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Universities for a Resilient, Democratic Future: CHARM-EU Statement on Democracy



BARCELONA, Spain, 23 November 2026 - The CHARM-EU Alliance has adopted a Statement on Democracy following its Annual Conference 2026, European Alliances, Democratic Values, and Societal Resilience held at Åbo Akademi University in Turku, Finland, this October. The statement reaffirms the importance of democratic values, academic freedom, and international cooperation in addressing today's societal challenges.

Living in a democracy is a privilege that must not be taken for granted. Only seven per cent of the world's population lives in strong liberal democracies, the lowest figure in 50 years. As higher education institutions, it is our responsibility to fiercely defend the democratic values we stand for: values of academic freedom, reasoned debate, academic enquiry and openness, inclusion, diversity, and innovation.

Strong, well-funded institutions are essential components of a healthy democracy. Universities exist to challenge and serve society and its citizens. Faced with climate change, geopolitical instability, rapid technological change, mis- and disinformation, and the erosion of trust in expertise, universities must work together to advocate for their values and to create a world in which humanity, biodiversity and the planet can flourish.

Crucially, as highlighted at the CHARM-EU Annual Conference 2026, European Universities alliances and their universities have a vital role to play in this mission. Strengthening democratic values and participation is a key priority in CHARM-EU's strategy for the coming years. Moving far beyond traditional frameworks of institutional cooperation and student mobility, these alliances serve as powerful platforms for transnational co-creation and democratic resilience.

By embedding democratic norms, values and practice directly into education, fostering open science, embracing interculturality at their core, and uniting educators, researchers, students, and citizens to tackle local and global challenges collectively, European Universities alliances and higher education institutions act as essential anchors, keeping our societies from drifting apart and ensuring that higher education remains a cornerstone of a resilient, inclusive future for Europe and beyond.