



Academic Freedom in the Nordics: Legislation, Practice, Challenges

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A Nordic supermodel?

- The Nordic model is based on trust and social dialogue
- Working life is well regulated and organized
- Social-democracies with stable socio-economic pillars



We trust our governments to assure institutional autonomy, strong legal frameworks for academic freedom and democratic values



The Nordic countries The next supermodel

Politicians from both right and left could learn from the Nordic countries



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Mobility Scoreboard

EHESO

Institutional autonomy and academic freedom

Select report view : Scoreboard

Time Series

Indicator source

Friedrich Alexander University and V-Dem Institute

Select indicator

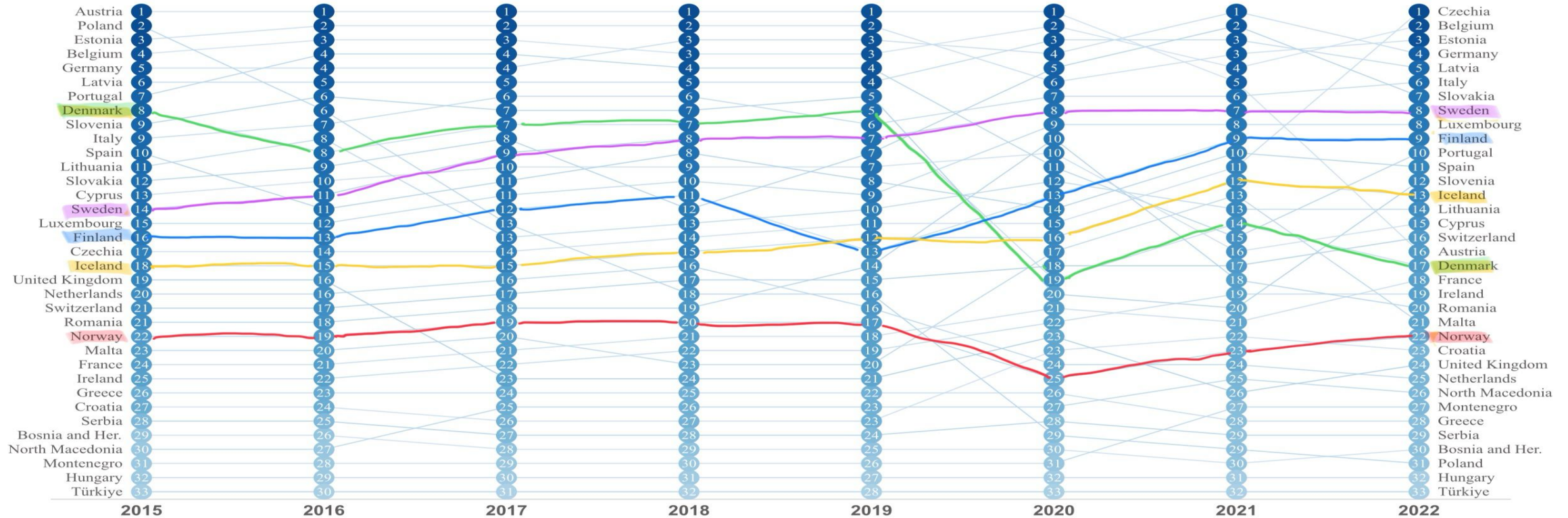
Select countries

Reset filters

Academic Freedom Index

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Rank by countries across years



