

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

Directorate General II - Democracy

The Director General

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 20 February 2014

Dear Professor Olsson,

Thank you very much for your e-mail of 7 February 2014, to which the Secretary General has instructed me to respond.

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are key ingredients of democratic societies, and I am pleased to note that your web site refers to the European Convention on Human Rights as well as to the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)7 on the responsibility of public authorities for academic freedom and human rights.

Through its Education programme as well as through its contribution to developing the European Higher Education Area, the Council of Europe seeks to promote a culture of democracy and human rights. One example of this is our long running cooperation with the US Steering Committee of the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy; the European Wergeland Centre and other partners in promoting the democratic mission of higher education.

While academic freedom and institutional autonomy are key to developing and maintaining democracy, the Council of Europe's main role, as an intergovernmental organization, is to work with the States party to the European Cultural Convention to implement these principles in their legislation and practice. Addressing possible individual cases is above all a matter for competent judicial and other bodies, including – to the extent the cases may fall under the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights – through the European Court of Human Rights should all recourse to appeal have been exhausted within the national court system. It is not within the remit of the Council of Europe as such to assess individual cases.

The Council of Europe, however, underlines time and again the importance of academic freedom and institutional autonomy to developing and maintaining a culture of democracy, not only to Swedish public authorities but to the public authorities of all States party to the European Cultural Convention as well as to civil society.

Yours sincerely,


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