

Global Campus of Human Rights
Policy Observatory Project, 7th edition

Brief Policy Area Outline

***‘Protecting, promoting and enjoying academic freedom:
trends, challenges and impacts from a human rights-based approach’***

Chiara Altafin

Academic freedom has been progressively recognised as a multifaceted human right at the international level. It is legally grounded in various provisions of international law, including those enshrining freedom of opinion and expression, the right to education, and the right to the benefits of science, and it also has elements of freedom of association, freedom of movement, and other rights. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy have been also acknowledged as essential elements of free and democratic societies. Overall, they are deemed as essential not only to learning, upholding and passing on cultures of teaching, research, creativity, innovation and excellence, but also to democratic processes, pluralism, social and cultural understanding and cohesion, and economic prosperity, for sustainable rights-respecting societies.

It is worth considering first the **ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers** (1966) and the **UNESCO Recommendation concerning Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel** (1997) which are [two instruments](#) setting out principles regarding the rights and responsibilities of educators, from the pre-school level through university, and providing guidance for multiple stakeholders. In particular, UNESCO Rec. para. 13 states that “the interplay of ideas and information among higher-education teaching personnel throughout the world is vital to the healthy development of higher education and research and should be actively promoted ...”. The 2017 **UNESCO Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers** ([SHS/BIO/PI/2017/3 Rev](#)) is another key instrument in the field.

Several human rights treaties applicable globally or regionally can be relied on to promote and protect particular aspects of the right to academic freedom, especially the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Scholars’ comprehensive overviews¹ have included references to: first and foremost, Article 19 ICCPR on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Article 13 ICESCR on the right to education, and Article 15(1)(b) ICESCR on the “right of everyone [...] to enjoy the benefits of scientific

¹ Eg, R. Quinn and J. Levine, ‘Intellectual-HRDs and Claims for Academic Freedom under Human Rights Law’, *International Journal of Human Rights* 18(7–8) (2014) 898–920, at 904; Klaus D. Beiter, Terence Karran, and Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua, ‘Academic Freedom and Its Protection in the Law of European States Measuring an International Human Right’, *European Journal of Comparative Law and Governance* 3(2016) 254–345, at 261–263; K. Roberts Lyer, I. Saliba, and J. Spannagel, ‘University Autonomy and Academic Freedom’, In: Roberts Lyer, Kirsten Saliba, Ilyas Spannagel, Janika (Ed.) *University Autonomy Decline: Causes, Responses, and Implications for Academic Freedom* (2023) Routledge, 9–29.

progress and its applications”, its paragraph 2 on states’ obligations to take steps “necessary for the conservation, the development and the diffusion of science and culture”, its paragraph 3 on states’ obligations “to respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity”, and its paragraph 4 on states’ obligations to encourage the development of “international contacts and cooperation in the scientific and cultural fields”; but also to Articles 2(1) and 26 ICCPR, and Article 2(2) ICESCR forbidding discrimination on *inter alia* the ground of “political or other opinion”; Article 6 ICCPR on the right to life, Article 7 ICCPR prohibiting torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Article 9 ICCPR addressing the right to liberty and security of the person, Article 12 ICCPR on the right to liberty of movement, and Article 13 ICCPR on the right of aliens not to be arbitrarily expelled from a state, Article 14 ICCPR protecting the right to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law in civil and criminal cases, Article 17 ICCPR prohibiting arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy or correspondence, Article 18 ICCPR on the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, Article 21 ICCPR on the right of peaceful assembly, Article 22 ICCPR on the right to freedom of association, Article 25(c) ICCPR guaranteeing the right of citizens of access to the public service in their country without discrimination, Article 15(1)(c) ICESCR protecting the right “[t]o benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which [one] is the author”.

