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**Rectors' conferences in Germany, Austria and Switzerland:
Criticism of how researchers who are critical of the government are treated
in Turkey**

The rectors' conferences in Germany (HRK), Austria (uniko) and Switzerland (swissuniversities) are looking upon the Turkish state's treatment of its researchers who are critical of the government with grave concern.

Presidents Prof. Dr. Horst Hippler (HRK), Dr. Sonja Hammerschmid (uniko) and Prof. Dr. Michael Hengartner (swissuniversities) fiercely criticised the Turkish government's repression of those who signed the petition entitled "We Will not be a Party to this Crime" and called for freedom of expression to be protected in Turkey.

HRK President Hippler made the following statement: "Freedom of expression and freedom of science, research and teaching are inextricably linked. Just like any other responsible citizen of a democratic state, researchers must also be allowed to express their opinion freely. The relationship between German and Turkish higher education institutions, which is traditionally good, is very important to us, so these recent events are all the more concerning to us."

Uniko President Hammerschmid said: "Freedom of expression is a key European value and a cornerstone of the international scientific community that must be respected by every government."

Professor Hengartner added: "Universities have always been places of free thinking and open discussion, so they need special protection."

HRK President Hippler was one of the signatories of an open letter from the *Scholars at Risk* international network to the President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The letter was published today on <http://scholarsatrisk.nyu.edu/>.

The petition titled "We Will not be a Party to this Crime" demands an end to Turkish military intervention in the country's Kurdish provinces and calls for a peaceful solution to the conflict. A series of arrests were made following the publication of the petition on 10 January 2016. Other researchers have been threatened with detainment, prosecution or termination of positions.

Additional information:

The three rectors' conferences are members of the European University Association (EUA). You can find a press release by the association on the events occurring in Turkey [here](#).