

Break-out session 1: The challenges of global knowledge collaboration and becoming more prepared for them

Adapting to policy shifts

How to keep collaboration going when politics change?

Responding to security risks

How to prepare for threats — from cyberattacks to war?

Protecting academic freedom

How to defend autonomy when freedoms are at risk?

Denmark

⇄ Adapting to policy shifts , responding to security risks and academic freedom - discussed together

1. Academic freedom - must also add responsibility
2. Teach students (and staff) the concept of academic freedom, what happens if we loose it?
3. Tell politicians and society specific stories about how knowledge change the world
4. Academic freedom and autonomy are internal concept, we need to make narratives for the society
5. Ideology turns. Narratives may also be misunderstood or used against us. Do not reach everyone, switching the story
6. Risk of becoming reactive
7. Keep universities open, different opinions and dialogue (Universities in the US: polarisations vs the nordic)
8. HEIs must be more interested in freedom of speech, respect and make areas for different views in the HEIs and in society. Train students (US did not have)
9. Arguments and evidence
10. HEIs must be self critical and prepared
11. Collaboration, communicate in different platforms
12. Basic (public) funding - need of internal debate on dimension

Estonia

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- **Preserve your identity but stay open and global.** Preserve your national language, culture and cultural heritage - But also: Stay open and global (use English)
 - **Why do we need to build resilience, and what do we need to defend?** Academic values, fine arts, humanities, social sciences, culture, democracy, academic freedom, and institutional autonomy.
How can we do it? We are stronger together! Networking and collaboration contribute to reduce HEIs's vulnerability. Diversity is a strength! **Can we do something more together?**
 - **The Contingency plans** are important ("beredskapsplaner") to be prepared. Political changes. IT-attacks. Research security...
 - i) **Learn** from the fast development in Hungary, USA, Ukraine, etc.
 - ii) **Take stock** of your own national legal and financial toolboxes. What can you do? When is the time and how do you need to use the different tools?
 - iii) **Carry out** scenario planning and training.

Finland

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1. There needs to be trust, solidarity, good communication and possibilities created to share experiences among partners in established networks.
 2. Being prepared, creating risk-assessments, simulations, trainings under strong leadership that helps gather both staff as well as students.
 3. Data-driven monitoring of academic freedom in order to keep track of an institution's/country's situation and being able to take action if one is falling behind. Having courage to speak up even if it's not you that is being influenced personally by restrictions to academic freedom.

**1. Key Point 1**

Strive for balance between looking inward and outward. Avoid isolation by not focusing solely on European or Nordic values.

2. Key Point 2

The principle “as open as possible, as close as necessary” highlights that academic freedom is essential but comes with responsibility. Universities must carefully assess risks and partners, while still maintaining space for their own judgment in complex, “grey zone” situations.

3. Key Point 3

Crisis management preparedness varies widely across countries, even though all have national regulations in place. Proximity to Russia often requires greater readiness.



1. European collaboration – active participation in networks (including Nordic-Baltic networks) and alliances is of significant importance.
2. International students play an important role.
3. In global cooperation, maintaining a balance between academic freedom and security is crucial.
4. Universities have a responsibility to contribute to reducing polarization, for example by providing education on how to effectively address disinformation.



1. Demonstrate how free academic inquiry has historically led to major breakthroughs – our own resp
2. We all need to reflect on: “Are we brave enough to stand alone – and to stand together?”
3. Strengthen institutional and individual responsibility when entering collaborations and undertaking research.
4. Discover leading practices, adopt what works, and contribute your strengths to the wider Nordic-Baltic community (E.g. preparations for threats – learn from Finland)
5. Institutionalize and strengthen this type of Nordic-Baltic collaboration.



1. Use clear frameworks to guide decisions for building resilient collaboration networks at diverse levels of internationalization.
2. With respect to responding to security risks – it is necessary to calculate the impact of not-collaborating, not just going the easy way of not collaborating because it is risky.
3. Protecting academic freedom means ensuring scholars can pursue inquiry and collaboration without political or ideological interference, within ethical and security limits provided by the wider framework.



1. Adapting to policy shifts
 - Politification of the institutions – how to react to for example to pressure to change the faculty structures etc.?
 - We need discussion about how the universities work.