In 1999, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) interpreted academic freedom in relation to the right to education, addressing that it was not mentioned in Article 13 ICESCR: in the section ‘academic freedom and institutional autonomy’ of its [General Comment No. 13](#), it stated (para 38) to have “formed the view that the right to education can only be enjoyed if accompanied by the academic freedom of staff and students”. It then elaborated (para 39) that “Members of the academic community, individually or collectively, are free to pursue, develop and transmit knowledge and ideas, through research, teaching, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation or writing”. In the same paragraph, it added that “academic freedom includes the liberty of individuals to express freely opinions about the institution or system in which they work, to fulfil their functions without discrimination or fear of repression by the State or any other actor, to participate in professional or representative academic bodies, and to enjoy all the internationally recognized human rights applicable to other individuals in the same jurisdiction”; it further stated that “the enjoyment of academic freedom carries with it obligations, such as the duty to respect the academic freedom of others, to ensure the fair discussion of contrary views, and to treat all without discrimination on any of the prohibited grounds”. Importantly, it highlighted that “the enjoyment of academic freedom requires the autonomy of institutions of higher education”, also framing the latter in an operational context exposed to state limitations (para 40).

In 2020, in its [General Comment No. 25](#), the CESCR interpreted academic freedom in the context of Article 15 and explained (para 13) the “freedom to research” as containing “at least” five dimensions: 1. “protection of researchers from undue influence on their independent judgment”; 2. “the possibility for researchers to set up autonomous research institutions and to define the aims and objectives of the research and the methods to be adopted”; 3. “the freedom of researchers to freely and openly question the ethical value of certain projects and the right to withdraw from those projects if their conscience so dictates”; 4. “the freedom of researchers to cooperate with other researchers, both nationally and internationally”; and 5. “the sharing of scientific data and analysis with policymakers, and with the public wherever possible”. Importantly, the CESCR linked (para 46) the existence of academic freedom to a non-exhaustive list of rights “including freedom of expression and freedom to seek, receive and impart scientific information, freedom of association and freedom of movement; guarantees of equal access and participation of all public and private actors; and capacity-building and education”. In positioning academic freedom within the right to science, the Committee has elevated it to a right enjoyable by all humans in society, also noting that “any limitation on the content of scientific research implies a strict burden of justification by States, in order to avoid infringing freedom of research” (para 22).

In his 2020 report ([A/75/261](#)), the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, focused on related aspects of academic freedom, highlighting “the special role played by academics and academic institutions in democratic society” and noting that, “without academic freedom, societies lose one of the essential elements of democratic self-governance: the capacity for self-reflection, for knowledge generation and for a constant search for improvements of people’s lives and social conditions”. He provided an overview of the legal framework applicable to academic freedom, recognising that “there is no single, exclusive international human rights framework for the subject” and referring to the ICCPR and the ICESCR. He highlighted with examples (paras 21-23) that academic freedom also enjoys protection in the African, inter-American, European and other regional systems. Significantly, he stressed that “academic freedom should be understood to include the freedom of individuals, as members of academic communities (e.g., faculty, students, staff, scholars, administrators and community participants) or in their own pursuits, to conduct activities involving the discovery and transmission of information and ideas, and to do so with the full protection of human rights law” (para 8).

Building on his report, a Working Group on Academic Freedom (WGAF) of UN experts, scholars, and civil society actors, led by Scholars at Risk (SAR), was created to promote the strengthening of monitoring and protection mechanisms for academic freedom across all levels, including among UN offices and systems as well as member states. The **Principles for Implementing the Right to Academic Freedom** ([A/HRC/56/CRP.2](#)), drafted by WGAF in 2023 and presented in several gatherings, articulate **nine crucial aspects of this right**. These are grounded in UN legal standards, recommendations, reports, and statements, as well as regional human rights instruments, and are informed by available data and reporting on violations or threats to academic freedom and expert commentary. Notably, [Appendix 1](#) provides “considerations to assist UN and other stakeholders in assessing levels of implementation in context, whether by desk review of reports and media, country or site visits, expert assessments, or a combination of methods”. [Appendix 2](#) provides “practical guidance which states, education systems, ministries, institutions, staff and student unions could undertake or propose to improve the implementation of this right in practice”. The table here below lists these principles.

