

## **The Guild supports Sweden's Rectors in defence of Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy**

The Guild stands in full support of the unanimous protest of Swedish Rectors expressed through the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions, against the Swedish government's decision to shorten the terms of office of the external members of Swedish university boards from three years to 17 months. This action, taken to enable the government to make direct appointments of security experts to the Boards of Swedish universities, circumvents a well-established process to ensure a proper, careful balance between the government's right to overview public universities, and the institutional autonomy and self-governance necessary to ensure academic freedom in the pursuit of knowledge.

Particularly at a time when Sweden holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU, it is essential that it sets an example to the rest of the EU to uphold and defend the principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom in Europe. We remind Sweden and the EU Member States of their commitment to protecting these fundamental principles through the Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research, and their engagement in the ERA Policy Agenda. We call on our policymakers to work in close collaboration and partnership with their universities to ensure that legitimate security concerns are recognised and respected within the essential context of the free circulation of knowledge, the intrinsically global nature of research, and the need for academic freedom and autonomy in how we produce knowledge.

We call on Sweden, the Swedish Presidency, and the European Council to ensure that institutional autonomy and academic freedom are always respected. It is essential that Europe is strengthened as a global model for academic freedom and institutional autonomy. This is the basis for the quality of our research and teaching. It is critical for our ability to attract and retain research talents. And it is the foundation for the vibrant contribution our universities make to public life.