



Choosing Academic Freedom

Opening Remarks of the President of the Max Planck Society

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On the Occasion of the Release of the

Joint Statement of the G6 Network of Research Organisations on Academic Freedom

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– Check against delivery –

Esteemed colleagues and guests,

Over the last month, I was traveling in the United States and in China. And throughout these visits, I found myself thinking about science in Europe. What really struck me is this: Science in Europe must remain strong. We must chart our own course and engage with all our partners in the world on equal footing. And we can do so. Why? Let me tell you one reason:

Europe is increasingly attracting outstanding talent from around the world, because of the quality of our research, but also because we offer something that is highly and increasingly valuable: a deep commitment to academic freedom. For me, academic freedom is not an abstract principle. It is the condition that makes excellent science possible in the first place. It allows us to ask critical questions, to challenge assumptions, and to collaborate openly across borders.

But academic freedom is increasingly endangered. We see growing pressure on academic freedom - globally, but also within Europe. Political interference, funding constraints and rising polarization are more and more often shaping the space in which science operates. Trust in science is being eroded and short-term priorities are often preferred over curiosity-driven research.

If we ignore these developments, we risk undermining not only our research system, but the very foundations of Europe's democratic model. This is also why the declaration that we present today really matters.

As the G6 network of European research organizations, we argue that upholding academic freedom is essential - for Europe's competitiveness and for its democratic resilience.



Today, we call for action:

- to firmly anchor academic freedom as a binding European value;
- to invest in bottom-up, excellence-driven research;
- to establish effective monitoring and resilience mechanisms;
- to strengthen Europe's digital sovereignty;
- and to promote academic freedom through international cooperation.

With this declaration, we also commit ourselves –

- to supporting threatened researchers,
- to fostering a strong ethical research culture,
- and to communicating science responsibly to society.

Because ultimately, academic freedom is something we have to actively uphold. And if we do, Europe will continue to be a place where talent comes, where ideas flourish, and where science can truly serve humanity.