Principle 1: Academic freedom is the right to develop knowledge and ideas

Academic freedom is the human right to acquire, develop, transmit, apply, and engage with a diversity of knowledge and ideas through research, teaching, learning, and discourse

Principle 2: Academic freedom is protected by international human rights law

Academic freedom is protected by existing international human rights standards and international education principles

Principle 3: Academic freedom requires autonomy of institutions

The protection, promotion, and enjoyment of academic freedom require the autonomy of academic, research, and teaching institutions

Principle 4: Academic freedom includes intramural and extramural expression

Academic, research, and teaching staff and students have the right to engage in expression and discourse with persons and groups inside and outside the academic, research and teaching sector

Principle 5: Academic freedom requires access to information

Enjoyment of academic freedom requires respect for the right to information, sources of information, and the tools, materials, and methods necessary to gather, develop, interpret, and share information and ideas

Principle 6: Academic freedom requires freedoms of movement and association

Enjoyment of academic freedom requires freedoms of movement and of association

Principle 7: Academic freedom is essential to all levels of education

Academic freedom is essential to all levels of education, from early childhood through adult education, and all types of academic research and teaching institutions.

Principle 8: Students have the right to academic freedom

As members of education communities, students have the right to academic freedom

Principle 9: Respect for, protection of, and promotion of academic freedom is a shared responsibility

The State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and fulfil all human rights, including academic freedom. Everyone has a right and responsibility, individually and in association with others, to respect, promote and strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including academic freedom, at the national and international levels.

In March 2023, at the 52nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council, 74 states issued a [joint declaration](#) recognising academic freedom not only as “key to human rights education” but also as “essential for technical and scientific progress and for the development of the creative industries and the arts”, adding that “it is intrinsically linked to the effective enjoyment of other rights and freedoms, such as participation in public affairs, freedom of opinion and expression and the right to education, demonstrating the indivisibility of all human rights”. Their statement also called for enhanced international cooperation towards strengthening the protection and promotion of academic freedom.

In her 2024 report ([A/HRC/56/58](#)), the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Farida Shaheed, has examined the right to academic freedom from a right to education perspective and proposed considering **academic freedom as an autonomous human right** grounded in several provisions of international law. She affirmed academic freedom as “not a professional freedom limited to education personnel or traditional institutions such as universities”, calling on states to acknowledge it as an “autonomous right at national level, clarifying that it is applicable at all levels of education, for researchers, educators and students” (paras 6-14, 20). To promote its advancement and ensure an improved status worldwide, she called for the endorsement and realisation of the cited [Principles](#) as a roadmap for national and institutional action.

Following a brief reference to the importance of academic freedom towards the fulfilment of the right to education in the UN Human Rights Council’s [Resolution 53/7](#) (2023), its subsequent [Resolution 59/9](#) (2025), adopted without a vote during its 59th session, acknowledged that the **academic freedom of staff and students is a core aspect of the right to education**. It highlighted that “states, academic institutions, teachers and staff have the responsibility to promote an inclusive, safe and enabling environment for academic, evidence-based enquiry, debate and discussion”, and thus expressed “deep concern at the increasing restrictions on academic freedom” (p. 4). It further emphasised that “academic freedom, at all levels of education, inside and outside the academic community, is at the heart of scientific progress and contributes to building knowledge as a public and common good”, and that “individuals, as members of academic communities or in their own pursuits, should be free to conduct activities involving the discovery and transmission of knowledge and ideas, and to do so with the full protection of human rights law” (p. 4). Additionally, it took note with appreciation of the [Principles](#) (para 18).

In parallel, **regional legal and policy frameworks** have progressively reinforced academic freedom and institutional autonomy. In particular:

- ➔ The 1948 [American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man](#) includes the right of every person “to ... participate in the benefits that result from intellectual progress, especially scientific discoveries” (Article XIII). The Additional Protocol to the 1988 American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ([Protocol of San Salvador](#)) in Article 14 provides that “the States Parties to this Protocol undertake to respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity”. The 2021 [Inter-American Principles on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy](#) were adopted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organisation of American States (OAS).

