

NORDIC UNIVERSITY DAYS 2024

EVENT REPORT



NORDIC
UNIVERSITY DAYS
23-24 September
2024



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The Nordic University Days 2024 were organised by The Nordic University Association chair, Universities Norway (UHR) in collaboration with following Brussels offices



ABOUT NORDIC UNIVERSITY DAYS 2024

The Nordic University Days 2024 were held under the presidency of Norway of the Nordic University Association. Nordic University Days (henceforth NUD) 2022 took place on 23–24 September in Brussels, following the successful first two events in 2019 and 2022. The general purpose of NUD 2024 was to:

- **Informal networking:** Between the Rectors of the Nordic universities and with relevant representatives from the EU institutions.
- **Positioning/influencing:** Raise awareness of Nordic universities' positions regarding EU research, innovation and higher education policy agendas assisted by the set of agreed key messages. Position Nordic universities in the context of the European Research Area and the development of the European Education Area.
- **Showcase:** Demonstrate Nordic universities' strongholds in relation to policy agendas. Build knowledge about EU research and education policy priorities, funding programmes and networks.
- **Knowledge & internal capacity:** Build knowledge among university leaders of EU research and education policy priorities, funding programmes and networks. Develop networks and relations among university leaders

Moreover, the **theme** for NUD 2024 was:

- **Possibilities** for the next programming period
- **Inform** and **develop knowledge** among Nordic Rectors about EU policy and programmes for research, education and innovation.
- **Raise awareness** about Nordic universities' interests in future EU policies and programmes for research, education and innovation policies.
- **Provide a platform** for networking with EU- policy and decision-makers

Further, NUD 2024 formed a platform for dialogue between the rectors and European decision-makers. The programme included interactive seminars with representatives from DG Research and Innovation; DG Education, Youth, Sports and Culture; European Research Council; and Members of the European Parliament as well as an evening reception programmed by the Norwegian presidency which featured military representatives to NATO as well as Norway's ambassador to the EU Jørn Gloslie.

The programme organisers of this year's Nordic University Days were Aarhus University Brussels Office, Gothenburg European Office, Greater Copenhagen EU Office, University Alliance Stockholm Trio, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) Brussels Office, Universities in South Sweden Brussels Office, University of Bergen (UiB) Brussels Office, University of Alto, Universities of Turku Brussels Office, and the Norwegian Rectors' Conference.

Disclaimer: This report contains short summaries of each of the meetings, as well as the key messages highlighted during each session, as understood by the programme organisers. The speakers are not to be held accountable for the content based on the programme organisers' perception of the discussion. Photos from the event can be downloaded via the respective hyperlink below, photo credit to be given to Filip Pecevski.

[Nordic University Days-Selection 24.09.23- Jpeg](#)

[Nordic University Days-Selection 24.09.24- Jpeg](#)

Key messages for the Nordic University Days 2024

These were the Key Messages that were identified prior to Nordic University Days 2024 (see the Key Messages in full detail in [Appendix 1](#))

1. **An excellence-driven European framework programme for research and innovation: Towards FP10**
2. **Academic freedom and institutional autonomy; a priority**
3. **Science for policy**
4. **Joint implementation of the European Research Area and European Education Area**
5. **Universities in a new geopolitical and global landscape**

MONDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2024

Brief summary of the day

The **first session** of the day was titled [An excellence-driven European framework programme for research and innovation: Towards FP10](#) and was introduced by Sunniva Whittaker (Rector, University of Agder) and Jón Atli Benediktsson (Rector, University of Iceland) and focused on the upcoming Framework Programme for research and innovation (FP10). The speakers of the session were Joachim Wiemann (Deputy Head of Unit, Common European Strategic Planning Unit, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission), and Eystein Jansen (Vice-President, European Research Council). Several key messages were presented during the presentations including the need for a strong focus on excellence in FP10 and the need for simplification for both applicants and the Commission. During this session recent policy papers were referenced explicitly including [Much More than a Market](#) (Letta), [Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines](#) for the next European Commission and [The Future of European Competitiveness](#) (Draghi). References to the unreleased report conducted by the expert group on the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe were also discussed. [This report has since been published](#) after the NUD took place.

The afternoon continued with the **second session** [Joint Implementation of the European Research Area and the European Education Area](#) which was moderated by Svein Stølen (Rector of the University of Oslo) and Keijo Hämäläinen (Rector, University of Tampere). The speakers of the session were Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen (Director-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission) and Heiko Prange-Gstöhl, (Senior Policy Officer, Unit for ERA and Spreading Excellence and Research Careers, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission). This session focused on both the [European Research Area](#) and the [European Education Area](#) as well as the upcoming [ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027](#) and addressed several key challenges such as skills shortages and the importance of [European University Alliances](#) to combat this. Also, future policy initiatives such as the [European Degree](#) were explored. Moreover, the [5th freedom to enhance research, innovation education as introduced by Letta](#) was referenced during this session.

The **third session**, [Academic freedom and institutional autonomy; a priority](#), was moderated by Hans Adolfsson (Rector, Umeå University) and Kristin Eysteinsdóttir (Rector, Iceland University of Arts). The speakers of the session were Signe Ratso, (Deputy Director-General of Innovation, Prosperity and International Cooperation, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission) and Enora Bennetot Pruvot (Deputy Director Governance, Funding & Public Policy Development, European

Universities Association). During this session, attention was brought to academic freedom and institutional autonomy which are values under increased pressure. Several policy documents were referenced during this session including a [toolkit on foreign interference](#), a document on how to [enhance research security](#) and a [resolution on academic freedom in January](#). Moreover, the slides by Pruvot can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

During the Nordic University Days 2024 **evening reception**, Jørn Gloslie, Ambassador of Norway to Belgium and Deputy Head of Mission Days welcomed attendees to the Norway House. Sunniva Whittaker (Chair of the Nordic University Association) then gave a speech emphasising the need for universities, governments, and international organisations to work together to tackle global security and defence issues. Lastly, Brigadier General Anders Persson, The Swedish Deputy Military representative to NATO and EU, provided insights on NATO's security agenda. The slides can be found in the [Appendix 3](#).

An excellence-driven European framework programme for research and innovation: Towards FP10

The moderators of the session were **Sunniva Whittaker**, Rector of the University of Agder and **Jón Atli Benediktsson**, Rector, University of Iceland. The speakers of the session were **Joachim Wiemann**, Deputy Head of Unit, Common European Strategic Planning Unit, and **Eystein Jansen**, Vice-President, European Research Council.

The objectives of the session were to gain insight into the preparatory work of the upcoming FP10 as well as focus on the excellence nature of the framework programme.

Wiemann's keynote speech focused on the preparatory work of the upcoming framework programme. Some of the key points made during this session were:

- Wiemann began his presentation by emphasising that **the Commission is in the early stages of preparing FP10 and is keen to hear feedback from the research community closely involved in research projects**.
- He highlighted that [Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines](#) for the next European Commission are crucial as they set the tone for the new EU mandate. The Commission speaker expressed his satisfaction with the R&I content in these guidelines, stating it underscores the importance of R&I: **"We need to put R&I at the centre of our economy"**, which the [Draghi report](#) echoes.
- Regarding FP10 preparation, Wiemann mentioned that a key document is the [Ex-post evaluation of Horizon 2020](#), which identifies **simplification** as a major takeaway. The midterm evaluation of Horizon Europe is now complete, and the key messages will be published early next year. Additionally, the [High-Level Group report](#), and the Draghi report will also contribute to FP10.
- The speaker noted that political decisions regarding content are still pending. However, many within and outside the Commission also emphasise the need for simplification, particularly in **internal governance, application processes, and budget lines**. Balancing early-stage research and close-to-market research is also a key focus.
- Overall R&I investment in Europe, as highlighted in the Draghi report, is still below the promised 3%. **More private investment** is therefore needed which points towards a strong link between FP10 and alternative funding sources. The political guidelines advocate for increased investment in R&I, which would **benefit the SSAH community**, the speaker mentioned.
- Changes can still be made under Horizon Europe, with Draghi stressing that there is about 20% urgency, **especially concerning research security**.
- By 1 July 2025, the Commission should present its overall ambition for the MFF. The programmes are typically published either immediately after or a few months later. We will know more about FP10 in the second half of 2025.

