

Workshop

Academic Freedom in a hybrid illiberal regime Global lessons from Hungary

Organiser: Prof. Konrad Lachmayer

Sigmund Freud University, Faculty of Law

Lassallestraße 3, 6th floor, room L 619

1020 Vienna

25./26. April 2024

Registration: Please send an email to johannes.steinboeck@jus.sfu.ac.at

Since 2010, academia has been under increasing pressure in Hungary. While the expulsion of the Central European University brought considerable international attention, it was only the tip of the iceberg. Infringement of academic freedom targets teaching, research, and dissemination, and has many faces: defunding or banning academic programs, harassment and dismissal of academics, censoring curricula or conferences, as well as outlawing or refusing to cooperate with or provide information to nongovernmental organizations and human rights defenders, which are valuable sources for academic research. Technically, it involves bringing independent public research institutions under government control, reallocating funds to an alternative network of government-dependent and government-friendly research institutes, think-tanks, and GONGO's, taking-over the national accreditation board and the national science fund, as well as a sweeping reorganization of almost the entire public higher educational sector to be managed by politically controlled foundations.

While the case studies are brought from Hungary, the workshop goes beyond the habitual country report-style inventory of grievances and infringements, to frame and formulate the contributions in a way that the Hungarian case study may offer added value for global discussions on the conceptual problems and the (interconnected) infringements of academic freedom under authoritarian pressure.

There are two points of departure where the Hungarian case may offer instructive insight. The first, in light of the particular context and the consequences of the European Union's rule of law conditionality sanctioning mechanisms targeting higher educational institutions, pertains to the divest/defund dilemma of how liberal democracies should relate to academia in illiberal regimes.

A second illuminative feature of the Hungarian case lies in the fact that academia is simultaneously a victim and an agent of state capture and government takeover. While academia has been a target of the populist regime, the academic sector and community is not homogenous, as some institutions and academics are beneficiaries of the system with promising career prospects in highly lucrative positions.

The case of Hungary highlights that infringement of academic freedom does not only happen by chilling independent research and teaching, but also via using captured, funded and governed, often transnationally operating academia to advocate government agendas, frequently disguised by scholarly legitimacy which is difficult to identify on the global academic market.

Workshop Programme

25. April, Thursday

1.30 p.m. Registration

2.00 p.m. Welcome Address

I. Introduction

2.15 p.m. What is academic freedom: stakeholders, challenges, infringements, remedies: an overview

Andras L. Pap (HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences – Institute for Legal Studies/Eötvös University, Budapest; Central European University, Vienna)

2.35 p.m. Discussion

2.50 p.m. Domestic and multilevel constitutional protections, and the academic divest/defund dilemma in the light of the EU's rule of law sanctions

Nóra Chronowski (HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences – Institute for Legal Studies, Budapest)

3.10 p.m. Discussion

3.25 p.m. Coffee Break

II. Structural and Institutional Developments

3.45 p.m. The Funding of Academic Freedom - A Tool for Pressure or Protection?

Emese Szilágyi (UNHCR)

4.05 p.m. Discussion

The facade of privatization: diverting public institutions under political control, and the double-edged rhetoric of entrepreneurial management

Nóra Bán-Forgács (HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences – Institute for Legal Studies/Milton Friedman University, Budapest)

4.40 p.m. Discussion

4.55 p.m. Coffee Break

5.15 p.m. Creating institutional dependencies: The example of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, *Viktor Lőrincz* (HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences – Institute for Legal Studies/Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest)

5.35 a.m. Discussion

5.50 a.m. Pressure on Academic Freedom and Democratic Decline,

Konrad Lachmayer (Sigmund Freud University, Faculty of Law)

6.10 p.m. Discussion

6.25 p.m. End of academic programme (1st day)

26. April, Friday

III. Creating alternative scholarship

9 a.m. The rise of new institutions providing controlled scholarship

Zoltán Szente (European University Institute, Florence; HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences – Institute for Legal Studies/Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest)

9.20 a.m. Discussion

9.35 a.m. Public education takeover: centralizing school management, taking over the curriculum, and restructuring employment schemes

Sára Hungler (HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences – Institute for Legal Studies/Eötvös University, Budapest)

9.55 a.m. Discussion

10.10 a.m. Coffee Break

10.30 a.m. Funding propaganda: research and higher education institutions, the academic equivalents of quangos

Zsolt Körtvélyesi (Central European University, Vienna; HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences – Institute for Legal Studies/Eötvös University, Budapest)

IV. Final Considerations

11.10. a.m. Dissent and mobilization in a populist political context: academic freedom as a master narrative

Attila Bartha (HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences – Institute for Political Science/Corvinus University, Budapest)

Pál Susánszky (HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences – Institute for Political Science, Budapest)

11.30 a.m. Discussion

11.50 a.m. Concluding remarks

Fruzsina Gárdos-Orosz (HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences – Institute for Legal Studies/Eötvös University, Budapest)

12.10 a.m. Final Discussion

12.30 a.m. End of Workshop