- ➔ At the Council of Europe (CoE) level, the 1950 **European Convention on Human Rights** (ECHR) does not refer to academic freedom, but the European Court of Human Rights has developed case law relating to it, subsuming it under the freedom of expression protected by Article 10, although this does not cover institutional autonomy. However, Article 10 allows limitations that are “prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary”. Notably, the European Commission for Democracy Through Law (known as the Venice Commission) has also required states to “refrain from undue interference” with teaching and organising teaching and research, admitting restrictions within the boundaries of “legitimate aims, and [...] proportionate and necessary in a democratic society”, as foreseen by ECHR articles on freedom of expression, association and the right to education. At **political level**, academic freedom and institutional autonomy were advocated in post-socialist member states as part of their democratic transition (see [DECS-HE 92/3 \(1992\)](#)). Subsequent policy instruments include: the Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation on the responsibility of public authorities for academic freedom and institutional autonomy ([CM/Rec\(2012\)7](#)) and Recommendation on fostering a culture of ethics in the teaching profession ([Recommendation CM/Rec\(2019\)9](#)); the Parliamentary Assembly’s [Recommendation 1762 \(2006\)](#) on academic freedom and university autonomy, [Recommendation 2189 \(2020\)](#) on “Threats to academic freedom and autonomy of higher education institutions in Europe”, and [Resolution 2352 \(2020\)](#) on the threats to academic freedom and autonomy of higher education institutions in Europe; and the 2019 [Global Forum on Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and the Future of Democracy](#). The CoE Education Strategy 2024-2030, “Learners First”, and the 2023 Summit of Heads of State and Government have also stressed the relevance of safeguarding higher education’s democratic role. In 2025, the CoE Education Policy department published a second set of briefs in the [Academic Freedom Insights series](#) addressing the most pressing challenges to academic freedom in Europe and beyond.

- ➔ At the European Union (EU) level, the **Charter of Fundamental Rights**, entered into force in 2009, provides in [Article 13](#) that “the arts and scientific research shall be free of constraint” and that “academic freedom shall be respected”, with the accompanying explanation indicating that academic freedom comes “primarily from the right to freedom of thought and expression”. Relevant **policy documents** include: the European Parliament resolution of 17 January 2024 with recommendations to the Commission on promotion of the freedom of scientific research in the EU ([2023/2184\(INL\)](#)); the European Parliament recommendation of 29 November 2018 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on defence of academic freedom in the EU’s external action ([2018/2117\(INI\)](#), para. 1 (b)); the [Rome Ministerial Communiqué](#) of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and its [annexe](#) about academic freedom (2020); and the [Bonn Declaration](#) on Freedom of Scientific Research

adopted at the Ministerial Conference on the European Research Area (2020). The safeguarding of academic freedom has been put at the core of EU higher education policies and made part of EU efforts to promote and protect democratic values (eg, see Council Conclusions on the European Universities Initiative – Bridging higher education, research, innovation and society: Paving the way for a new dimension in European higher education, [CO 8658/21 \(2021\)](#); European Parliament resolution of 8 July 2021 on a New ERA for research and innovation (2021/2524(RSP)), [P9 TA\(2021\)0353 \(2021\)](#); Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A European Strategy for Universities, [COM\(2022\) 16 final \(2022\)](#)). The EP [STOA Forum for Academic Freedom](#) launched in 2022 has served as a platform since then for open [dialogue and collaboration](#) among policymakers, experts, and academia to address related challenges, with the STOA Academic Freedom Monitor editions of [2023](#) and [2024](#) reporting on how academic freedom in the EU is protected legally and in practice. Moreover, an [EP report](#) on the state of play of academic freedom in the EU member states in 2023 provided an overview of *de facto* trends and developments and presented a set of policy options for the EP STOA Panel.

- ➔ In 2010, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights of the African Union (AU) issued its **Principles and Guidelines on the Implementation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights** ([Nairobi Reporting Guidelines](#)), whose Guideline 71(j) defined as one obligation under Article 17 that state parties “ensure academic freedom and institutional autonomy in all institutions of higher learning”, referring to Article 2(g) of the 1997 South African Development Community, Protocol on Education and Training, and the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel. Guideline 71(l) also affirmed states’ obligation to ensure that higher education institutions contributed to “economic, social, cultural and human development” and “the promotion and protection of freedom and dignity”. The AU commitment to “academic freedom, autonomy and accountability” as well as its link to development was reaffirmed in Articles 2 (1)(a), 3(b) and 4 of the [Statute of the Pan African University](#) adopted by the AU Assembly in 2013 and revised in 2016.

