

**4-5 November 2024, Aachen
Program**

SYMPOSIUM

Tuesday, 5 November 2024, forum M, Mayersche Aachen
Buchkremerstraße 1-7, 52062 Aachen
9:00am to 4:30pm

09:00-09:15: Words of Welcome

09:15-10:00: Impulse Session

Freedom through Competitiveness? Exploring Europe's Horizons

- Wibke Reincke, Senior Director and Head of Public Policy, Novo Nordisk
- Wolfgang Kopf, Senior Vice President for Group Public and Regulatory Affairs, Deutsche Telekom AG
- Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (video message)

How does freedom of research fuel European innovation? What drives Europe's competitive edge in the international arena? The freedom to conduct research is a challenged fundamental European value, essential for fostering innovation, advancing knowledge, and maintaining Europe's competitiveness on the global stage. During the opening session of this Summit, economic leaders will demonstrate the pivotal role of research freedom in their company's achievements, while European policymakers will offer perspectives on creating a supportive political landscape that fosters this freedom. Thereby, the aim is to highlight research freedom as a strategic element in global competition, examining the essential conditions for ensuring sovereignty and unrestricted development capabilities within Europe.

10:00-10:15: Coffee Break

Focus: Times of the Metaverse

10:15-11:15: Sci-Fi Scenario Discussion

From Science Fiction to Reality? Designing a European-like Metaverse

- Moderation: Jennifer Baker, Presenter and Reporter, EU Tech Influencer 2019
- Elena Bascone, Charlemagne Prize Fellow 2023/24
- Nadina Iacob, Digital Economy Consultant, World Bank
- Rebekka Weiß, LL.M., Head of Regulatory Policy, Senior Manager Government Affairs, Microsoft Germany

The emergence of the Metaverse as a significant technological innovation, driven by huge tech companies beyond the European borders, promises to exert an unprecedented influence on both our public and private spheres - from virtual spaces and smart cities to blockchain and AI. Its influence on science and research is uncertain, as well as it poses challenges to European values of freedom, security and democracy. This discussion explores strategies for shaping the construction of the Metaverse in a manner that reflects European principles as a competitive and sovereign actor, as well as European ideals of scientific freedom, democratic governance, and societal benefit.

11:15-11:30: Coffee Break

11:30-12:30: Panel Discussion

Navigating the Ethical Landscape: AI and the Boundaries of Research Freedom

- Moderation: Prof. Dr Gabriele Gramelsberger, RWTH Aachen University
- Prof. Dr Holger Hoos, RWTH Aachen University
- Prof. Dr Benjamin Paaßen, Bielefeld University

Interaction between AI and academic freedom: Where do questions of AI-supported knowledge generation affect freedom perspectives? There are high social expectations with regard to AI technologies, but also concerns about the creeping disempowerment of humans. The aim of this discussion is to explore the possibilities, development opportunities and risks of AI technologies for the future of the scientific knowledge process and the technical developments based on it. Questions arise such as the replaceability of human researchers by AI and the expected changes in scientific research. What are the consequences for the working environment of researchers and the new challenges posed by AI for legal regulation in the area of conflict between academic freedom and data protection? The aim is to explore the recommendations for responsible stakeholders in science, research policy and society from an interdisciplinary perspective.

12:30-13:30: Flying Lunch

Focus: Times of Crisis

13:30-14:15: Conflict Narratives – TedTalk Session (5x5min)

A Look at Practice: Insights into Conflicts over Academic Freedom

- Dr Dominik Brenner, Central European University

Illiberalism and Academic Freedom

Academic freedom has yet again come under threat from various internal and external forces. One of the most serious external developments in recent times are direct and indirect attempts by governments to diminish the autonomy of universities as part of a broader move towards illiberalism. This talk will take a closer look at the illiberal turn in Hungary and its effect on the freedom of research. In 2019, Hungary became the first European Union member state since World War II to expel a university which marks a

significant escalation in the political suppression of academic freedom. Based on first-hand experience on the forced relocation of Central European University (CEU) from Budapest to Vienna, I will argue that the curtailing of academic freedom is an integral part of illiberalism and showcase how legal reforms, public disinformation campaigns, and direct state control have reshaped the landscape of universities and diminished freedom of research within and beyond illiberal regimes.

- Dr Kristin Eichhorn, University of Stuttgart

#IchBinHanna and the Freedom of Research

Ever since Amrei Bahr, Kristin Eichhorn, and Sebastian Kubon started the initiative #IchBinHanna, academic precarity has been a widely-discussed subject in Germany. The fact that research careers are overwhelmingly uncertain as the majority of faculty is only on fixed-term contracts substantially impairs researchers' ability to exert their fundamental right to scientific freedom. Studies show that researchers who hold only temporary employment are more likely to suppress not only structural but research-related criticism out of fear of retaliation. This creates a significant threat to their ability to participate as well as to the quality of academic research itself. The German research system with its extreme hierarchical structure and constant competition, offering basic rights to only a small elite that has 'proven' its worthiness by years of self-exploitation, is ill-equipped to face challenges on scientific research and democracy in general. Those who are trained to constantly adapt to trends and external funding requirements will not be able to stand up if the very foundation of critical research is at stake.

- Dr Ece Cihan Ertem, University of Vienna

Academic Freedom? Does It Still Exist Anywhere in the World?

