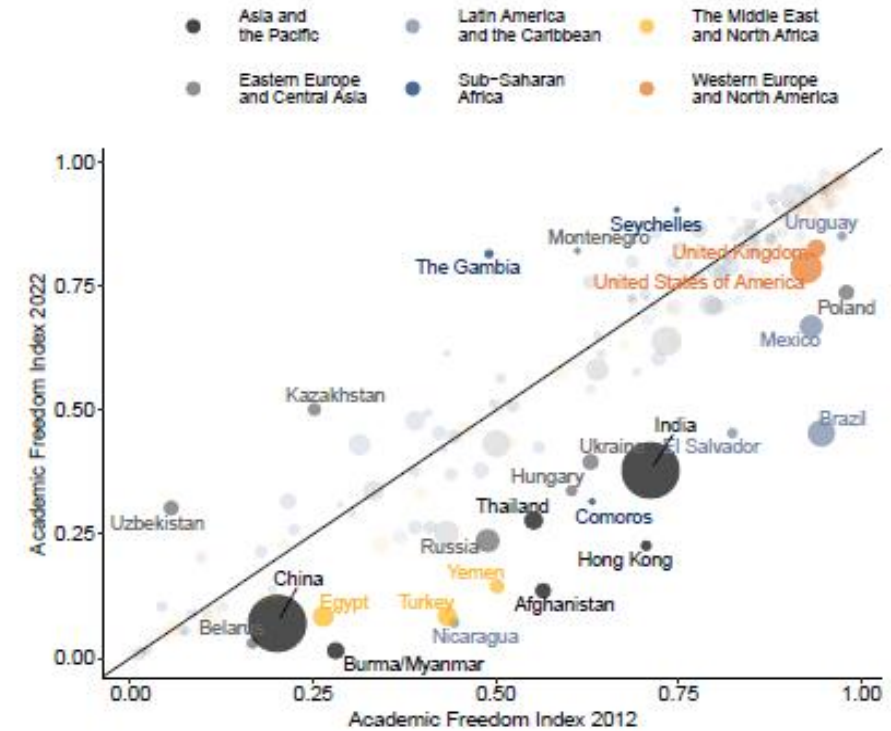


Figure 4: Increasing and decreasing scores on the Academic Freedom Index, 2012–2022. Academic freedom increased in countries above the diagonal line and decreased in countries or territories below it. Countries are labelled if the difference between 2012 and 2022 was statistically significant and substantially meaningful. The size of the points indicates the population size of the countries/territories (Data from the World Bank: World Development Indicators).

Discussion

- How relevant are the BP discussions/approach on this topic to your context? Does it address the main challenges of your system? Please elaborate.
- Is there a common understanding about these values in your system? What interest do the stakeholders show on this questions?
- What do you see as main perils and risks for values in your system or at your institution? N.B. challenges could come from outside, e.g. by governments, but also by other parties (media, companies), but also from inside, by the members of the institution.
- Are there any measures for protecting these values in your system, through policies and legislation, or dedicated structures?
- Are there any data-collection practices in your system? What challenges would this present?