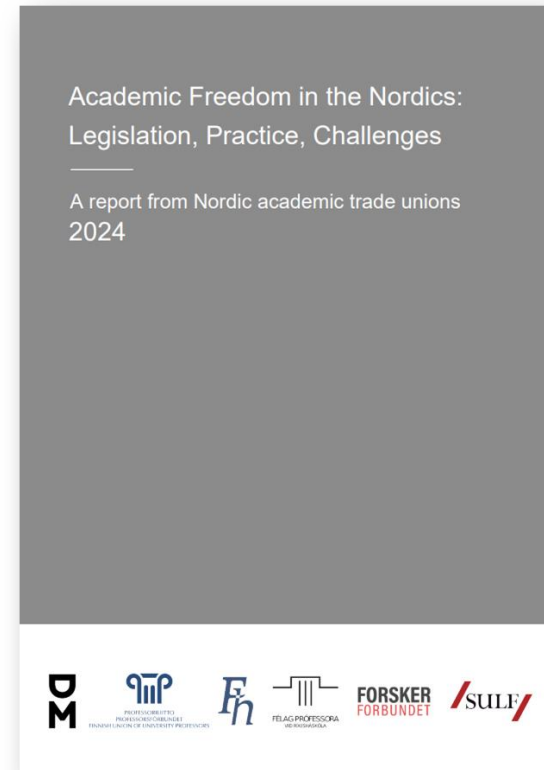


Nordic unions joining forces

- Despite strong legal protection external pressure, precarious employment and political interference are increasing concerns
- De jure vs. de facto?
- Provide evidence of current situation and call for action



The Nordic region continue to serve as a global benchmark for independent research and education



Key findings – main threats

- Resource allocation and external funding
- Political and ideological influence
- Precarious employment
- Collegial Governance and managerial control
- Harassment and Threats to Free Expression



The role of Trade Unions in Protecting Academic Freedom – our call

- Advocate for stronger legal protections and institutional autonomy
- Provide strong and long-term public funding
- Protect the security of employment
- Reinforce collegial governance
- Protect freedom of expression
- Foster a culture of open discussion and academic integrity

The screenshot shows a news article from University World News. The header includes the site name and tagline 'THE GLOBAL WINDOW ON HIGHER EDUCATION' along with a logo. A navigation bar lists categories like Global, Africa, Asia, SDGs, Edtech/AI, Commentary, Special Reports, Partnerships, Search, and About Us. The article is categorized under 'NORDIC COUNTRIES' and features a main headline: 'Academic unions demand action over academic freedom threats' with a red ribbon icon. The author is Jan Petter Myklebust, dated 01 November 2024. Social media sharing options for LinkedIn, X, and Facebook are visible. The article text discusses a report presented at the 2024 session of the Nordic Council, calling for renewed efforts to protect academic freedom. A sidebar on the left contains social media links and related links, including headlines about political threats to academic freedom and university board interference in Sweden.

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NORDIC COUNTRIES
Academic unions demand action over academic freedom threats

Jan Petter Myklebust 01 November 2024

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Academic trade unions from Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland presented a report on academic freedom at universities to the 2024 session of the Nordic Council which called for renewed efforts to protect academic freedom which they say is increasingly under pressure in the region.

The Nordic Council session, which convened under the theme "Peace and Security in the Arctic and Nordic regions", was held in Iceland from 28 to 31 October.

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Related Links

SWEDEN
Biggest threats to academic freedom are political – Report

SWEDEN
Academics hit back over interference in university boards

SWEDEN
Calls for constitutional

Any wins or hopes?

- Academic freedom lifted on the political agenda
- Iceland: Increased awareness, aiming for stronger legal protection in University Act
- Denmark: Dialogue and open discussion at Faculty level
- Norway and Sweden: Ongoing processes towards stronger constitutional protection

The report also indicates an urgent need to enhance awareness of all aspect of academic freedom among staff and students



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den högre utbildningens
frihet och lärosätenas
autonomi – innan det är
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Next steps

- Follow up legal protection processes
- Build momentum: Approach Nordic Council, Nordic Rector ´ s Conference, Student unions
- Nordic Academic Freedom Conference in 2026/2027

...and not least: Continuously fighting for institutional autonomy, collegial voice, funding and working conditions



Why This Matters Across Europe

- Nordic countries have been seen as models for academic freedom
- Erosion of protections here can spread to other regions
- European cooperation is needed to defend academic independence.





Thank you!

Dr Karin Åmossa

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