Basic information

2018/2117(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Defence of academic freedom in the EU's external action. Recommendation to the Vice President/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy **Subject** 6.10.08 Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	KHAN Wajid (S&D)	03/05/2018
	Shadow rapporteur BOCSKOR Andrea (PPE) TANNOCK Timothy Charles Ayrton (ECR) KYUCHYUK Ilhan (ALDE) BUCHNER Klaus (Verts/ALE) CASTALDO Fabio Massimo (EFDD)	

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
European External Action Service	MOGHERINI Federica

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
14/06/2018	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
21/11/2018	Vote in committee		
27/11/2018	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0403/2018	Summary
28/11/2018	Debate in Parliament		
29/11/2018	Decision by Parliament	T8-0483/2018	Summary
29/11/2018	Results of vote in Parliament		
29/11/2018	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2018/2117(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 121
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/8/13398

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE627.708	10/09/2018	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE629.434	16/10/2018	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0403/2018	27/11/2018	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0483/2018	29/11/2018	Summary

Defence of academic freedom in the EU's external action. Recommendation to the Vice President/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

2018/2117(INI) - 27/11/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Wajid KHAN (S&D, UK) on a European Parliament recommendation 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.

According to UNESCO, **academic freedom is defined as the right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine**, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies.

The academic community and educational institutions are **increasingly vulnerable** to interference, pressure or repression from states, the business sector or other non-state actors.

However, autonomy is a necessary precondition for education institutions to fulfil their proper functions. Academic freedom requires constant and vigilant protection from undue pressure from the State or commercial interests.

In view of this, the report recommends that the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy:

- **explicitly recognise the importance of academic freedom** in public statements, policies and actions relating to the EU's external action, including recognition of the principles that ideas are not crimes and that critical discourse is not disloyalty, but rather essential parts of a democratic society and its development, that the autonomy of education institutions should be protected at all times;
- **recognise that claims to academic freedom** fall under existing **human rights law**, derived from the right to education and the rights to freedom of expression and of opinion;
- demonstrate support for the institutions, staff and students that are at risk or have been the victims of coercion or violent attacks and publicly condemn such attacks, by raising the issue at all levels;
- support **equal access to the academic community**, regardless of ethnicity, caste, disability, nationality, religious belief, gender identity, sexual orientation or other status;

- highlight that attacks on academic freedom can also take the form of cyberattacks;
- raise academic freedom at different levels of **political dialogue**, including in human rights dialogues and consultations with partner countries;
- encourage all states to do as most EU Member States have already done and endorse and implement the **Safe Schools Declaration** and its accompanying Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict;
- work with the UN, the Council of Europe, international agencies, civil society and higher education communities to create **mechanisms for monitoring and reporting** attacks, threats and undue restrictions on higher education;
- engage and encourage **regular dialogue** with university communities and organisations whose mission it is to protect higher education communities and promote academic freedom, in order to develop the best policy frameworks, initiatives and advocacy strategies for academic freedom;
- contribute to the development of capacities for prompt, thorough and transparent investigations of violations of academic freedom :
- step up **diplomatic efforts** with partner countries through bilateral and multilateral engagement in relation to incidents of concern involving threats or attacks on academic freedom;
- revisit **existing support and protection mechanisms** for human rights defenders to develop the capacity to identify and provide assistance, including emergency protection and support;
- ensure that the **EU's macro-financial assistance programmes** for third countries and the policies of European financial institutions do not undermine academic freedom by supporting policies that reduce the allocation of national income to the education sector;
- create **new initiatives** within existing and future programmes – possibly as synergies developed and funded by the Union through its non-education and research budgets, for new EU-funded programme actions to support the placement of at-risk academics, student researchers and full degree students with international protection status in European higher education and research institutions;
- support ongoing normative efforts at regional and international level, including through the adoption of an **international declaration** on academic freedom and the autonomy of higher education institutions;
- encourages the EU and its Member States to take initiative on academic freedom at the UN Human Rights Council.

Defence of academic freedom in the EU's external action. Recommendation to the Vice President/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

2018/2117(INI) - 29/11/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by421 votes to 97, with 111 abstentions, a resolution on a European Parliament recommendation 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.

In the light of the recommendation concerning the status of higher education teaching personnel adopted in 1997 by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions, Parliament considered that democracy cannot exist without academic freedom, the definition of which should be based on fundamental democratic values, the possibility of critical and independent thinking, institutional autonomy and social responsibility; that democracy cannot exist without academic freedom.

The academic community and educational institutions are increasingly vulnerable to interference, pressure or repression from states, the business sector or other non-state actors.

However, **autonomy is a necessary precondition** for education institutions to fulfil their proper functions. Academic freedom requires constant and vigilant protection from undue pressure from the State or commercial interests.

Accordingly, Parliament made the following recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy:

- **explicitly recognise the importance of academic freedom** in **public statements** and policies relating to the EU's external action, including recognition of the principles that ideas are not crimes and that critical discourse is not disloyalty, but rather essential parts of a democratic society;
- recall that academic freedom extends to the freedom of academics to disseminate information and conduct research and **distribute knowledge without restriction**, the freedom to express their views and opinions -– even if controversial or unpopular – in the areas of their research and professional expertise,
- **publicly highlight the problems of attacks** on academic freedom, including their negative consequences and recall the responsibility of states to guarantee academic freedom;
- ensure that EU institutions and Member States' representatives visiting third countries are briefed on the situation of academic freedom;
- support equal access to the academic community, regardless of ethnicity, caste, disability, nationality, religious belief, sexual orientation or other status;
- raise academic freedom at **different levels of political dialogue**, including in human rights dialogues and consultations with partner countries, and step up **diplomatic efforts** with partner countries through bilateral and multilateral engagement in relation to incidents of concern ;
- encourage all states to do as most EU Member States have already done and endorse and implement the **Safe Schools Declaration** and its accompanying Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict;
- work with the UN, the Council of Europe, international agencies, civil society and higher education communities to create **mechanisms for monitoring and reporting attacks,** threats and undue restrictions on higher education and individual scholars;

- encourage **regular dialogue with university communities**, in order to develop the best policy frameworks, initiatives and advocacy strategies for academic freedom;
- foster work on research and advocacy aimed at reforming legislation imposing undue restrictions on academic freedom, and promote institutional autonomy;
- revisit existing protection mechanisms for human rights defenders to provide assistance, including through physical protection, legal and visa support, medical support, trial and prison monitoring, advocacy and lobbying, and long-term support during exile;
- promote the existing projects financed by the EU, such as the '**Academic Refuge**', which strive to raise greater awareness of the importance of academic freedom in the higher education sector;
- ensure that the **EU's macro-financial assistance programmes** for third countries and the policies of European financial institutions do not undermine academic freedom by supporting policies that reduce the allocation of national income to the education sector;
- create **new initiatives within existing and future programmes** -such as the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA III), Horizon 2020, Erasmus+ and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, for new EU-funded programme actions to support the placement of at-risk academics.