

<i>Deepening the ERA through protecting academic freedom in Europe – Action 6</i>	
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<b>1. Description</b>	<p><i>What does the action consist of? Explanation of the problems being addressed, the means used, the objectives to be achieved. Are certain actions already ongoing? Interplay with other actions or policies (EU or national).</i></p> <p>Action 6 consists of two main strands:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Facilitate the development of a policy approach to safeguard academic freedom in Europe</li> <li>ii. Supporting HEIs, RPOs and RTOs in recognising and tackling R&amp;I foreign interference.</li> </ol> <p><u>Facilitate the development of a policy approach to safeguard academic freedom in Europe</u></p> <p>Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research are safeguarded by art. 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and defined, respectively, in the annex to the November 2020 EHEA Rome Ministerial Communiqué and in the Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research adopted in October 2020.</p> <p>The importance of these concepts have been widely recognised in important European documents such as the Pact for R&amp;I in Europe and the new European strategy for universities.</p> <p>However, in order to better protect academic freedom in Europe, there is a need to develop policies and tools to support HEIs, RPOs, RTOs and individuals.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Updated and clear data on the status of, and on threats to, academic freedom in Europe is crucial. This is why the main tool that needs to be developed is a <i>European monitoring system on academic freedom</i>. The preconditions for the development of the monitoring system is the <i>conceptualisation</i> of the issues and an analysis of what is available and ongoing (e.g. Bologna Follow Up Group, Academic Freedom Index, ongoing work of European Parliament). The monitoring approach should have a particular focus on freedom of scientific research and also contain elements on foreign interference in R&amp;I.</li> <li>b) Once the monitoring system is finalised, the implementation of a <i>pilot monitoring exercise</i> could be launched. Based on the results of the monitoring exercise, a <i>monitoring report</i> would be produced.</li> <li>c) The findings of the monitoring report would contribute to evidence-based policymaking and could eventually lead to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- definition of a <i>policy approach</i> to address the issues identified;</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- organisation of Mutual Learning Exercises (MLE) on Academic Freedom in Europe.</li></ul> <p><u>Supporting HEIs, RPOs and RTOs in recognising and tackling R&amp;I foreign interference</u></p> <p>In reference to R&amp;I foreign interference, it is important to acknowledge that the EU's global approach in R&amp;I is based on a positive agenda of partnership coupled with the constructive management of differences.</p> <p>In recent decades, R&amp;I activities have increasingly expanded beyond national borders to become fully internationalised and faced new challenges to their free and rights-based operation.</p> <p>Therefore, a new set of tools need to be developed to better protect European fundamental values and protect key research findings and intellectual assets.</p> <p>In January, the Commission published a <i>Staff Working Document (SWD) on tackling R&amp;I foreign interference</i> which defines the threats and a possible approach to address issues around four focus areas: values, governance, partnerships and cyber-security.</p> <p>In order to increase awareness and understanding around this topic some actions are needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) <i>MLEs on “tackling R&amp;I foreign interference”</i> could focus on exchanges of national best practices at operational level to identify, prevent and recover from foreign interference. They would identify good practice, lessons learnt and success factors based on the available evidence and collective experience.</li><li>b) Subsequently, <i>national workshops</i> could be organised in order to disseminate the results and further promoting the debate on the issue at national level.</li><li>c) To facilitate the preparedness of R&amp;I institutions to tackle foreign interference, the Commission can provide expert support, on a voluntary basis, to R&amp;I institutions in order for them to prepare action plans embedded in their own governance.</li><li>d) Use Open-source intelligence (OSINT), which is the collection and analysis of data from open sources to produce actionable intelligence, to develop a dashboard that will provide research performing organisations, including universities, and researchers with readily accessible third country information on specific institutions, individuals, technologies, affiliations, research projects, universities.</li></ul> <p>In parallel, the setting up of a one-stop shop <i>European digital platform on academic freedom and foreign interference in R&amp;I</i> could be envisaged. This platform would increase awareness on these topics, contain information on European, national and third parties (RPOs, HEIs and RTOs) initiatives, and provide a list of national contact points.</p>
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	<p>Massive open online courses (MOOC) on academic freedom and R&amp;I foreign interference could be organised by interested institutions and organisations.</p> <p>All the above-mentioned efforts would have as common broader objective to create a culture of academic freedom at all levels and a collective understanding of foreign interference in R&amp;I.</p>
<p><b>2. Actors</b></p>	<p><i>Who should implement the action? Member States, Commission, Associated Countries, other 3<sup>rd</sup> countries, stakeholders, etc.</i></p> <p><i>Please note whether half of Member States are already expected to be involved (para. 10 of Council conclusions)</i></p> <p>Action 6 should be implemented by strongly engaging with all MS and, as far as possible, with AC. Main actors would also be the stakeholders of the ERA including RPOs, HEIs, RTOs (at European and national level) and individual researchers and academics.</p> <p>Third countries may also be involved in line with the guiding principle on Global approach to Research and Innovation<sup>1</sup> ‘as open as possible, as closed as necessary’.</p> <p>Regarding the activities mentioned above:</p> <p><u>Facilitate the development of a policy approach to safeguard academic freedom in Europe</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Design of a European monitoring system on academic freedom.</u> This could be done by engaging with <i>independent experts</i> who should be tasked with the conceptualisation of the issues (e.g. definitions of key concepts, identification of different dimensions and elements), the analysis of what is already available (complementarity and coherence of European and national initiatives and activities) and the definition of the monitoring system. The work of the expert group could be validated, step-by-step, by a “<i>task force</i>” composed by <i>experts from the MS/AC, the Commission and relevant stakeholders</i>. The Commission would ensure the necessary coordination between the expert group and the task force.</li> <li>• <u>Implementation of the monitoring exercise.</u> <i>HEIs, RPOs and RTOs</i> would be the main actors for the implementation of the pilot monitoring exercise, which should be conducted internally on a voluntary basis. Ways for analysing the overall data gathered will be explored. For instance, the analysis could be conducted by <i>external contractors</i> or by the <i>European Fundamental Rights Agency</i>.</li> <li>• <u>Definition of a policy approach.</u> Based on the results of the monitoring exercise the “<i>task force</i>” could then discuss an evidence-based policy approach to tackle the issues identified.</li> </ul>