Jansen's keynote speech zoomed in on the role of the European Research Council. Some of the key points made during this second presentation in this session were:

- Jansen began by noting that both the [Draghi report](#) and the [mandate from Ursula von der Leyen](#) **highlight the importance of the ERC**. The High-Level Group is expected to support this direction, advocating for excellent research. The Draghi report emphasises the need to upscale research investment, **criticising EU funding as too top-down and bureaucratic**. The ERC has the critical mass for competitiveness but lacks financial resources. Increasing the number of grants for fundamental research projects is a priority, but budget constraints prevent this. To reach its full potential, the **ERC needs a significant increase in the total EU budget**.
- [The High-Level Group](#) shares many of Draghi's concerns, advocating for **more bottom-up breakthrough research** and **a stronger emphasis on MSCA**. The ERC is praised for its independence, which is crucial for scientists' success.
- FP10 should prioritise scientific excellence in all disciplines and **Europe must not be dependent on other countries' technologies**, and Jansen understands the ERC to have a pivotal role in this regard. Forty per cent of ERC projects have patents, and 400 ERC-funded start-ups exist ERC projects are also well-represented in the EIC. The best way to achieve impact is by giving researchers freedom. The challenge is transferring world-leading science into innovation. **In only 2 out of 20 fields of science, Europe leads**; the US or China leads in most fields, especially strategic ones. In emerging fields, the US and China have an even bigger lead.
- The final message was that the independence of the ERC Council is crucial. **ERC autonomy must be protected** as Europe's top frontier research body. Contrary to the Draghi report, the ERC finds its autonomy under pressure. The most important thing is for the ERC to continue producing high-quality research. Universities and rectors can collaborate on a joint knowledge intervention to implement ideas from Draghi. This will help create the necessary momentum, reduce bureaucracy, and secure a strong budget.

During the ensuing Q&A session, the following key points were made:

- Although FP10 is not mentioned in the [Mission Letter for Startups, Research and Innovation](#) it should be seen as a formal reservation and does not mean research and innovation are being overlooked, as there are **explicit commitments to expanding the ERC and EIE**. It is mentioned that the new portfolio provides a **clearer research mandate** for the new commissioner. Moreover, when reading the political guidelines of Ursula von der Leyen, she suggests a few budget changes: **simplifying the structure, moving from a programme-based to a policy-based budget, and reducing the number of programmes**. Ultimately, the new college will decide how to best structure and organise the overall budget and the speaker hopes the Draghi report serves as a wake-up call for the political community, as politicians are responsible for the budget.
- When asked about the **fifth freedom** and the opportunities and challenges that come with implementing that, it was mentioned that the fifth freedom is crucial due to the **mobility of the research domain**. It is important for the cohesion of Europe to have a joint market, especially for **widening countries**, as it allows for the sharing of competencies.
- When asked about the **splitting of research and education** in the new College portfolios: Education and research have not always been combined and were separated in the past as well. There are differences between the two areas in terms of legislative competence and funding programmes. Practically, if one commissioner holds too much responsibility, it limits their public appearances and resources. Splitting them has advantages, and there is no problem with this approach. The Commission always looks for ways to improve the interface between Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe and does not see a difference whether it is managed by one or two commissioners.
- When asked about what the **future of pillar II** looks like Jansen replied that the structure will not be organised in pillars, according to him, and that the mandate clearly indicates this. There will be **more emphasis on fundamental and breakthrough research**.

- Moreover, during the Q&A session, it was noted that disruptive innovation over the past 20 years has led to issues with well-being and democracy, **emphasising the need to prioritise SSAH**. In preparing FP10, the ERC has increased funding for SSAH projects to match that of life sciences. Although SSAH topics are flagged across framework programmes, **there is concern that this integration is superficial, often seen as an add-on** - the Commission aims to improve this. EU Missions are relevant for SSH as they extend beyond technologies. Stakeholders should highlight where SSH is crucial to avoid it being overlooked.

Joint implementation of the European Research Area and the European Education Area

The moderators of the session were **Svein Stølen**, Rector of the University of Oslo and **Keijo Hämäläinen**, Rector of the University of Tampere. The speakers of the session were **Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen**, Director-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission and **Heiko Prange-Gstöhl**, Senior Policy Officer, Unit for ERA and Spreading Excellence and Research Careers, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission. The Q&A session was answered by **Vanessa Debiais-Sainton** (Head of Unit for Higher Education, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission as she replaced Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen in the last part of the session.

The objectives of this session were to bring focus to European Research Area including the ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027. Further, the aim was to inspire the Rectors who were present at the conference to take part in implementing and developing the shared European Education Area.

Ahrenkilde Hansen's keynote speech focused on the importance of a strong European education landscape. Some of the key points made during this second presentation in this session were:

- The speaker highlighted that Europe faces **a risk of a skills and expertise shortage**. She stressed the importance of the EU in safeguarding academic freedom, freedom of movement, and the uptake of the **5th freedom** and emphasised that the joint implementation of both research and education is important when considering poly-crises. Both research and education can help combat many of these.
- Both the European Research Area and the European Education Area must help universities overcome barriers for **increased cooperation between institutions**.
- With regards to the **European University Alliances**, the speakers underlined that the Commission is committed to the development of a blueprint for a **European degree**. Universities should play a role in shaping the policy and strengthen the flagship initiative through upcoming initiatives such as the European degree policy lab and the annual European degree forum. Nordic countries are well represented in the alliances with over 70 institutions and associated partners. The speakers also underlined that both Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe will help strengthen the alliances.

Prange-Gstöhl discussed the achievements and challenges of the ERA. Some of the key points made during this second presentation in this session were:

- The speaker mentioned that **new structures have been put in place for ERA governance such as the ERA Forum** to bring together the actors for cocreation, the ERA policy agenda as an implementation tool and a standardized ERA monitoring framework to produce evidence (country reports, quantitative scoreboard, dashboard).
- It was also mentioned that the Commission is working on the preparation of the **next policy agenda 2025-2027 with a more bottom-up approach** through increased stakeholder involvement. The aim is to have the Commission's proposal for the Council Recommendation

adopted by June 2025. The proposal of the ERA Act is still a black box, and many ideas are floating within the Commission services.

During the ensuing Q&A session, the following key points were made:

- **Open Science and Education** are central also to future policies but require balancing with knowledge security and digitalisation challenges.
- **Quality Assurance:** The Commission's objective is not to build a supranational system but to encourage member states to move towards institutional or interinstitutional quality assurance. Outcomes are expected under the Polish presidency.
- **Joint Implementation of ERA and EEA:**
 - Need for open-mindedness and breaking silos at all levels.
 - Universities should explore avenues of cooperation that will bring down costs in research, such as sharing research infrastructure.
 - Simplification of governance and more coordination without new structures.
 - Universities are key players in identifying coordination challenges and the Commission is open to hearing their feedback.
 - Acknowledging that there are currently too many partnerships in play, this needs to be streamlined for FP10.
 - Monitoring is a key tool for evidence-based policymaking (e.g. impact of the ERA actions on national-level performance needs to be shown). Mid-term evaluation of EEA in 2025 and Erasmus+ by the end of 2024. Building a European higher education sector observatory.
- **European Degree**
 - The vision behind the European degree (global competitiveness, attractiveness of European higher education) is shared across the member states. Implementation of it is realistic but requires a step-by-step process over 3-4 years.
 - European degree should be seen as a policy instrument for HEIs, not a funding instrument. It is based on a common European criterion which makes it accessible for all universities to issue, and not limited to the alliances or legal entities formed by them.

