

swissuniversities

swissuniversities
Effingerstrasse 15, Postfach
3001 Bern
www.swissuniversities.ch

Statement: swissuniversities recalls its commitment to the university values of institutional autonomy and academic freedom

The two principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom have always been supported by Swiss Higher Education. They are anchored in the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation in [Article 63a3 – Higher education institutions](#).

In the eyes of swissuniversities members, institutional autonomy and academic freedom are the keys to the success of Higher Education. They guarantee:

- the excellence of teaching and research,
- the quality of decisions taken by the governing bodies of Higher education institutions,
- the ability of Higher education institutions to compete and cooperate.

Moreover, freedom of science is a fundamental right, a pillar of democracy and a prerequisite for economic and social progress. The production, transmission, criticism and preservation of knowledge are essential to solving global challenges.

Today, however, under the influence of various divergent trends, swissuniversities feels the need to reaffirm the importance of and its commitment to these values.

First of all, swissuniversities observes with growing concern the gradual erosion of these principles in recent years. Academic freedom has been under siege in many parts of the world, including Europe, by restricting freedom of expression, by threatening researchers and teachers, or by undermining institutional autonomy through state or other third party involvement.

Secondly, it is the current context of 'fake news' that calls into question the place and status of scientific knowledge. Post-truth explanations are gaining momentum in shaping public opinion and political debate and have reached a new dimension through social media.

In this context, it is the responsibility of Higher education institutions to stand up for these principles. As pillars of society and democracy, Higher education institutions strive to prevent and counteract these developments. They remain vigilant and call on governments to ensure that national policy measures guarantee these achievements through a strong commitment based on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.