The policies change when the governments change for example the education numbers targets. But the universities do not work like this – universities work in long term and research and education go hand in hand. It takes time to build the field of science.

 - We should better show that the universities bring all the global knowledge for the good of our societies.
2. 1. Responding to the security risks
 - We need discussion about what is university and what is the role of risk mitigation in universities.

Developing the systematic risk assessment is far in some of the countries, and in very beginning in others.

 - o Cyber-attacks are constant.
 - Microsoft systems both protect and cause risks.
 - The strategies and preparedness is just being put up everywhere. Mainly this is on the responsibility of the universities to do this. In Norway central support to universities on data issues.
 - Admissions a risk point
 - We have entered into a world where we consider individuals (foreign students) as risks. We need to recognize the most apparent risks but be open.
 - Worst scenario is that we begin to build on mistrust.

- We are not state police and other authorities are responsible on the security – the universities follow the law and have dialogue with the authorities, but keep doors open.
- At the same time the issue that the Chinese students need to sign the agreement to report to China. This has affected how willing the universities are to hire Chinese researchers.
- As open as possible, as closed as necessary is a good principle. Not only the leaders, but the whole staff.
- In most countries discussion with the security authorities.
- Bursts of students coming from certain countries: rumors in social media in certain countries cause the mass applications from these countries for some while.
 - o There are tools to avoid this like: elevate the language requirements, application fees, higher degree fees, collaboration with the migration agencies.
 - o There are political voices wanting to put restrictions from certain countries, but so far the universities cannot and do not want to restrict certain countries
 - o Financing is not the driving force, but sometimes international students are a way to increase the critical mass to keep on the small field of science running
 - o The foreign students are not only a threat as they are talked now, but often brilliant young minds who raise the level of the universities!
- Universities are important actors in societies facilitating international discussions and diplomacy – we should keep the dialogue going!

3.1. Protecting academic freedom

- We tend to discuss that academic freedom is threatened from outside, but we should also consider the risk from inside. Social media makes it difficult to stand for the arguments also from inside. Polarization seen in the campuses too and we are moving away from dialogue.
- Request and pressure to the rectors to sign pamphlets/agreements for Palestina, sustainability etc. The universities are used to make things visible in a society. The purpose is good, but there is less awareness of academics freedom than before thus there is conflict in this.
 - o Hard to argue, why we are pro Ukraine and not pro Palestina.
 - o We do not have to adapt to policy shifts except by research.
 - o This is an issue more in other countries than in others.
- What should be the balance: government-born and what bottom-up, when creating processes for research security? Could the universities in USA have done something differently before? Probably yes.

As open as possible, as closed as necessary is a good principle

- Universities are important actors in societies facilitating international discussions and diplomacy – we should keep the dialogue going

We need to remind the society and our own communities, what the universities are there for.

- We should better show that the universities bring all the global knowledge for the good of our societies.

NATO

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1. Adapting to policy shift. How do we deal with new research partners from universities or countries we do not trust? We need shared responsibility at all levels in our universities. We need a lot of education, training and discussion on this new challenges across our universities. How do we deal with Israel?
2. Responding to security risk. Are we under attack by cyber attack. Who are attacking us, are these countries or teenagers? How do we deal with this new reality. We need stronger and more effective defense for data. And there is an extra risk since so much of our data is processed outside our universities or our firewalls.
3. Protecting academic freedom. AF and Autonomy is the cornerstone of higher education in which we need to defend with all means. How to we define AF – some would say that AF is a freedom to do everything. We need to know what we mean by using this term and come up with some common understanding of what it means and we also need to talk about the responsibility that follows the freedom. Protect academic responsibility?
4. All these questions are connected, do we see any bigger picture? At all level we need to educate staff and students in these areas. To equip them with tools and skills to deal with these policy shift. This means guidelines from the leadership and critical discussion within universities. Univ. also need to educate the politicians. Academic freedom is probably not a good term to fight for towards politicians and even the general public, gives rise to the idea of the Ivory tower, maybe we should talk more about academic responsibility and Autonomy. In this respect we also need to remember the impotence of private funders which are key players in this respect in some NB-countries.

