



Brussels, 25 June 2021

Dear Speaker Henrik Dam Kristensen,

on behalf of Executive Board of European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) I am sending you a public statement protesting against political attacks on academic freedom and voicing concern about the erosion of academic freedom in Denmark.

On behalf of ECREA Executive Board,

Associate Professor dr. Ilija Tomanić Trivundža,
ECREA President



ECREA protests against political attacks on academic freedom and is deeply concerned about the erosion of academic freedom in Denmark

The European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) is deeply concerned about the erosion of academic freedom in Denmark and the mounting political attacks on particular research areas within the fields of social sciences and humanities.

On 1 June 2021 the Danish Parliament adopted a statement on ‘Excessive activism in certain research environments’, calling upon universities to ensure “that the self-regulation of scientific practice is working” and that “there should be no standardization of research in order to produce politics disguised as science”.

A number of academics, particularly those working in the fields of race, gender, migration, and post-colonial studies, have been publicly attacked by both Danish politicians and media outlets in ways that by far surpass legitimate public debate and critique. The attacks have resulted in a number of academics withdrawing from public debates and even filing for legal protection. ECREA members and academics working in the field of media and communication research were among academics who were pressured or publicly attacked by the media, politicians and public figures.

In an open letter, signed by over 3000 academics, the statement adopted by the Danish parliament has been described as a culmination of “political campaign against targeted research environments by a number of politicians and public figures across the political spectrum” which include not only social sciences and humanities but also technical and natural sciences. It is particularly worrying that the support for public pressure on critical research comes from across the political spectrum, that the government is openly critical of research which does not support its policies and that the Ministry of Higher Education And Science has not defended the autonomy of scientific research.

ECREA fears that the apparent political consensus on the undesirability of critical research, indicated by the majority support for the statement (72 out of 96 cast votes), will lead to intensification of what is described by our members as a growing culture of fear and will lead to withdrawal from public debate, self-censorship or worse, decline of critical research on politically sensitive topics. This seems particularly likely given the number of precariously-employed academics in Denmark. Such developments would be detrimental not only on development of science but on the state of democracy in Denmark.

The current state of affairs – not only Covid 19 pandemic but the looming economic, environmental and humanitarian crisis – has highlighted the necessity and benefits of free and critical scientific research. Scientific autonomy from political and religious power has developed for a reason and the list of cases where political silencing of critical research has resulted in societal and environmental failures is already too long.

ECREA sees positions, such as the one adopted by Danish parliament on 1 June 2021, as systemic attacks on academic freedom and calls the Danish parliament to stop political attacks on autonomy of scientific research. It also calls the Danish Minister of Higher Education and Science, Ane Halsboe-Jørgensen, to actively act in favour of the independence of scientific research and higher education institutions in Denmark.

In the light of this, ECREA would also like to express its support to our Danish members and colleagues.

On behalf of ECREA Executive Board,

Associate Professor dr. Ilija Tomanić Trivundža,
ECREA President

