



# SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

WUS Conference Wien, Sept 21 – 23, 2021

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# EHEA FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

- We reaffirm our commitment to promoting and protecting **our shared fundamental values in the entire EHEA through intensified political dialogue and cooperation** as the necessary basis for quality learning, teaching and research as well as for democratic societies.
- We commit to upholding institutional autonomy, academic freedom and integrity, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education.
- Rome Communiqué, November 2020



# ACADEMIC FREEDOM

- indispensable aspect of quality learning, teaching and research in higher education as well as of democracy.
- distinct, fundamental democratic right in part grounded in the right to education, and shares elements with freedom of thought, opinion and expression.
- designates the freedom of the academic community - including academic staff and students – in respect of research, teaching and learning and, more broadly, the dissemination of research and teaching outcomes both within and outside the higher education sector.
- ensures that the academic community may engage in research, teaching, learning and communication in society without fear of reprisal.
- Societies cannot be genuinely democratic without honoring academic freedom and institutional autonomy. At the same time, the fundamental values of the EHEA cannot be fully realized except in democratic societies.
- *Appendix to the Rome Communiqué: statement on academic freedom*





# CIVIC SPACE

- ability of citizens and civil society organizations to organize, participate and communicate.
- key to any open and democratic society.
- citizen engagement.
- commitment to public space.
- participative and deliberative democracy.
- competences for a culture of democracy.



# BACKSLIDING OF DEMOCRACY

- Attacks on citizens exercising their democratic right to participate in civic life.
- Restricting electoral participation – and choice.
- Impact of COVID on democracy – not “only” on health.
- Preventing free learning, teaching, and research.
- Universities as civic institutions.
- Critical analysis and thinking.
- Decreasing commitment to democratic values.



# SOME CHALLENGES

- Political will
  - European standards vs. national prerogatives (cf. Belarus)
- The purposes of education
  - Four major purposes
  - Redefining our understanding of learning outcomes
- The more subtle challenges to academic freedom and institutional autonomy.
  - Economic restrictions and benefits (who sets the agenda?)
  - Misuse of research results
  - Lack of scientific literacy



# COUNCIL OF EUROPE INITIATIVES

- Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture
  - Redefining learning outcomes
- Ethics, Transparency and integrity in Education (ETINED)
  - A culture of ethics (Kant's categorical imperative)
- An Education response to COVID-19.