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# Freedom and Safety of Scientists

## UNESCO Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers

Carl Vannetelbosch  
Inclusion, Rights and Intercultural Dialogue Section  
Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO

- I. UNESCO Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers at a glance**
- II. Major implementation initiatives**
- III. Upscaling efforts: the focus on Freedom and Safety of Scientists**

# I. 2017 Recommendation – Overview



- Standard-setting instrument for values-driven science ecosystems
- Adopted by all UNESCO Member States
- Replaces the 1974 Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers
- Subject to a four-yearly monitoring
- Intended to influence the development of national laws and practices

# I. 2017 Recommendation – 10 key areas

Key area 1  
**Science  
for UN ideals**



Key area 2  
**Science  
and society**



Key area 3  
**Research  
informing policy**



Key area 4  
**Science as a  
common good**



Key area 5  
**Inclusivity and  
non-discrimination**



Key area 6  
**Human rights  
standards**



Key area 7  
**Scientific freedom  
and responsibility**



Key area 8  
**Scientific integrity  
and ethics**



Key area 9  
**Human capital**



Key area 10  
**Enabling  
environment**



## II. Implementing the 2017 Recommendation

- **Responsible Research Networked Globally (RRING)**
- **Strengthening STI Systems for Sustainable Development in Africa**
- **Study on status of scientists in Mongolia**
- **Monitoring the RS|SR**
- **NEW UNESCO Programme on Freedom and Safety of Scientists**



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Management of  
Social Transformations  
Programme



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## II. Monitoring the 2017 Recommendation



- **Global Observatory of Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Instruments (GO-SPIN)**
  - Analyse STI evidence-based policies to detect gaps and make reforms
  - Online platform updated to allow online reporting (2024-2025 cycle)
- **RS|SR Indicators**
  - Measure progress in STI system over time and allow systematic and consistent reporting across all Member States
  - Draft framework currently being finetuned by experts before submitting to Member States for approval

## II. Strengthening the 2017 Recommendation

### 216 EX/Decision 45 (May 2023)

- *Requests* the Director-General to strengthen work on the **freedoms and responsibilities of scientists** to support, inter alia, national efforts in line with document 216 EX/45 and the provisions of the 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers, and in particular its paragraph 46;



# III. Freedom and Safety in the 2017 Recommendation

Key area 5

**Inclusivity and non-discrimination**



Key area 7

**Scientific freedom and responsibility**



Key area 9

**Human capital**



- Member States should take measures to ensure equal opportunities for the initial education and training needed to qualify for research and development careers **without discrimination**
- Creativity of scientific researchers should be promoted in national policy on the basis of utmost respect for the **autonomy and freedom of research indispensable to scientific progress**
- Scientific researchers are recommended to **work in a spirit of intellectual freedom**, which should include **protection from undue influences**, and to **express themselves freely and openly** on the ethical, human, scientific, social or ecological values
- Member States should guarantee the **safety of scientific researchers** and the **protection of workers in general from hostile or dangerous environments**

### III. Freedom and Safety – Telling Statistics

- **22%** of 300 scientist respondents reported receiving threats of physical or sexual violence for giving media **interviews about COVID-19** (Nature, October 2021)
- **39%** of 468 scientist respondents experienced online harassment or abuse related to their **climate research** (Global Witness, April 2023)
- **49%** of women scientists out of 5,200 scientists in 117 countries say they have experienced **sexual harassment** at work (Ipsos, on behalf of the L'Oréal Foundation, 2022)
- **62%** of respondent researchers in 31 countries reported having been the victim of one or multiple forms of **gender-based harassment or violence** (UniSAFE project, 2022)
- **391 attacks** on **higher education communities** in 65 countries and territories (Scholars at Risk – *Free to Think*, 2022)



### III. Freedom and Safety – Science Dialogues

- **What is the problem?**
  - *Main forms of harassment of and violence*
  - *Impact of such harassment and violence on scientists*
  - *Extent instigated by actors from outside of academia*
  - *Link between gender and identity and other factors*
  - *Overview of the scope and depth of the phenomenon*
- **What are the causes of gender-related harassment and violence?**
- **What are possible solutions for the problem, on the institutional, national and international level?**



# III. Freedom and Safety – Policy Dialogue

- **35 Member States' Science Advisors** joined to share their thoughts, challenges, needs, best practices and proposals from a national perspective
- **Transparent and constructive** approach
- **Four questions:**
  1. What is understood by 'safety'?
  2. What can States do to protect the safety of scientists?
  3. What do States need to protect the safety of scientists?
  4. What should a global Call to Action to promote the safety of scientists include?



### III. Freedom and Safety – New Mandate

#### Draft 42 C/Resolution (November 2023)

- *Invites* all Member States to strengthen their efforts to ensure the full and comprehensive implementation, monitoring and reporting of the 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers, **emphasizing the role of women and youth**;
- *Requests* the Director-General to **establish a programme on the promotion of scientific freedom and the safety of scientists** to support inter alia national efforts in accordance with the provisions of the 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers, in particular to review periodically the conditions of scientific researchers, and in line with 216 EX/Decision 45;



### III. Freedom and Safety – New Programme

- Creation of a **dedicated space for regular dialogue** with science policy advisors;
  - Convening of a **ministerial roundtable**;
  - **Data collection and analysis** leading to annual reports;
  - **Advocacy and awareness-raising** about freedom and safety, possibly through a **Call to Action**;
  - Building **institutional capacities**;
  - Fostering **alliances with key stakeholders**, including relevant UNESCO networks.
- **In close and constructive collaboration with Member States**



### III. Freedom and Safety – Next steps

- Publication of **Policy Paper** on the Safety of Scientists
- Develop and implement the new **programme in detail** in collaboration with stakeholders
- Create and enhance **partnerships** for joint implementation
- Collaborate on **specific issues** (data collection, advocacy, ...)
- Elevate issue on **international agenda**



**YOU'RE  
INVITED!**

# Thank you

Carl Vannetelbosch  
UNESCO

for

UniSAFE Final Conference  
Commitments towards gender-based violence at international level  
21 November 2023



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