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy; a priority

The moderators of the session were **Hans Adolfsson**, Rector, Umeå University and **Kristin Eysteinsdottir**, Rector, Iceland University of Arts. The speakers of the session were **Signe Ratso**, Deputy Director-General of Innovation, Prosperity and International Cooperation, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission and **Enora Bennetot Pruvot**, Deputy Director Governance, Funding & Public Policy Development, European Universities Association.

The objectives of this session were to bring attention to academic freedom and institutional autonomy which are values under increased pressure.

Ratso's keynote speech focused on the importance of strong European education. Some of the key points made during this second presentation in this session were:

- Ratso mentioned that universities worldwide face political, economic, and geographic threats which are **challenging the core mission of the free flow of knowledge**. The new Commission, [in its letter for research](#), will introduce an **ERA Act to guarantee the fifth freedom which has the potential to enhance academic freedom**. Scientific research is also under threat, and an index shows that compared to 2008, it has declined. In Hungary, people are limited, and threats are occurring even in Sweden. The quality of research declines, and researchers are leaving their jobs.
- **What is being done at the EU level:** The EU responds with joint actions, such as the Declaration of Freedom of Research 2020, which reaffirms core principles. In 2022, the Commission published a

[toolkit on foreign interference](#) with actionable recommendations. Member States are also closely involved in mutual learning exercises, examining the role of policymakers in combating these issues. In May, the focus was on [enhancing research security](#), allowing EU researchers to engage in international projects. Moreover, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution on academic freedom in January](#), focusing on scientific research which protects and advances three key elements: the rights of individual researchers, the rights of research organisations, and public systems.

- **But what is the role of universities?** While policy and frameworks are crucial, ultimately, it rests with universities. **Universities must remain places where ideas can be freely debated, controversial viewpoints discussed, and transformative powers realised.** Upholding integrity in research and ensuring that knowledge is used for the public good is essential. External actors can undermine this and safeguarding is about protecting our fundamental values. While the Mutual Learning Exercise (MLE) is confidential, several documents have been made relevant for universities. Finally, the **ERA Policy Agenda** includes a specific action on academic freedom, with proposed actions for the future, and the speaker invites universities to act.

Pruvot's keynote speech focused on institutional autonomy and the slides from the presentation can be found in [Appendix 2](#). Some of the key points made during this second presentation in this session were:

- The speaker first mentioned that **funding or income structures are heavily influenced by the state** (70%), posing a threat to autonomy if funding only comes from here.
- There is pressure on autonomy from alignment. For instance, in Ireland, institutions have been brought together with more traditional ones, reducing their autonomy. This phenomenon has been seen in the **European University Alliances**: can these alliances shape a more modern regulatory framework? Would universities in alliances be more resilient if the state opposes them?
- English Programmes in Denmark have been cited as a negative case in terms of institutional autonomy and are mentioned as a key issue where the state is making ad hoc interventions.
- The speaker also presented the idea behind the **EUA University Autonomy Scorecard**. These include: i) guidance of advisory committee and EUA board, ii) data from national universities associations, iii) 35 higher education systems across Europe and iv) country profiles released throughout 2023-2024.
- Some more key takeaways from the presentation were:
 - Autonomy goes hand in hand with sound accountability frameworks. The notion of accountability is evolving and becoming increasingly complex.
 - Regulation does not mean all needs to be in the law – see use of “Codes” notably in England or Scotland.
 - Sustainable funding, flexible governance, and sufficient autonomy help unlock efficiency in university operations and support them in delivering impact.
 - An institutional vision is necessary and it must be developed and shared with all governance stakeholders.
 - To reap the benefits of greater autonomy, universities must be supported to develop the right sets of skills, whether strategic, transversal or technical, to best exploit autonomy. Autonomous universities require strong leadership.

During the ensuing Q&A session, the following key points were made:

- It was noted that in some countries, government regulations on higher education institutions can create challenges, but **institutional autonomy still allows for some freedom of choice**. Different countries have varying governance approaches and **reducing funding sources can potentially increase autonomy**.
- There was also a discussion on the gap between theory and practice in **institutional scorecards**, with some countries not following theoretical frameworks in practice.
- It was highlighted that even though **work programmes need to be detailed, institutional autonomy is important**. Institutions need direction but should have the **freedom to determine how to get there**. Currently, 188 different countries have applied for funding in Horizon Europe's

pillar II, and Ratso mentions that there is perhaps too much descriptive work done here and that more openness to research is needed.

- The session emphasised the need for **strong, collective leadership in universities, involving public authorities, academics, and students**. It was noted that there is no EU law on academic freedom, but the European Parliament has suggested it, and the Commission is receptive to this idea.
- The discussion also addressed the role of civil institutions in **defence research**, noting that dual-use research is not currently included in the FP but **may be considered in the future**.

TUESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2024

Brief summary of the day

The second day **began with a MEP Breakfast session** at the European Parliament where Rectors and members of the European Parliament engaged in seven different thematic roundtable discussions. Each discussion is summarised under the respective thematic headline:

Debate on Increased EU Cooperation in Defence and Security Matters. The conversation highlighted the need to view defence and security as long-term challenges. The discussion acknowledged the complexity of decision-making in the face of military, climate, and other threats, underscoring the need for a multidisciplinary approach and democratic control over the weapon industry in Europe.

Boosting Europe's Competitiveness. The discussion centred around boosting Europe's competitiveness, emphasizing the need for joint EU efforts and addressing potential challenges within Nordic collaboration. Concerns were raised about University Alliances potentially limiting collaboration. The importance of fostering a European identity and collaboration beyond the Nordic region was stressed.

AI and Its Opportunities and Challenges. The discussion highlighted the need for careful regulation to ensure AI benefits society. The impact of AI on education and universities was a significant focus, with the need for universities to define effective AI use in educational contexts. The EU's lag behind the US and China in technological development was noted, with a call for ongoing dialogue and collaboration.

Climate Targets 2040. The group discussed the European Commission's climate targets for 2040, expressing concerns that the targets are insufficient. The role of universities in raising awareness and training students to tackle global challenges was debated.

The next Multiannual Financial Framework. The conversation highlighted the need for a more flexible budget to tackle unforeseen crises and new challenges. The importance of predictability and ringfencing certain budget points was emphasized. Discussions also focused on the integration of Dual Use in the Research Programme and the need for better regulation.

Addressing the Shortage of Qualified Workforce. The conversation highlighted the need for joint efforts to address the shortages of a qualified workforce in the EU. Improving working conditions and aligning education with job market needs were emphasized. The importance of recognizing skills across borders and reskilling was discussed.

Academic Freedom. The discussion centred around the importance of academic freedom for society and the need for stronger legal protections. The impact of geopolitical tensions on academic freedom was discussed, with a call for universities to navigate these challenges responsibly. The importance of mutual support among university leaders was emphasized.

Following the MEP Breakfast, the Nordic University Days continued with two sessions following the same format as day one. **The first session Universities in a new geopolitical and global landscape** was moderated by Erik Renström, Lund University, and Peter Møllgard, Copenhagen Business School (CBS). Speakers in the session were Bojan Grlaš, Deputy Head of Unit at the Directorate for International Cooperation II, Directorate General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission and Hilligje Van't Land, Secretary General of the International Association of Universities (IAU). The session focused on the intersection of academic freedom, institutional responsibility, and global cooperation. The importance of trust, cybersecurity, and responsible international cooperation was emphasized. The need for strategic partnerships and maintaining open collaboration channels was discussed.

