

## Upholding Academic Freedom is essential to ensure Europe's competitiveness and democratic resilience

### Joint Statement of the G6 network of research organisations

Academic freedom is a fundamental value of the European Union and an essential component of resilient societies. Academic freedom stands at the core of Europe's democratic identity, and encompasses the freedom of research, teaching, publishing, as well as international exchange. Academic freedom enables open inquiry, critical thought, and the free exchange of knowledge across borders.

The G6 of science, comprising six major European research organisations, observes with grave concern that academic freedom is under threat in many regions of the world. This threat stems from political, financial, and societal pressures that undermine the EU's knowledge base and create strategic vulnerabilities. In addition, the stagnation of public funding for research and an increased reliance on commercially oriented private funding results in tying research to short-term economic outcomes, whereas growing overregulation discourages cooperation. Furthermore, rising political polarisation and the spread of disinformation erode public trust in science and delegitimise certain scientific disciplines, leading to a selective use of evidence.

The implications of these threats touch upon the very core of the European project, which is founded on shared values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. Protecting academic freedom in all its dimensions is therefore a shared responsibility involving the EU, national authorities, and the scientific community. From a perspective of strategic competitiveness, the integrity of the European Research Area depends on a high level of academic freedom to attract and retain global talent. Moreover, academic freedom is a fundamental prerequisite for the EU's technological sovereignty, as the independent development of knowledge is essential for the security of digital data and AI value chains.

### G6 Recommendations for EU Action

The success of the European Research Area depends on every Member State adhering to a minimum standard of academic freedom and on Member States holding to account those who defect from these principles. To achieve this, the G6 strongly recommends the following strategic actions:

#### 1. Elevating Legislative Ambition

The G6 urges the European institutions to make academic freedom a permanent, long-term priority. Academic freedom should be enshrined legally as a clearly defined, binding, and enforceable fundamental value across the Union. This would provide a solid legal basis for protecting researchers and institutions and for ensuring that Member States are held accountable to a common standard.

#### 2. Funding Bottom-Up Excellence in European Research

The next Framework Programme (FP10) must be funded significantly and structured to foster high-risk frontier research. In particular, the humanities and social sciences require funding given their essential role in fostering critical thinking and addressing Europe's complex societal and democratic challenges. Academic freedom should be an eligibility criterion for the Framework Programme on the institutional level. Eligible institutions must provide internal structures that effectively safeguard and enable academic freedom in all its dimensions.

#### 3. Institutionalising Monitoring and Resilience

The G6 endorses the European Parliament's ['Forum for Academic Freedom'](#) initiative and recommends EU-wide tools for monitoring academic freedom. In order to build resilience against future threats, an independent expert group could be established to 'stress-test' EU research funding

mechanisms against potential abuse by anti-democratic political actors to ensure that the scientific infrastructure remains robust even in times of political instability.

#### 4. Securing Digital and Technological Independence

Europe must significantly increase its investment in digital sovereignty. The Union needs the capacity to rescue data infrastructures and protect research results that come under threat. This includes creating politically independent communication platforms and data infrastructures that can safeguard the integrity of European knowledge.

#### 5. Promoting Academic Freedom through Science Diplomacy

Promoting transboundary academic collaboration and exchange is an important element of diplomatic efforts and contributes to safeguarding science from political interference. This requires proportionate research-security measures that build international trust without compromising open science and collaboration, which are the foundation of scientific excellence.

### G6 Self-Commitment

As representatives of a significant part of Europe's publicly funded basic research, the G6 members are dedicated to being proactive guardians of the scientific freedom they advocate for. The G6 remains committed to ensuring that Europe remains a sanctuary for independent thought, guided by values that serve the common good. In order to strengthen academic freedom, the G6 is committed to exploring the following areas of institutional collaboration:

#### Creation of a 'Safe-Haven Network'

The G6 will explore the establishment of a 'Safe-Haven Network' to link and scale existing institutional initiatives across different EU countries. The long-term ambition is to develop a coordinated mechanism that provides temporary hosting of threatened researchers across the EU, access to research infrastructure, and comprehensive legal and security support for researchers at risk.

#### Fostering an Ethical Research Community

To counter transnational repression and silencing tactics, the G6 will support initiatives that build 'virtuous circles' for scientific responsibility and integrity. By fostering positive interrelationships and ethical behaviours from the ground up, the academic community will more easily resist external pressure.

#### Strategic Science Communication

The G6 members uphold their duty to communicate scientific findings clearly to society and to provide evidence-informed advice to policymakers without becoming partisan actors. To this end, the G6 will explore ways to build robust capabilities in science communication, potentially including the development of politically independent communication platforms or shared data infrastructures that curate and disseminate high-quality research results, such as those funded by the ERC.

---

*The G6 network unites six large multidisciplinary Research Performing Organisations located in Europe, the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR), the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), the Helmholtz-Gemeinschaft Deutscher Forschungszentren (Helmholtz Association), the Leibniz-Gemeinschaft (Leibniz Association) and the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (MPG).*