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Mutual learning exercises on academic freedom in Europe.</u> The <i>Commission</i>, with the help of participating <i>Member States and Associated Countries</i>, could organise these exercises. <i>Member States and Associated Countries</i> would be asked to initiate discussions at national level and disseminate information about the MLEs and relevant documents ahead of the MLEs.</li> </ul> <p><u>Supporting HEIs, RPOs and RTOs in recognising and tackling R&amp;I foreign interference</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Mutual learning exercises on tackling foreign interference in R&amp;I.</u> The <i>Commission</i>, with the help of participating <i>Member States and Associated Countries</i>, could organise these exercises. <i>Member States and Associated Countries</i> would be asked to initiate discussions at national level and disseminate information about the MLEs and relevant documents (e.g. EC Staff Working Documents on “tackling foreign interference in R&amp;I) ahead of the MLEs.</li> <li>• <u>Organisation of national workshops on tackling foreign interference in R&amp;I.</u> Interested <i>Member States and Associated Countries</i> would be asked to organise these workshops in their countries. The <i>Commission</i> will participate.</li> <li>• <u>Provide expert advice to interested R&amp;I institutions.</u> <i>Member States will be asked to promote this support initiative among R&amp;I institutions.</i></li> <li>• <u>Open-source intelligence (OSINT) dashboard.</u> The <i>Commission</i> will coordinate the development of the dashboard but <i>Member States</i> will be asked to identify the parameters of common interest and to name national contact points that should have access to the dashboard.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Set up of a one-stop shop European digital platform on academic freedom and foreign interference in R&amp;I.</u> The <i>Commission</i> has been exploring different options. An optimal solution would be to implement the academic freedom and foreign interference in R&amp;I dimensions into an existing platform. Other options could be provided by the <i>Fundamental Rights Agency</i> or by a <i>consortium funded by an EU grant</i>. While operational details will need to be defined, the effectiveness and the efficiency of the platform would be directly linked to the efforts of <i>HEIs, RPOs, RTOs, MSs and EU institutions</i> that will be required to advertise and populate it with information.</li> <li>• <u>Massive Open Online Courses.</u> Interested <i>institutions and organisations</i> will be invited to organise MOOC with the objective to foster a culture of academic freedom at all levels and a collective understanding of foreign interference in R&amp;I.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Timing and milestones</b></p>	<p><i>As far as a calendar can be established already at this stage.</i></p>