The second session Science for Policy was moderated by Ilkka Niemelä, Aalto University, and Margareth Hagen, University of Bergen. Speakers: Alessandro Allegra, Policy Assistant to the Deputy Director-General for Planet, People, and Science for Policy, Jolita Butkeviciene, Director of Innovation in Science and Policymaking at the Directorate-General Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. The session addressed the need to strengthen the Science for Policy (S4P) ecosystem across Europe. The importance of integrating scientific expertise into policy and overcoming communication barriers between scientists and politicians was emphasized. The need for early and structured interaction between researchers and policymakers was discussed.

MEP Breakfast

The second day began with a breakfast session at the European Parliament where the Rectors and members of the European Parliament engaged in seven different thematic roundtable discussions. The session was opened with welcoming remarks from Sunniva Whittaker, Rector of the University of Agder & Chair of the Nordic University Association who then handed over to the Norwegian Rectors at the thematic roundtables to begin the discussions. Each discussion is summarised under the respective thematic headline:

1. Debate on Increased EU Cooperation in Defence and Security Matters

Moderated by: Klaus Mohn, University of Stavanger

MEPs: Villy Søvndal (The Greens), Sebastian Tynkkynen (ECR)

The conversation highlighted the need to view defence and security as long-term challenges, spanning over 20 years. Participants noted that economic and social stability have been disrupted by factors such as China's rise, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the pandemic. These events have posed threats to international cooperation and the autonomy of Higher Education Institutions. The role of HEIs was emphasized, with a call for them to contribute knowledge and competence, analyse the new international situation, and form new alliances. HEIs are also seen as crucial in training students and developing relevant study programs. The discussion acknowledged the complexity of decision-making in the face of military, climate, and other threats, underscoring the need for a multidisciplinary approach and democratic control over the weapon industry in Europe. With all Nordic countries now members of NATO, the importance of collaboration on defence was stressed, along with the need to avoid the divisions seen in the US. Academic freedom was highlighted as essential, with HEIs encouraged to maintain critical thinking and broaden their perspectives to include military and security considerations. A deeper understanding of different cultures and tensions was deemed necessary, with basic research now potentially useful in the future.

The discussion also touched on the importance of following international law and strengthening international organizations, addressing tensions in the Arctic, and enhancing Nordic cooperation. The blurred line between military and civil purposes, such as the use of drones and IT solutions in the Ukraine war, was noted, along with the challenge of budgeting for dual-use technologies.

In conclusion, Mohn summarized that the current lack of cooperation and the presence of war in Europe challenge the principles and values of HEIs. He emphasized the need to adapt research, education, and training activities to strive for a return to times of collaboration and peace.

2. Boosting Europe's Competitiveness

Moderated by: Vidar L. Haanes, MF vitenskapelig høyskole

MEP: *due to last-minute cancellations, no MEP participated in discussions at this table.*

The discussion centred around boosting Europe's competitiveness. The conversation focused on what actions are possible and emphasised that change should have started "yesterday". There is a need for a so-called joint EU effort to support and increase competitiveness, especially when one compares Europe's efforts with those in the US and China. However, several concerns were raised, such as potential challenges within Nordic collaboration and the possibility that University Alliances might hinder student and research exchanges by limiting collaboration to within their alliances rather than extending beyond them. Additionally, the importance of fostering a European identity and collaboration beyond the Nordic collaboration was stressed. A broader perspective was also introduced, questioning whether Europe is neglecting Africa and how future collaborations with Africa could be developed. Lastly, it was brought up that there could always be more focus on increasing the Nordic collaboration. Overall, the group had a good discussion, with the participants agreeing that the fifth freedom will continue to play a significant role in the future.

3. AI and Its Opportunities and Challenges

Moderated by: Dag Rune Olsen, UiT The Arctic University of Norway

MEP: Christel Schaldemose (S&D)

The discussion on the AI Act and its impact on education and universities highlighted the need for careful legislation to ensure AI benefits society without unintended consequences. While adjustments to existing laws may be necessary, a complete absence of regulation is not an option. Legislation should facilitate societal benefits while considering its effects on competition and the competitiveness of Europe. The discussion touched on regulatory flexibility, suggesting that legislation could allow universities more freedom in using AI compared to market regulations. However, national laws often complicate EU regulations, creating additional layers of legislation.

The impact of AI on education and universities was a significant focus. Historical shifts in knowledge production raise questions about the future organization of education. Universities have yet to define the effective use of AI in educational contexts. The future role of universities will likely evolve, focusing on community and experiential learning, and emphasizing creativity, curiosity, and scientific intuition—areas where AI falls short.

In a data-driven society, the EU needs to develop its own AI models and ensure access to big data. Open access to data is crucial, but misuse poses significant challenges. AI is a multifaceted phenomenon that is often underestimated in its complexity, encompassing more than just technology; ethical implications are paramount.

The EU lags behind the US and China in technological development. However, it is important for the EU to continue its own development according to its fundamental values rather than trying to follow others. In conclusion, the need for ongoing dialogue was emphasized. The EU is committed to continuing work with AI and related developments for years to come. Parliamentarians hope for active dialogue with stakeholders, such as universities, to ensure that legislation supports a suitable operational environment for research and education to flourish.

4. Climate Targets 2040

Moderated by: Siri Fjellheim, NMBU

MEP: Pär Holmgren (The Greens)

The group discussed the current impacts of climate change. The European Commission's climate targets for 2040, introduced in February 2024, aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 90% compared to 1990 levels and achieve climate neutrality by 2050, were discussed and consensus that the targets are insufficient and are not science-based. This disconnect is a major reason for the global rise in climate activism. Despite the challenges, Holmgren stressed the importance of maintaining hope by highlighting positive achievements, such as improved air quality in major European cities due to reduced emissions and the shift

from fossil fuels. However, he acknowledged that significant work remains, as poor air quality still causes many deaths. The group also discussed the Draghi report, which links economic competitiveness with the transformation process, and expressed concerns about agriculture's environmental impact.

The role of universities was debated, with suggestions that they could declare a climate emergency to raise awareness and focus on training students to tackle global challenges. The group discussed the pros and cons of university policies on transport, such as train versus flying. Finally, concerns were raised about the limited time available to address these issues.

5. The next Multiannual Financial Framework

Moderated by: Karen Spens

MEP: Merja Kyllönen (The Left/GUE), Rasmus Nordqvist (The Greens)

The conversation highlighted that the Parliament traditionally have been a protagonist for Research and Innovation. The group reflected on the need to build a more flexible budget which will allow the EU to better tackle unforeseen crises and new challenges. There needs to be flexibility in the yearly budgets. While acknowledging this need the rectors emphasized the need for predictability and advocated some type of ringfencing of certain budget points. The EU needs to do better when it comes to scaling up ideas and enterprises. There was a question about whether the MEPs expect the next MFF to be larger than the last. The MEPs said there is an expectation that the budget will grow, and it needs to grow. The extra money will come from the EU's own resources. There was also a discussion about regulation. Both MEPs stated that they think there is a need for more and better regulation. The MEPs told the rectors that the main priorities of the MFF will be security and migration. The final discussions focused on Dual Use. Should Dual Use be integrated into the Research Programme? Nordqvist raised the question of whether military innovation needs to be supported with public funding.

6. Addressing the Shortage of Qualified Workforce

Moderated by: Astrid Kvalbein, Norwegian Academy of Music

MEP: Stine Bosse (Renew)

The conversation highlighted the need for a joint effort to address the shortages of qualified workforce in the EU. Collaboration is vital to address the labour shortage, as no single country can solve this alone. Improving working conditions for newly educated individuals is essential to retain talent in Europe and prevent "brain drain." Education must align with the needs of the job market to ensure good prospects for graduates.

One solution could be to better recognize skills across borders by the establishment of a common European set of skills. As people live and work longer, reskilling becomes crucial. The education system must become more dynamic, allowing individuals to exit and re-enter as needed. Universities need to update their methods to be more adaptive and flexible, combining different fields to create relevant and attractive degrees. Vocational education also needs greater recognition.

