



DM - Letter to the Ministries of Education in Denmark - Tirana Ministerial Conference in May

Dear Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Children and Education, Jakob Jensen, and Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Research, Hanne Meldgaard,

The digital and green transition, the health and cost of living crisis, attacks on fundamental values such as human rights, the rule of law, and democracy, freedom, and respect for knowledge and science, as well as Russia's war against Ukraine and the risk of escalation, have a strong social, economic, and political impact on the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and on educators and researchers in higher education and research institutions.

The European higher education and research sector and its staff play a central role in defending the fundamental values of higher education, human rights, democracy, and equality. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are crucial elements in strong democracies and social development. Academic freedom is essential for any democracy to enable freedom of expression, open discussions, and build mutual trust in knowledge. Higher education and research free from political, economic, and religious influence also contribute to ensuring a knowledge-based society where rational and informed decisions are made.

To ensure high-quality higher education and research and to develop "a more inclusive, innovative, interconnected, and resilient European Higher Education Area (EHEA) [1]," it is crucial that staff are properly valued and supported. It is essential to ensure that academic careers are attractive to talented educators and researchers. However, increasing pressures on staff and on higher education and research institutions, including underfunding, privatization, precarization in academic work, and declining wages, make academic careers less attractive.

Improving the attractiveness of academic careers and for staff in higher education and research is a high priority for the member organizations under the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), representing educators and researchers in the higher education and research sector in 52 countries.

DM is a member of ETUCE and has participated in enhancing ETUCE meetings regarding the upcoming Tirana Ministerial Conference 2024. The boards of DM's sectors for University Colleges, business academies, and maritime education, and for Universities would like to urge the ministries to focus on the following issues in the continued work leading up to and during the upcoming Ministerial Conference 2024. We encourage the pursuit of the following goals in a future communique:

- Strengthening academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and other fundamental values, such as freedom for knowledge, science, and speech, and ensuring that these fundamental elements are effectively monitored throughout

the EHEA, with the involvement of staff in the process. Unfortunately, DM's members observe a lag in academic freedom and institutional autonomy in various places in Europe, undermining the quality of education and research.

- Ensuring high-quality research-based teaching and learning, equality between teaching and research, a shift from quantitative to qualitative assessment of teaching and research, and a responsible, transparent, and collegial evaluation of scientific work. DM's members find it crucial that researchers and educators have secure frameworks that enable the highest possible quality in their work. It is important that the assessment of education and research is based on relevant methods, both qualitative and quantitative.
- Recognizing that developments in teaching and learning, including digitalization, should be supported by pedagogical practice and ensuring an appropriate balance between work and private life for staff, including respecting educators' and researchers' right to be online as well as offline. DM's members find it crucial to ensure resources to support digital teaching methods. Digital tools cannot stand alone but require a pedagogical and educational practice that ensures students gain skills to operate in an increasingly digital job market and society.

If you are interested in further elaboration on our proposals for the upcoming communique, we are, of course, available for a meeting.

Best Regards,

Brian Arly Jacobsen – Chairman of DM University

Tommy Dalegaard Madsen – Chairman of DM University Colleges, Business Academies, and Maritime Education