Notably, **initiatives from non-governmental higher education institutions** have contributed to the reinforcement of academic freedom beyond the state level since the eighties. In particular:

- ➔ The 1988 [Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education](#), was drafted by more than 50 professional organisations after a training seminar organised by the World University Service in 1984. The goal was to launch a process of codifying academic freedom at the international level. It *inter alia* sets a democratic purpose for higher education institutions in pursuing the fulfilment of human rights and addressing themselves to the “contemporary problems facing society” (paras 14, 15).
- ➔ The 1990 [Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility](#), which promotes the protection of the right of all African intellectuals to “pursue intellectual activity”, “enjoy the freedom of movement” and “express [their] opinions freely in the media” (arts. 4, 6 and 9), was adopted by a collective of scholars associated with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), a pan-African non-governmental research organization founded in 1973. Its subsequent 2007 [Juba Declaration on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy](#) states that “all academicians have the right to fulfil their teaching, research and dissemination of information without fear, interference or repression from government or any other public authority” (para 1). It demands that governments avoid interfering with “the autonomy of Higher Education Institutions” (para 5). It also states that “members of academic community should inculcate the spirit of tolerance and enhancement of democratic debate and discussion” (para 11) and refers to the role of

both institutions and academics in addressing societal problems (paras 9, 12). The [international conference](#) on academic freedom in Africa, held in 2025 at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, organised by the Senegal-based Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), culminated in the review and adoption of the [Dar es Salaam Annex \(2025\)](#) to the Kampala Declaration.

- In the Arab world, the 2004 **Amman Declaration on Academic Freedoms and the Independence of Higher Education and Scientific Research** came out of the conference on academic freedoms in Arab universities organised by the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) in Jordan; subsequent scientific conferences on the topic have been organised by ACHRS.

However, **threats to academic freedom at all levels of education** have increasingly arisen from diverse situations of armed conflicts, authoritarianism, populist regimes, repressive governments, heightened polarisation based on religion, race, political divides, or democratic backsliding globally. Over the past two decades academic freedom has been deteriorating and remains under attack, with worrying trends across all continents of the world. Data from SAR's Academic Freedom [Monitoring Project](#) and the 2024 [Free to Think](#) reporting series, as well as the [Academic Freedom Index](#) (AFI), document them and highlight the need for responses at the national, regional and global levels. Notably, providing an overview of 179 countries, in 2025 AFI [found](#) "a statistically significant and substantially meaningful decline in academic freedom" in 34 countries and territories, with only eight countries showing an increase; a potential driver of such a decline has been identified in the rise of anti-pluralist parties, as illustrated by three cases about Argentina, Poland and the United States. Pattern of violations are broad, including the erosion of academic autonomy of universities, attacks on student organisations, the judicialization and political persecution of academics and students, government interferences, gender-based violence, online harassment, the lack of protective measures and adequate institutional response. The importance of an intersectional lens in both understanding and overcoming threats and attacks has been also highlighted in this regard.

The AFI records the actual realization of academic freedom based on expert assessments which build on **five key indicators**: the freedom to research and teach; the freedom of academic exchange and dissemination; the institutional autonomy of universities; campus integrity; and the freedom of academic and cultural expression. In 2021 the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) and SAR published [policy recommendations](#) for how to use the AFI data for promoting academic freedom by higher education policymakers, university leaders, and research funders.

Notably, innovative approaches in the form of **regional coalitions for academic freedom** have emerged. The Scholars at Risk Network (SAR) has made efforts to foster the launch and development of independent regional coalitions as a means of supporting regionally tailored initiatives to protect academic freedom while strengthening cross-regional collaboration. In particular, the Coalition for Academic Freedom in the Americas ([CAFA](#)) was launched in 2021, followed by the Africa Coalition for Academic Freedom ([ACAF](#)) and the Southeast Asia Coalition for Academic Freedom ([SEACAF](#)) in 2024. Each of these have led to a growing membership of academic freedom supporters, advancing advocacy, research, the monitoring of related violations, and contributing to the implementation of relevant normative frameworks.