7. Academic Freedom

Moderated by: Christen Krogh, Oslo Metropolitan University

MEP: Sigrid Friis (Renew)

The discussion centred around how Academic freedom is crucial not just for universities but for society as a whole, as it underpins democratic values. Currently, some European politicians understand the importance of academic freedom, but weak legislation makes the system vulnerable. Stronger legal protections are needed, ideally enshrined in national constitutions or higher education acts. Universities themselves must also protect academic freedom. Internal threats, such as harassment from colleagues, require institutions to foster a healthy culture and robust management practices. Poland's rectors' conference has adopted a code of good practices, which could serve as a model for other countries. The discussion also touched on the impact of geopolitical tensions, such as the crises in Gaza, the Middle East, and Ukraine, on academic freedom. Universities must navigate these challenges responsibly, balancing openness with security.

University leaders often face significant pressure and threats, highlighting the need for mutual support. Friis emphasized that both politicians and academics face threats and must stand together to avoid being silenced. In the debate on protecting academic freedom in EU treaties, she suggested that rather than setting a minimal standard, it might be more effective to create aspirational goals that drive progress.

Universities in a new geopolitical and global landscape

The session was moderated by **Erik Renström** (Vice Chancellor of Lund University), and **Peter Møllgard** (President of Copenhagen Business School (CBS)). They introduced the keynote speakers and set the tone for discussions focusing on the critical intersection of academic freedom, institutional responsibility, and global cooperation. The speakers of the session were **Bojan Grlaš**, Deputy Head of Unit at the Directorate for International Cooperation II, Directorate General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission, **Hilligje Van't Land**, Secretary General of the International Association of Universities (IAU).

The objective of this session was to discuss the critical intersection of academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and global cooperation, especially within the context of evolving geopolitical and security challenges.

During his address, **Møllgard** shared insights on the challenges faced by CBS, particularly drawing attention to a recent cyber-attack that had substantial consequences for the institution. He emphasized the importance of trust in an increasingly complex global environment, recounting an incident where a former employee was targeted by a phishing email that triggered the attack. This incident underscored the need for vigilance and strong cybersecurity measures within academic institutions. Møllgard reflected on the broader context of geopolitical and environmental concerns, which were topics of previous discussions, and posed a critical question: "Who can we trust?" He acknowledged the dilemma of balancing international collaboration with security, especially in environments where employees from Russia and China are part of the workforce, raising the need for responsible navigation of these complex relationships. He noted Denmark's proposal of principles for responsible international cooperation, advocating for an approach that values academic freedom while emphasizing institutional responsibility. He stressed that while institutions must be "as open as possible and as closed as necessary," leadership must navigate these dilemmas carefully.

Renström, in his remarks, shared his perspective on international collaboration, particularly with China. He argued that halting all collaborations would lead to significant losses and stressed the necessity of maintaining open, yet safe, collaboration channels. Renström reinforced the need for strategic partnerships to ensure global competitiveness while being mindful of security concerns.

Grlaš discussed the European Commission's approach to international cooperation across various regions, highlighting the interconnected nature of global issues like climate change.

- Framed the current period as pivotal, given the transition to a new European Commission, with questions surrounding the future of international R&I cooperation.
- Recognized **emerging threats from nations like China and Russia**, while emphasizing the importance of **dialogue and science diplomacy** to navigate these complexities.
- Proposed a **balanced approach** for academic institutions to be "as open as possible and as closed as necessary," especially given the vulnerabilities of the research sector.
- **Announced upcoming initiatives**, including a centre for expertise on research security and the inaugural European Flagship Conference on Research Security in autumn 2025.

Van't Land cited a recent cyber-attack on the University of Paris to underscore global security challenges in higher education. Discussed the UNESCO "Pact for the Future," advocating for responsible international cooperation and the need to safeguard university independence.

- Emphasized that higher education is a "passport to economic security" and called for keeping European borders open for international talent.

- Addressed the **competition for global talent, noting brain drain as a risk**, and advocated for more South-South cooperation and partnerships beyond highly-ranked institutions.
- Stressed the **importance of ethical research practices** and the IAU's mission to promote global cooperation over competition, using science diplomacy to foster transparent international collaboration.

During the ensuing Q&A session, the following key points were made:

- **Renström** raised the question of Europe's stance on sending top talent to collaborate with China, prompting discussion on the balance of cooperation, security, and competition.
- **Grlaš** highlighted the complexity of navigating these relationships, advocating for risk-minimized collaboration that also serves mutual benefits.
- **Van't Land** emphasized the role of trust in international cooperation and the importance of involving universities in shaping research policy, rather than just responding to it.
- **Møllgard** suggested that if China has some of the world's best institutions, collaboration should remain an option.
- Some attendees argued that HEIs should **prioritize open science and avoid security-based** constraints; others suggested focusing on the ethos of academia rather than tightening restrictions. Several attendees noted that the conversation on international collaboration has shifted, with **growing political interest and increased caution** around partnerships with countries like China and Russia. Concerns were raised about the risk of **compromising long-term values** like academic freedom and open science due to short-term security fears.

The session concluded with the consensus that openness is integral to the DNA of higher education institutions, emphasizing the need to carefully balance security with academic freedom.

Science for Policy

The session was introduced and moderated by **Ilkka Niemelä**, Rector of Aalto University, and **Margareth Hagen**, Rector of the University of Bergen. The speakers of the session were **Alessandro Allegra**, Policy Assistant to the Deputy Director-General for Planet, People, and Science for Policy, and **Jolita Butkeviciene**, Director of Innovation in Science and Policymaking at the Directorate-General Joint Research Centre of the European Commission.

The objective of the session was to address the ongoing efforts to strengthen the Science for Policy (S4P) ecosystem across Europe. With increasing societal challenges, there is a growing need for effective channels that enable scientific knowledge to inform policy decisions. The session aimed to explore how to bridge the gap between science and policy, ensuring that research outcomes are aligned with societal needs and that policymakers are equipped to utilize scientific expertise.

Allegra's keynote address emphasized the need for a unified European Science for Policy (S4P) framework. He advocated for integrating scientific expertise into policy to address societal challenges effectively, calling for a renewed **"social contract"** between science and society. Allegra highlighted several areas of improvement:

- **Fragmented Ecosystem:** Existing mechanisms across Europe need further unification.
- By continuing **to support excellent science**, as it is the bedrock of scientific advice and science for policy.
- By explicitly recognizing that **societal goals** are at the core of the scientific endeavour.
- By ensuring the highest **ethical standards** in research, its transparency and trustworthiness.
- By valuing and **rewarding policy engagement**, not just knowledge production for its own sake.
- By creating clear **career paths** and opportunities for those researchers who have the potential and inclination to engage with policymaking.

- By continuing to engage with our counterparts in the national administrations to co-create this change.

Allegra claimed there is a big political interest, including the [2023 Council Conclusions](#), in ERA, and the critical role of higher education institutions (HEIs). He invited HEIs to join a Community of Practice to co-develop the S4P Code of Practice.

Butkeviciene underscored that European **polymaking must be grounded in scientific knowledge**, as reinforced in [mission letters to the new Commission](#). She emphasized overcoming communication barriers between scientists and politicians, promoting **collective problem-solving** to address issues like the green transition, and strengthening trust through evidence-based debates. Key points made:

- Science in **Democracy**: Science underpins democratic debate and policy decisions.
- **Bridging Communication Gaps**: Incentivizing researchers to engage in policy processes and encouraging policymakers to consult scientific insights.
- Combating **Disinformation via Education**: Educating the public is essential to counter misinformation.
- Structural engagement needed: there is a **lack of European data and open data**.
- Engagement Timing: **Early and structured interaction** between researchers and policymakers is crucial. The challenge of aligning research timelines with policy needs, as scientific studies often require lengthy timelines that don't always match policy schedules.

