



ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN TIMES OF ILLIBERAL ASSAULTS ON DEMOCRACY

September 19th and 20th, 2022 | CEU QS AUDITORIUM

The university – as a site of critical thinking, knowledge production and knowledge transfer – is a popular target of illiberal attacks in all democracies today. The dismissal of thousands of Turkish academics under the guise of emergency measures in 2016 was dramatic. In contrast, CEU's own example is a sobering reminder of how little it takes to uproot an internationally recognized institution of higher education through legal means in the heart of Europe. Institutional and curricular reforms, budget cuts and constraints on research funding, adjustments of tuition fees have a familiar chilling effect from India to Brazil, the United Kingdom to France that impairs the epistemic foundations of university autonomy.

This conference explores the shape and shades of academic freedom across the globe in times of illiberal assaults on democracy. Scholars and practitioners, who have been at the forefront of defining and defending the elusive freedom, are invited to share their experiences and exchange ideas. For without academic freedom neither the university nor liberal democracy as we know it will survive in the 21st century.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2022

16.30-16.40 / Welcome Remarks

Shalini Randeria // CEU

Wilhelm Krull // TNI

Renata Uitz // Department of Legal Studies / CEU / Democracy Institute //

16.40-18.30 / Assaults on Academic Freedom

As liberal democracies are systematically being dismantled from within using electoral majorities, universities are facing ever more confident authoritarian rulers. Assaults on academic freedom are increasing from both external forces as well as from within the university. Is there a need to distinguish between academic freedom and freedom of expression in this context? How best can we defend both today?

Chair: Renata Uitz // Department of Legal Studies / CEU / Democracy Institute //

Panelists:

Nandini Sundar // University of Delhi //

Michael Ignatieff // Department of History / CEU //

Éric Fassin // Department of Political Science / University of Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis // [online]

Alexander Etkind // Department of International Relations / CEU //

18.30-19.00 / Reception, CEU Glass Hall (Quellenstrasse 51)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2022

9.00-10.45 / Locating Academic Freedom Outside the University

Although academic freedom has traditionally been associated with the university, free inquiry is practiced in a variety of institutions outside of it as well. For instance, institutes of advanced study have become sites for generating new ideas outside of universities or partially embedded in these. In some illiberal settings free inquiry has migrated to think tanks and independent research centers. In view of these changes traditional epistemic sites – such as archives – acquire new roles and gain new relevance.

Chair: **Shalini Randeria** // CEU //

Panelists:

Wilhelm Krull // TNI //

Istvan Rev // Department of History / CEU / Blinken Open Society Archives //

Camilla Croso // OSF //

Andreas Schedler // CEU Democracy Institute //

10.45-11.15 / Coffee break

11.15-12.45 / The Culture Wars and the University

With populist anti-intellectualism and illiberal practices on the rise academic freedom is caught in strident debates about the values that underpin the university. As the raging culture wars engulf universities, the epistemic and normative foundations of democracy are under threat.

Chair: **Renata Uitz** // Department of Legal Studies / CEU / Democracy Institute //

Panelists:

Maria Kronfeldner // Department of Philosophy / CEU //

Vladimir Safatle // Department of Philosophy and the Department of Psychology / University of São Paulo //

Ruzha Smilova // Department of Political Science / University of Sofia //

Éva Fodor // Department of Gender Studies / CEU //

12.45-14.00 / Lunch Break

14.00-15.45 / The Future of Democracy – University – Academic Freedom

The mission and purpose of the university needs to be re-envisioned under current conditions. Illiberal practices targeting the university and its community of scholars and students – and their freedom – lend new urgency to older questions about the relevance and impact of scholarship. Debates on decolonizing curricula and providing affordable access to the university point to the need for reforms as well. With sustained attempts to silence dissenting voices gaining ground many scholars are being forced to relocate outside their home countries.

Chair: **Wilhelm Krull** // TNI //

Panelists:

John Douglass // Center for Studies in Higher Education (CSHE) / University of California, Berkeley //

Aysuda Kölemen // Bard Berlin // OSUN Threatened Scholars Initiative //

Mitchell Ash // Universität Wien // BBAW working group on academic freedom //

(TBC) **Sonja Puntscher-Riekmann** // University of Salzburg //