In June 2025, leading voices from these three coalitions explored **regional approaches to protecting academic freedom** at a [side event](#) during the 59th session of the UN Human Rights Council, in light of its previous resolutions on education as well as the interactive dialogue convened by UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education. The directors of these three coalitions provided examples of how global challenges manifest locally and how regional strategies can help guarantee that **education remains "a space for freedom"**, not for fear:

- [SEACAF](#) regional director Bencharat Sae Chua described how, in the absence of a regional human rights mechanism in Asia, academic freedom is constrained by ideological control, religious actors, national security narratives, and commercialization. She called for a two-pronged strategy of both grassroots movement-building and institutional reform to counter these forces.
- [CAFA](#) regional director Camilla Croso underlined the disconnect between existing legal protections and reality on the ground in the Americas. Notwithstanding the regional legislative frameworks in force, attacks are increasing. Disinformation, militarization, and attacks on gender and environmental research are growing. She stressed the need for collective action, institutional protocols, and strategic advocacy.
- [ACAF](#) regional director Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua highlighted threats from within and beyond the African continent, including armed groups, international financial pressures, and exploitative research models from the Global North. ACAF is developing Africa-specific principles, hosting a continental conference, and building regional mechanisms to ensure protections are implemented and enforced.

The **growing impact of surveillance and digital repression** was another issue addressed in the same event in considering the relation between technology, conflict, and the weaponization of education. Participants warned that social media can not only mobilise and empower but also introduce new vulnerabilities, especially for dissenting voices; they also highlighted that education is neglected and deliberately targeted in conflict zones such as Kashmir and Palestine, emphasising the urgent need for international solidarity and concrete support for displaced and at-risk students, with safe pathways to education, against censorship and violence silencing dissent.

In focusing on ways to express solidarity between students, teachers and institutions through action, the event moderator Jesse Levine stressed that defending **academic freedom is fundamentally grassroots work**. Legal frameworks matter, but they only work when societies embrace and defend the values of inquiry, dissent, and knowledge.

Overall, a [key message](#) of the event was that “academic freedom is under threat, and defending it is essential to the future of democracy, scientific advancement, and social justice”. Speakers put emphasis on regional frameworks “for **localizing protection commitments and adapting them** to regional experiences, histories, and human rights mechanisms” as well as for demonstrating that “academic freedom is not an imported or relative value but a universal one, indigenous to each and every global region”. Nonetheless, they also stressed that the development and implementation of regional frameworks can benefit from the **support of the global community**, including international actors, states, higher education institutions, and individuals in each region. Importantly, they highlighted that the cited [Principles](#) are “useful guidance” as it is crucial that regional approaches adopt a **comprehensive approach to academic freedom**, to apply and engage with the diversity of knowledge happening outside and inside the academic community and at all levels of education; these principles can be “contextualised and applied regionally”.

2025 has seen **further regional initiatives to protect academic freedom** also in Europe. For example, in February the European University Association (EUA) published key [principles and guidelines](#) on how universities can protect and promote academic freedom, complementing EUA’s existing work and contributions to related expert and policy discussions over the years. In June a coalition of European consortia and organisations launched a [collective call](#) urging Europe to champion academic freedom and to protect researchers at risk, with a [statement](#) urging “the European Commission and EU Member States to prioritise the continuation and extension of ... actions, including comprehensive support for international researchers and students facing danger and displacement, in line with the 2022 Marseille Declaration on international cooperation in research and innovation”. They also refer to the 2022 [Inspireurope Recommendations](#). Other significant statements came from university rectors, such as in the case of [Dutch Universities](#). Moreover, in June eight partners of CIVICA – a European alliance of ten leading universities in the social sciences – decided on a [joint statement](#) to

reaffirm their commitment to academic freedom and institutional autonomy and the vital role of science in democratic societies, against political or financial interference in science and education.

It has therefore become more and more worth understanding further different scenarios and strategies used to curtail academic freedom in different parts of the world depending on the context (eg, Africa, Asia Pacific, Caucasus, Central Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, and South East Europe) as well as calling for stronger acknowledgment of a rights-based dimension of academic freedom at international, regional, national, and institutional levels, to ensure effective protection and implementation.

Thus, the **next edition of the Global Campus Policy Observatory** will revolve around ‘Protecting, promoting and enjoying academic freedom: trends, challenges and impacts from a human rights-based approach’. The selected policy analysts would be free to choose areas and issues relevant in their regions around the above theme, working in close cooperation with the related coordinator.