Audience members raised concerns about the need for scientists to **maintain independence** while engaging more directly in policymaking. Allegra emphasized that while scientific rigour is essential, scientists can still play an active advisory role without compromising their objectivity. Questions were raised about **funding structures** that support policy-oriented research. Butkeviciene acknowledged that existing funding models often prioritize knowledge production over policy engagement. Some participants pointed out that **cultural differences** between academia and government can hinder effective S4P collaboration.

The session closed with a call for HEIs to actively shape the S4P Code of Practice, underlining the need for stronger collaboration, communication, and trust across the S4P ecosystem for a resilient and sustainable society.

APPENDIX 1: NORDIC UNIVERSITY DAYS 2024 - KEY MESSAGES

1. An excellence-driven European framework programme for research and innovation: Towards FP10

The current structure of Horizon Europe has proven to be an efficient framework for European research and innovation. Building on this success, excellence must continue to be the leading principle guiding investments in research, education, and innovation to enhance the sustainable growth and resilience of our societies.

Moreover, the new geopolitical situation and the global challenges like the green and digital transition call for new approaches to international R&I collaboration underpinned by an ambitious budget. A predictable and ambitious budget dedicated to research and innovation should be ensured, potentially even ring-fenced, to avoid unnecessary frustration among potential applicants, and wasted planning efforts and to avert a gradual erosion of the budget due to funds being prioritised for other initiatives. Establishing the budget for FP10 requires a proper balance between predictability and flexibility to safeguard research and innovation. Additionally, the FP10 calls for simplification and should be cut down from unnecessary special rules and measures.

Innovative blue-sky and frontier research, breakthrough technologies, social innovations and applications are necessary for the global transition to a greener and more digital society. It is needed to develop robust evidence that supports or rejects the added value and viability of solutions, approaches etc. Therefore, it is essential to maintain a balance between bottom-up and top-down funding opportunities within the framework programmes, along with a corresponding coherence in the Technology Readiness Levels (TRL), to further ensure that the EU R&I funding landscape fosters strategic cooperation among the best research teams in Europe.

Finally, there is an increasing demand for a comprehensive and enhanced integration of an interdisciplinary approach in FP10. Recognising universities as pivotal agents of change, it becomes evident that the integration of social sciences, arts, and humanities (SSAH) must be enhanced within the framework programme. Only by acknowledging and incorporating SSAH disciplines can universities effectively tackle the intricate and multifaceted challenges ahead.

2. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy; a priority

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are fundamental for universities to develop knowledge and science needed to solve rapidly evolving global challenges. Freedom of scientific research, freedom of teaching and learning, freedom in carrying out research without commercial or political interference, freedom to disseminate and publish one's research findings, freedom from institutional censorship, or the education system in which one works, should be valued. Lastly, freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies, including trade unions, should be accepted as a university core value.

Many Nordic universities are signatories of Magna Charta Universitatum, supporting principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. However, as geopolitical tensions intensify, the assurance of academic freedom and institutional autonomy becomes less certain, particularly in an era where scientific discoveries are being undermined, and the independence of universities is being challenged more often. In response to these challenges, it is necessary to not take academic freedom and institutional autonomy for granted, but to engage actively to ensure that those remain strong. Academic freedom, especially freedom of scientific research, is an essential element of a democratic and free Europe and therefore a fundamental value of the EU and a principle for international cooperation. Institutional autonomy is a key component of academic freedom. Academic institutions should have the freedom to manage their core activities of research and teaching without fear of societal, political, or religious interference that would impact scientific research or teaching. Hand in hand with academic freedom is academic responsibility. The Nordic universities take

responsibility to shape societal transformation through research and education, while staying true to their values and mission. This responsibility lies within the organisation as well as when engaging with other stakeholders.

Both the European Research Area (ERA) and the European Education Area (EEA) need to continue to fortify and support the efforts of academic organisations concerning academic freedom which is an indispensable prerequisite for social, political, cultural, and economic progress and resilience and yet still today in acute danger in many countries.

Universities are global by nature, and so are their values. Moving the discourse from academic freedom to academic fundamental values allows the debate to become more inclusive.

3. Science for policy

In a recent Council conclusion, “Strengthening the role and impact of R&I in the policymaking process in the Union”, the implications of citizens' and civil society organisations' participation in the design of policies are highlighted. This is a crucial point in policymaking, including researchers and universities as well. Strengthening the contribution of research and innovation to policymaking benefits society as a whole. Universities and their researchers are key actors in this structure. Among other things, scientific analyses can support the understanding of a policy problem. Science can assess different policy options and assist in designing solutions. Universities and researchers also play a crucial role in providing empirical evidence and uncovering fake news through participation in public debates.

However, there are challenges in integrating evidence effectively into policymaking. Science and policy can be perceived as different worlds where their participants do not speak the same language. Skills and knowledge need to be enhanced on both sides. Incentives for researchers to contribute to policy should also be improved. It is a skill to contribute with knowledge and evidence to policymaking. For policymakers, checking with research should become a standard action to ensure that new legislation will not hinder education and R&I activities. Scientific evidence and research should be an important component of policymaking.

Universities do not only have the capacity to support policy and policymakers with evidence but have a responsibility to do so. Policymakers on the other hand must be trained to better obtain and integrate evidence in policymaking. In a world where we are witnessing the increase of 'alternative facts', AI-generated (fake)news and biased algorithms, a common goal should be to promote evidence-informed policymaking and work together to create a healthy science for the policy ecosystem.

4. Joint implementation of the European Research Area and European Education Area

Preparations for actions under the European Research Area (ERA) and European Education Area (EEA) should be based on the views and concerns expressed by universities, and jointly seek solutions at both national and EU levels, if harmonisation and compatibility between higher education systems within Europe are to be achieved. The EU has a pivotal role in encouraging new European education and research initiatives, but it is also important that universities are included in the process of developing these, so that the initiatives respond to an actual need and add value.

Universities are the main actors in implementing the ERA Policy Agenda and the European Strategy for Universities and therefore their perspectives and experiences should play a more prominent role in the decision-making process. Higher Education stakeholders should have a stronger say in designing and implementing ERA objectives. The European Higher Education stakeholder community must be involved in the development and implementation of the initiatives that will shape the universities of the future.

Moreover, the European Research Area (ERA) and the ERA Policy Agenda for 2025-2027 could benefit from a streamlined structure. It is advisable to keep ERA actions restricted and targeted to enable meaningful work with individual actions and avoid confusion with parallel structures within Horizon Europe.

By 2025 the European Education Area (EEA) should be established. By then, the flagship initiative in Higher Education, The European Universities alliances should count to around 60 cross-border cooperations and legal entities. Allowing the initiative to be truly successful requires the possibility of continued European funding and for more Higher Education Institutions to take part. Furthermore, the European Commission must work in synergy with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) allowing for a harmonised implementation of the European Education Area (EEA) and the European Research Area (ERA). The European Universities alliances are one example where the harmonisation between the areas is beneficial for part-taking Higher Education Institutions. European Universities alliances create new opportunities for our academic communities whilst challenging the lack of implementation of Bologna Tools calling on the European Commission to find solutions to the barriers of depend cross-border collaboration.

5. Universities in a new geopolitical and global landscape

Foreign interference and security in research and innovation is identified as a growing challenge in an ever more internationalised field. EU-level guidelines on foreign interference and research security are becoming increasingly important to raise awareness and to handle a constantly evolving situation. Furthermore, the role of research in policy priorities of the EU such as investments and trade can also be seen in the Economic Security Package presented at the end of January this year. Except for proposing Council Recommendations on research security, it is made clear that research is also a relevant topic in outbound investments (investments outside of the EU), as well as in dual-use (military and defence application of research results). There are suggestions to further monitor outbound research investments, as well as a need to discuss the scope of dual-use. In many cases this implies unknown territory for universities, but where participation and input from academia and from science are of essence.

