



## The Young Academy Groningen re-emphasizes the need for effective communication and clarity on academic freedom within the UG

January 10, 2024

Given the latest legal decision by the Court of Appeal on the case of Susanne Täuber, the Young Academy Groningen (YAG) wants to reiterate the key messages of its public statement of May 2023 ([link](#)). As we elaborate below, the YAG believes that there is still a clear window of opportunity to kickstart genuine organizational changes regarding social safety and academic freedom, and for the UG to be in the forefront about these important issues.

After releasing the May 2023 statement, the YAG has discussed the issues of social safety and academic freedom with multiple members of the academic community, including the Board of the University (CvB). As a result of these exchanges, we continue to believe that it should be the CvB who takes the lead in the required discussions and organizational changes, working together with relevant stakeholders. The YAG feels such a leadership is important to demonstrate the CvB's commitment to learn from the past, and to prevent other cases from happening in the future. Of course, the YAG is eager to work together with the CvB on the topics of social safety and academic freedom, and to be an active, constructive partner in any related initiative.

As we stated in our May 2023 statement, the YAG identifies two key matters that require attention as a starting point:

1. Transparent and empathetic communication as a central element of effective leadership.
2. Clarity regarding academic freedom for Early-Career Researchers (ECRs).

Against this background, the YAG would like to reemphasize the need for the following areas to be considered, and for the CvB to intensify their efforts to address them:

- Leadership roles need to include a commitment to timely communication that revolves around *empathy* and *transparency*;
- To ensure social safety, academics, and in particular ECRs, need to be given authority and platforms to define how we realize 'academic freedom' in practice, in particular concerning voicing criticism towards the *hierarchies* that we all work in.

Furthermore, the YAG also wants to underscore that the challenges for academic freedom have much to do with work culture, communication and professional hierarchies. For these reasons, the YAG strongly believes that ongoing discussions about the need for more egalitarian social relations at universities in general (see also "Iedereen professor") need to be continued in order to foster and protect academic freedom and social safety in the long term.

As the YAG, we will continue to represent and defend the interests of ECRs and make their voices heard. We reiterate our willingness and availability for collaborating with the CvB and executive structures across the UG towards this end.