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The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions and its French counterpart, France Universités, are calling for academic freedom to be enshrined in state constitutions.

On the occasion of the meeting held in Stockholm on 16 and 17 November 2022 between France Universités and the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF), Astrid Söderbergh Widding and Manuel Tunon de Lara, their respective presidents, presented an overview of the state of academic freedom in the world.

University presidents in both countries share the view that EU member states which are governed, or supported, by political groups which might wish to undermine fundamental values on university campuses are particularly at risk.

They recalled that the freedom to teach and do research, to publish and disseminate the results of research, to create and transmit new knowledge through teaching and training, and to question dogmas or established doctrines by encouraging critical thinking by students, administrative staff and faculty alike are at the heart of academic freedom.

In line with the new *Magna Charta Universitatum*, the Rome Communiqué, the Bonn Declaration and the Marseille Declaration, France Universités and the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions call for a renewal of the social contract on which academic freedom rests, provided universities are allowed to define by themselves their responsibilities and role within and for society, independently of any prescriptive or coercive action on the part of public authorities. In this respect, academic freedom is inseparable from institutional autonomy, which it must give its full meaning.

Academic freedom, however, entails responsibilities towards citizens. This requires on the part of universities the ability to face up to major political, socio-economic and geopolitical upheavals, as well as to major contemporary challenges such as sustainable development, gender equality, the fight against all forms of discrimination, as well as the hosting of academic and student refugees.

Along with other fundamental freedoms and values, academic freedom lies at the heart of democracy.

This is why Astrid Söderbergh Widding and Manuel Tunon de Lara solemnly request that academic freedom be enshrined in national constitutions wherever it is not yet the case.