	<p><u>Facilitate the development of a policy approach to safeguard academic freedom in Europe</u></p> <p>(Q2 2022) Setting up of a group of independent experts and of the task force to design the European monitoring system on academic freedom</p> <p>(Q3 2022) 1<sup>st</sup> consultation with the task force on the progress made by the independent experts</p> <p>(Q4 2022) 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation with the task force</p> <p>(Q2 2023) Finalisation of the monitoring system</p> <p>(Q2 2023) 3<sup>rd</sup> consultation with the task force on the monitoring system</p> <p>(Q3 2023) Launch of the pilot monitoring phase</p> <p>(Q4 2023) Analysis and report from the pilot monitoring phase</p> <p>(Q1 2024) Task force to assess the pilot phase and start discussing a possible policy approach based on the findings of the first monitoring</p> <p>(Q1-Q4 2024) MLEs on academic freedom in Europe</p> <p><u>Supporting HEIs, RPOs and RTOs in recognising and tackling R&amp;I foreign interference</u></p> <p>(Q1 2022) Publication of SWD “Tackling R&amp;I foreign interference”</p> <p>(Q2 2022 – Q4 2023) MLEs on tackling R&amp;I foreign interference</p> <p>(from Q3 2022) Providing of expert advice to interested R&amp;I institutions on how to identify and tackle foreign interference</p> <p>(from Q1 2023) development OSINT dashboard</p> <p>(from Q1 2024) National workshops on tackling foreign interference in R&amp;I</p> <p><u>European digital platform on academic freedom and foreign interference in R&amp;I</u></p> <p>(?? ????) Depending on the solution that will be found</p> <p><u>Massive Online Open Courses on academic freedom and R&amp;I foreign interference</u></p> <p>(from Q1 2024) Design and organisation of MOOC</p>
<p><b>4. Funding</b></p>	<p><i>Identification of different sources of funding (EU, national, private, etc.) and if possible projected amounts.</i></p> <p><i>EU funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishment of the independent expert group</li> <li>- Analysis of the data and preparation of the monitoring report</li> <li>- Organisation of MLEs on R&amp;I foreign interference</li> </ul>

	<p><i>National funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organisation of national workshops on R&amp;I foreign interference</li> </ul> <p>According to how the following activity will be implemented funding would be needed for the setting up of the digital platform.</p>
<p><b>5. Expected impact</b></p>	<p><i>It is important to attempt to identify the expected impacts of the action, even if at an early stage there may be many unknowns.</i></p> <p>The general expected impact is to raise awareness and create a positive culture on the issues of academic freedom and foreign interference in R&amp;I.</p> <p>With the activities proposed, the aim is to increase research-based knowledge about the state of play of academic freedom and foreign interference in R&amp;I in Europe. This would support an evidence-based policy making around these topics and would provide the EU with updated information and new tools to reinforce academic freedom and prevent foreign interference.</p> <p>Furthermore, this action would project EU's position as a beacon for academic freedom with clear mechanisms to demonstrate its scope. It would contribute significantly to the EU's capacity to attracting leading minds (researchers and students) globally.</p>
<p><b>6. Monitoring</b></p>	<p><i>Qualitative and quantitative elements that allow progress in the implementation to be monitored. Once the policy platform is operational, Member States and Commission will be able to use it for this purpose.</i></p> <p>Qualitative elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Progress of the independent experts and the task force on the conceptualisation of the issues, the analysis of what is already available and the definition of the monitoring system on academic freedom.</li> </ul> <p>Quantitative elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation of the monitoring system on academic freedom</li> <li>- Organisation of the MLEs on foreign interference in R&amp;I</li> <li>- Setting up of the digital platform on academic freedom and foreign interference in R&amp;I</li> <li>- Number of R&amp;I institutions receiving expert advice to develop and implement action plans to identify and prevent foreign interference</li> <li>- Number of national contact points on foreign interference or knowledge security</li> </ul>

<b>7. Communication</b>	<p><i>What communication actions could be useful to promote the action, and who should do so (Commission, national public authorities, stakeholders, etc.)?</i></p> <p>It will be important to communicate on the preparation of the monitoring system on academic freedom: national public authorities may want to communicate at national level about the progress that are being made.</p> <p>It will also be important to communicate about the implementation of the monitoring system: this can be done both at Commission and national level.</p> <p>Finally, the Commission and national public authorities should communicate on the organisation of the MLEs and on the setting up of the digital platform.</p>
<b>8. Additional information</b>	