

EUPeace Alliance Policy Statement on European Values and Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is under pressure across Europe and beyond. In times of rising populism, growing societal polarisation, and challenges to democratic institutions, academic freedom stands as one of the cornerstones of European values. Deeply embedded in the social fabric of European higher education institutions, it is both a precondition for scientific progress and a guarantee of democratic resilience. The EUPeace Alliance reaffirms its unwavering commitment to academic freedom as enshrined in Article 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Rome Ministerial Communiqué (2020) of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The European Union recognises academic freedom not only as a fundamental right but also as a strategic resource for safeguarding institutional autonomy, fostering innovation, and maintaining open and secure international collaboration. Academic freedom is crucial for Europe's preparedness and competitiveness for several interrelated reasons. It underpins the capacity of universities to generate knowledge, foster innovation, and cultivate the democratic and critical skills needed to respond to current and future challenges – and to build a prosperous and resilient Europe.

In its European Strategy for Universities the European Commission places academic freedom at the heart of all higher education policies at EU level and within the Bologna Process. It affirms the need to protect institutional autonomy and academic integrity across the EHEA.

In the European Council's recommendation on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education EU education ministers adopted conclusions emphasising academic freedom and freedom of scientific research as foundations for Europe's strategic autonomy and competitiveness.

University Alliances play a vital role in protecting, cultivating, and promoting European values: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are not abstract ideals; they are enacted and made durable through teaching, research, public engagement, and academic cooperation.

As an Alliance of nine universities across seven countries, EUPeace exemplifies the potential of higher education institutions to bridge divides and foster mutual understanding. Inspired by the rebuilt bridge of Mostar – the symbol in our logo – we understand dialogue, cooperation, and critical thinking as key tools for building cohesive, democratic, and inclusive societies.

EUPeace reaffirms that academic freedom and institutional autonomy are non-negotiable principles. They ensure that knowledge is created, disseminated, and debated free from political interference or



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ideological constraint. No scientific truth can be imposed without debate, evidence, and peer scrutiny. To curtail academic freedom is to undermine the democratic fabric of Europe itself.

EUPeace is committed to this mission through transformative initiatives such as the European Track, a flagship component of our educational programme. The European Track provides students at Bachelor's and Master's level with a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and practice-oriented education. It addresses European and global challenges through a targeted development of intercultural and linguistic competencies, mobility and collaboration opportunities across the EUPeace Alliance, recognised through certification, and career-relevant learning experiences tailored to today's and tomorrow's societal needs.

This initiative embodies the vision of European universities as spaces of transnational solidarity and co-creation. It enables students to learn with and from each other across borders, building a shared understanding of Europe's diversity and its common values. It simply puts academic freedom and European values in practice.

At a time when universities are being called upon to defend democracy, EUPeace embraces its public mission: to promote civic engagement, intellectual openness, and social responsibility. We believe that inclusive and critical education is the most powerful tool against authoritarianism and exclusion. Our Alliance fosters environments where differing perspectives can be articulated, debated, and understood – not silenced.

About EUPeace

EUPeace is the European University for Peace, Justice, and Inclusive Societies.

Our mission is to provide tomorrow's citizens with the skills, knowledge, and experience to cultivate Peace, Justice, and Inclusive Societies. We explicitly address all sciences and fields, from the humanities and social sciences to the natural and life sciences as well as engineering, and are inspired by the rebuilt bridge of Mostar – the symbol in our logo – as a testament to how dialogue can overcome conflict.

Philipps-Universität Marburg		Marburg University
Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen		Justus Liebig University Giessen
Université de Limoges		University of Limoges
Università della Calabria		University of Calabria
Universidad Pontificia Comillas		Comillas Pontifical University
Západočeská univerzita v Plzni		University of West Bohemia in Pilsen
Sveučilište u Mostaru		University of Mostar
Çukurova Üniversitesi		Çukurova University
Univerzitet u Sarajevu		University of Sarajevo

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