To boost competitiveness and generate solutions to global societal challenges such as pandemics and climate change and deliver the twin transition, international R&I cooperation with partners outside of Europe is essential. “As open as possible, as restricted as necessary” should therefore remain a leading principle of EU’s framework programme for research and innovation, and the EU’s approach to international collaboration.

The EU should first and foremost assist universities in developing comprehensive and preventive approaches to tackle all forms of interference, threats to research, and to facilitate responsible collaboration. The EU should promote science collaboration globally and enter into strategic differentiated R&I partnerships based on common—principles that promote the importance of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, research integrity and ethics, open science, and gender equality.

APPENDIX 2: Presentation by Enora Bennetot Pruvot: “University autonomy in Europe: developments & challenges in mutating higher”



Overall developments



- Various reforms since previous Scorecard (2017)
- Landscape consolidation:
 - Mergers
 - Alignment of regulatory frameworks across sub-systems
- Transnational collaboration – the European Universities Initiative and its impact on national regulatory frameworks
 - All 4 dimensions matter to enable cross system collaboration
 - Few reforms implemented yet

Example of reforms

2017	Czechia, England
2018	Luxembourg, Poland
2019	Estonia
2020	NextGenerationEU
2021	Latvia
2022	Croatia, Ireland, Slovakia

Overall developments II



- Issues
 - Increasing ad hoc state interventions
 - Underfunding (general trend of underfunding and new investment needs)
 - Evolving geopolitical tensions (knowledge security, war in Ukraine)
 - Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Accountability
 - Growing complexity, monitoring and control
- Leadership
 - Increased autonomy requires skilled leadership (lack of LDP's and funding for it)



The EUA University Autonomy Scorecard



- Guidance of advisory committee and EUA board
- Data from national universities associations
- 35 higher education systems across Europe
- 4 dimensions + focus on overall HE landscape, European Universities Initiative, academic freedom
- Country profiles: released throughout 2023-2024



Autonomy dimensions



Organisational	Financial	Staffing	Academic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rector selection procedure/criteria • Rector term of office/dismissal • Inclusion/ selection of external members for the governing bodies • Academic structure decisions • Creation of legal entities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length/type of public funding • Keeping a surplus • Borrowing • Building ownership • Tuition fees for national/EU students • Tuition fees for non-EU students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment procedures • Salaries • Dismissals • Promotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting total student numbers • Selecting students • Introducing/terminating study programmes • Choosing language of instruction • Selecting QA mechanisms/QA providers • Study programme content design

Key enablers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic governance • Strategic planning • Leadership engagement • Shared services • Collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility use & space optimisation • Strategic financial management & allocation to priorities • Procurement • Internal incentive schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career path models adapted to new ways of conducting research and L&T • Incentives • Skills development, staff training (diversity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology enhanced learning • Design & introduction of programmes • Admission policies
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5

Autonomy supports transnational cooperation



• Governance & organisational matters

- Notably capacity to found legal entities, engage in contracts with foreign entities
- External members in university governance from abroad?

• Finances

- Internal financial allocation & capacity to make strategic investments
- Possibility to borrow, pool resources, etc
- Varying capacity for universities to decide on tuition fees

• Staff

- Autonomy of recruitment and salary setting - Joint staff hirings?
- Career reward structures (value of mobility for staff)

• Academic matters

- Institutional quality assurance: slow pace of transition!
- Joint programmes, degree structures, academic calendars, grading
- Capacity to decide on language of instruction
- Evaluations by foreign QA providers

Nordic higher education systems



7

Governance trends



- External authorities are less involved in university executive leadership matters, with some exceptions and the extreme case of Turkey.
- Experimental approaches described in the previous edition have led to sector-wide changes (e.g. Estonia).
- The main narrative for governance reform promotes efficiency in decision-making and a stronger connection to societal and economic interests.

Financial autonomy trends



- More steering through the funding model – indicators & performance agreements
- Stability of tuition fee models from the perspective of institutional decision-making capacity but possible upcoming changes
- Tensions around the campus; challenges to greening and efficiency
- More pressure on financial autonomy through:
 - *increased use of earmarked / targeted funding & eroding core public funding*
 - *insufficient public investment in infrastructure*
 - *lack of coverage of indirect costs in competitive funding*

Staffing autonomy trends



- Civil servant status continues to apply to a majority of senior staff in about half of the systems. Netherlands now completed a long-term deregulation process.
- Critical points of tension include rigidities in staffing matters such as salary-setting, contract duration, criteria (language proficiency...).
- The lack of attractiveness of academic careers and job security for early-career researchers are highly discussed issues.
- More flexible recruitment paths, ambitions regarding international attractiveness remain thwarted by regulations.

Academic autonomy trends



- Tensions around internationalisation – new limits because of financial pressures
- Slow pace of transition towards external QA at institution level instead of programmes
- Growing interest from governments for the contents and organisation of both the academic offer and research

Academic freedom in national legislation



Legal system	Concept & terminology	Subject of the provision	Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional protection (21 systems) • Ordinary law (the Law on Higher Education, Universities acts, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic freedom is mentioned, but not defined (3 constitutions) • Freedom of research/ freedom of science or freedom of teaching is referenced • Freedom of expression or freedom of speech 	<p>Some laws on higher education differentiate between institutional and individual rights</p>	<p>In certain systems, the state has the obligation to protect academic freedom (HR, GR, LT, PL) whereas, in some Nordic countries, universities bear the responsibility</p>

12

England: Higher Education Freedom of Speech Bill is under the discussion, which intends to create a special position within universities to protect and monitor freedom of speech through a complaints-based scheme

Norway: The discussions are geared towards fake news and democracy and have led the Ministry of Education and Research to establish an expert group to study related issues

Netherlands: Amid a greater awareness of the risks linked to the development of sensitive technologies at Dutch universities, the National Knowledge Security Guidelines were adopted

Latvia & Sweden: In both cases, the sector has been calling for legal amendments to provide a more detailed definition of academic freedom

Ongoing system-level developments

13

Key messages

1. Autonomy goes hand in hand with sound accountability frameworks. The notion of accountability is evolving and becoming increasingly complex.
2. Regulation does not mean all needs to be in the law – see use of “Codes” notably in England or Scotland.
3. Sustainable funding, flexible governance, and sufficient autonomy help unlock efficiency in university operations and support them in delivering impact.
4. An institutional vision is necessary & it must be developed and shared with all governance stakeholders.
5. To reap the benefits of greater autonomy, universities must be supported to develop the right sets of skills, whether strategic, transversal or technical, to best exploit autonomy. Autonomous universities require strong leadership.

THANK YOU

Enora.Pruvot@eua.eu

APPENDIX 3: Presentation by Brigadier General Anders Persson



Nordic University Days 2024

OUR PERSPECTIVE ON...

- *Research security and academic freedom*
- *the importance of collaboration in the research field between civil and military research (dual-use)*
- *how we should relate to technological development with democracy under pressure and a Europe marked by war and unrest*

Nato

The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments.

They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area.

They are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security.

