



Leopoldina
Nationale Akademie
der Wissenschaften

Call for Contributions to the Closed Programme

Academic Freedom under Pressure in Contemporary Europe: Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Strategic Agency

Location Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Vilnius

Date Monday 15 March and Tuesday 16 March 2027

Jointly hosted by the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences and
the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina

The Lithuanian Academy of Sciences and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina warmly invite European science academies, their Human Rights Committees and their representatives to contribute actively to the closed programme (16 March) of the 2027 *Human Rights and Science* Symposium in Vilnius. We welcome ideas for thematic sessions that participants would like to develop and organise together with the hosting academies.

Background

Across Europe, academic freedom is being challenged in different ways and under different political, institutional and societal conditions. The symposium aims to map these challenges across national contexts, identify mechanisms through which academic freedom may be restricted or undermined, and puts special emphasis on approaches to protecting and strengthening it.

A particular focus will be placed on both the individual and institutional level: What can researchers, academies, universities and research organisations themselves do to safeguard academic freedom, strengthen institutional autonomy and integrity, and maintain their capacity to act? How can they identify risks earlier, learn from different national experiences and develop effective strategies and practices?

Programme and participation

The first day of the symposium (15 March) will include a public event with two keynote lectures and a panel discussion jointly organised by the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences and the Leopoldina.

The second day (16 March) will be dedicated primarily to closed working sessions for representatives of European academies and Human Rights Committees. These sessions are intended to provide space for open exchange on experiences, challenges and possible responses.

The working sessions will take place in a closed and confidential setting to allow for an open exchange of potentially sensitive experiences and challenges. The substance of the discussions, individual contributions and related materials should not be shared outside the group of participants.

We warmly invite European science academies, their Human Rights Committees and their individual representatives to suggest themes and formats that they would be interested in developing into a session.

Possible topics could include, but are not limited to:

- mapping current challenges to academic freedom across Europe;
- mechanisms through which academic freedom is restricted or undermined;
- legal, institutional and organisational approaches to protecting academic freedom;
- the role of science academies in safeguarding academic freedom;
- national experiences, emerging risks and transferable practices.

Session format

Sessions should normally last around **60 minutes**, with up to **90 minutes** possible where appropriate. The format is open and may include, for example, short inputs followed by discussion, case studies, moderated exchanges, roundtables or interactive workshop formats.

What to submit

A short proposal should include:

- a working title;
- a brief description of the proposed session (max. 200 words);
- key guiding question;
- the proposed format;
- the organising academy, Human Rights Committee or representative;
- possible contributors or partner organisations, if already known;
- technical equipment and material needed on site for conducting the session.

Proposals should be submitted by **30 November 2026** **to the organising academies.**

The organising academies will review all contributions with a view to developing a coherent programme together with the proposers. Where themes overlap, we may suggest bringing contributors together or further developing related ideas jointly. Depending on the number of contributions received and the time available, not every proposal may be included as a separate session.