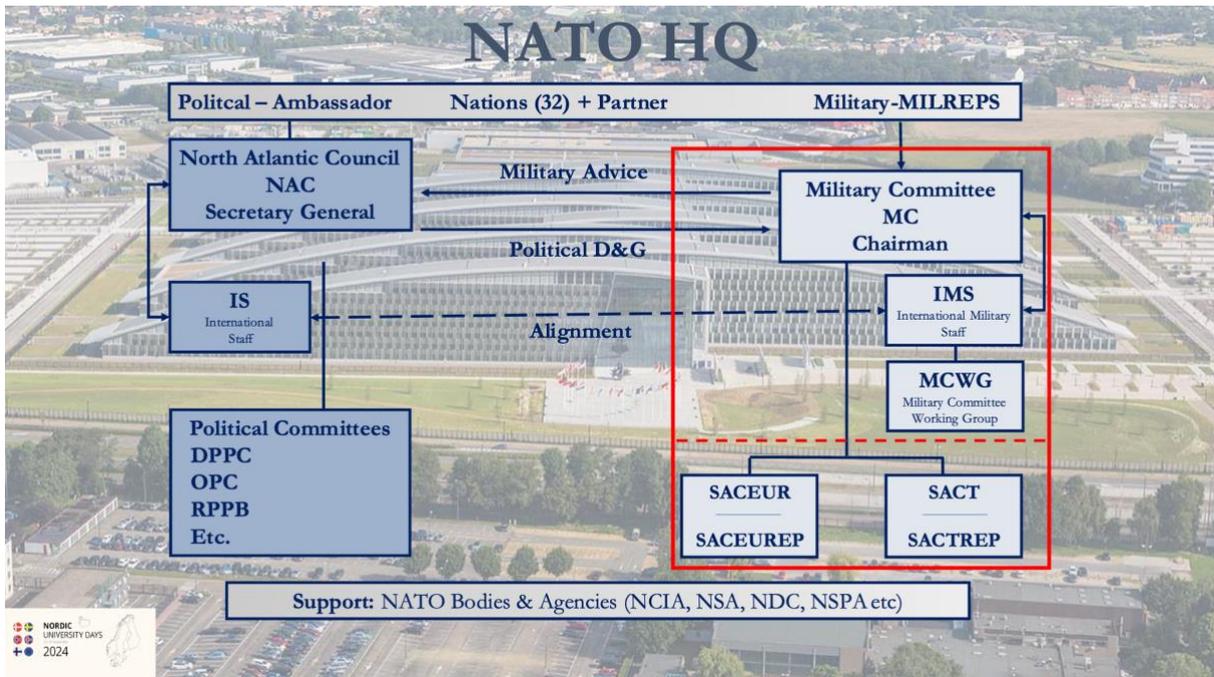


Artikel 3

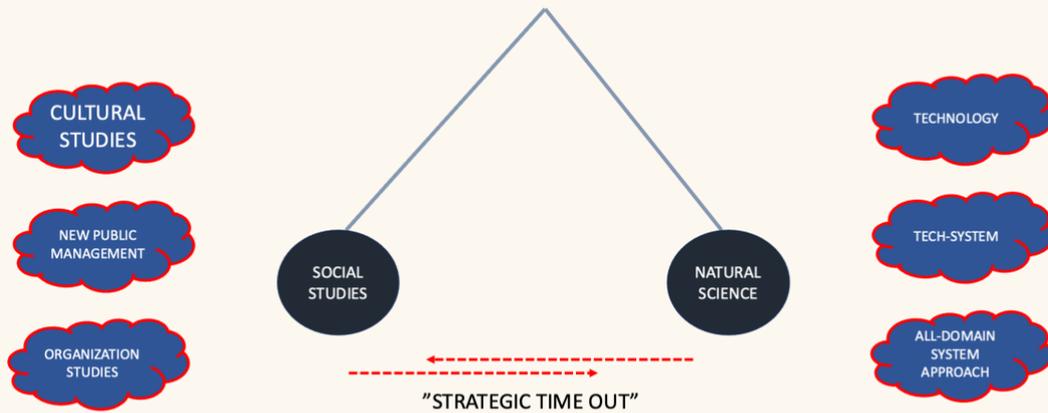
"...the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack"

Artikel 5

"...an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all"



The Pendulum of our time



CROSS DISCIPLINARY STUDIES NEEDED



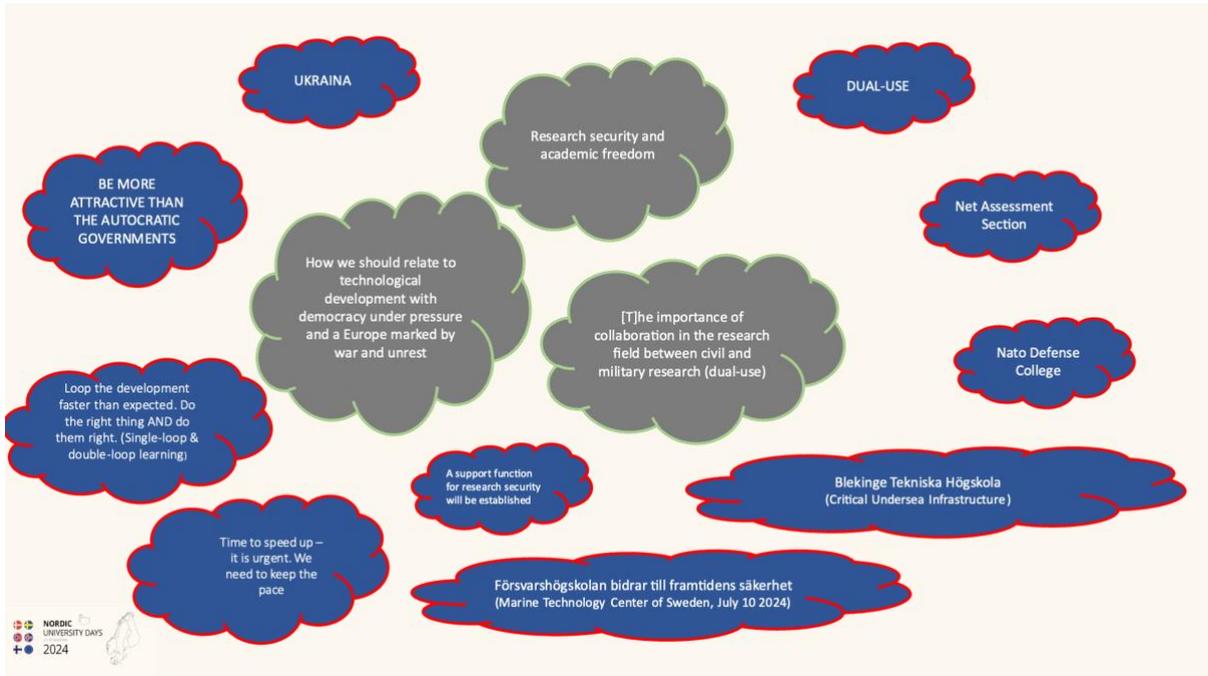
CMR – Civil Military Relations

- The neighbourhood of the Nordic countries is marked by instability and unpredictability
 - How do we make the neighborhood more stabile and predictable?
- Military (Officer) profession (**Expertise– Responsibility– Corporateness**)

THEORY...

- Nato Strategic Concept – From theory to reality
 - 360 degree approach
 - The Russian Federation/Terrorism
 - Deterrence and Defence/Crisis Prevention and Management/Cooperative Security





The Defence Innovation Accelerator of the North Atlantic (DIANA)



CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Space

The environment of Space represents a vast and largely unexplored frontier with immense potential for scientific discovery and technological innovation. It encompasses a wide range of technical challenges, from space exploration and astronomy to satellite technology and space-based communication systems and sensing. Cutting across the challenges, space-based technologies involve topics that span climate change, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and advanced manufacturing.

Resilience

The Resilience theme emphasises the need for solutions and technologies that can withstand and quickly recover from disruptions or threats across all domains. The goal is to develop resilient energy systems, secure and robust data infrastructures, durable sensing and surveillance systems, adaptable human health and performance strategies, and strong critical infrastructures and logistics that can withstand various operational environments.

Sustainability

A key part of responsible innovation, the Sustainability theme encourages solutions that meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It seeks to emphasise the importance of developing and implementing environmentally friendly, energy-efficient technologies and practices that ensure long-term viability.

DIANA'S 2024 CHALLENGES

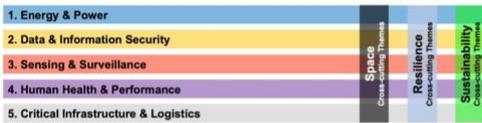


Figure 1: The Challenge Statements with cross-cutting themes.