New Authoritarianism on Academic Institutions: The Turkish Case of Bogazici University

This talk addresses the decline of academic freedom globally, particularly in the 2020s. Even in the so-called "developed world," alarming incidents have occurred recently, including professors being dragged on the ground and forcefully silenced for advocating peace, university campuses facing police raids, peaceful student protests being met with violence, and academic conferences being canceled. The widespread surge in violence and authoritarianism, often disguised as democratic governance, has become a pressing global issue, carrying profound implications for human rights, democratic institutions, global stability, and environmental sustainability (Cohen, 2023; Matovski, 2021; Miller 2015; Morse, 2012). The nuanced or direct implications of authoritarianism on academia have received comparatively less attention even though authoritarian regimes exert control over scientific pursuits, educational agendas, and academic institutions, cultivating a cadre of compliant "scholars" and "experts" to advance ideological agendas. This talk will specifically focus on a recent Turkish case having other numerous

cases of academic freedom violations in Europe and the US in the background. This talk delves into a pertinent case study, Bogazici University, renowned as one of the country's premier public educational institutions. This form of governance has sought to extend its political hegemony over academia, as evidenced by the notable case of Bogazici University and the talk aims to contemplate the concepts of academic freedom, autonomy, and academic solidarity.

- Dr Lars Lott, Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg

Academic Freedom Worldwide: What We Can Learn from the Academic Freedom Index?

This talk provides an overview of the current state of academic freedom, its developments, and its prospects. The Academic Freedom Index is an expert assessment of the de facto protection of academic freedom worldwide, based on five indicators: the freedom to research and teach; the freedom of academic exchange and dissemination; institutional autonomy; campus integrity; and the freedom of academic and cultural expression. This talk discusses whether the global situation of academic freedom is comparable to the situation 50 years ago and offers different perspectives on the state and development of academic freedom. The average country-based global level of academic freedom has stagnated over the last 20 years, while the population-based perspective suggests that academic freedom has returned to levels last recorded in 1973. The talk also briefly considers the consequences of declines in academic freedom for innovation and research quality.

- Prof. Dr Jeff Wilkesmann, Deggendorf Institute of Technology (DIT)

The Uncertainty of Being a Free Academic Thinker in Venezuela: Is a European Approach Viable?

Since 2014, the challenges faced by Venezuelan universities regarding freedom, autonomy, and academic integrity, acutely increased, mostly because of the ongoing political and economic crisis. Universities opposing the government were systematically defunded, and led to a severe decline in academic resources and infrastructure. Most affected have been public universities, which historically defended democratic values and academic freedom, now many of them remain barely open, with inadequate teaching and research facilities. About 8 million Venezuelans have fled, contributing to a significant loss of critical academic talent, thus many universities cannot keep their educational standards and output. Due to hyperinflation and government negligence, faculty salaries do not reach 50 USD per month. This financial strain forces many to seek additional employment or leave academia. Academic freedom has been increasingly compromised, with budget cuts undermining university autonomy. In 2023, Venezuela scored 15 out of 100 on the Freedom House scale for overall freedom, indicating a severely restricted environment for academic expression. The overall landscape of higher education remains precarious and under threat. The

recent elections in July 2024 demonstrated once again the lack of transparency in democratic processes. The opposition was able to publicly publish the official voting records demonstrating their victory, however, the government declared themselves winners of the election and accused the opposition's presidential candidate González a terrorist, leading him to flee and request asylum in Spain. The European Parliament has strongly condemned the massive electoral fraud perpetrated by the Venezuelan regime and does not recognize Maduro's proclaimed victory. The continuous repression by the regime against opposition figures, including torture, enforced disappearances and killings has been condemned by the European Parliament. And although the European Commission continues to advocate for a peaceful and democratic resolution to the crisis in Venezuela, they have stopped short of fully recognizing González as the legitimate president, focusing more instead on targeted sanctions and support for international criminal court investigations into human rights abuses.

13:30-14:15: **Workshop / Presentation**

EU's Biodiversity Strategy and Ocean Governance (in English)

- Dr Verónica Relaño Écija, Charlemagne Prize Fellow 2023/24

Verónica Relaño will present the research findings from her project as part of the Charlemagne Prize Academy during this roundtable. The workshop will focus on the EU's maritime policies, biodiversity, and nature conservation. The aim is to explore how the EU can confront the climate crisis and address the challenges ahead. This discussion will provide an opportunity to reflect on the EU's role in global environmental governance and how it can adapt to urgent ecological and political developments.

14:15-15:15: **Panel Discussion**

Conflict in Europe's Academic Landscape and Their Impact on Freedom of Research: What's New About It?

- Moderation: Prof. Dr Stefan Bösch, RWTH Aachen University
- Frank Albrecht, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation
- Miranda Loli, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute in Florence, Charlemagne Prize Fellow 2023/24
- Prof. Dr Carsten Reinhardt, Bielefeld University

Freedom is one of the constitutive values of democratic society and scientific practice. The promise to guarantee and preserve this freedom for all is part of our European self-understanding. What does it mean to research and teach in freedom? In view of the current debates at different levels, especially institutional as well as individual, the question arises as to where the points of conflict between individual and institutional freedom are and what conditions and limits exist. The institutionalized freedom of research is founded on conditions, e.g. that science is not an endeavor of politics or economy. However, we see in the present a lot of dynamics presumably blurring such institutionalized boundaries and impacting on

the cultural-institutional conditions of freedom of research. What are the forms and consequences of conflicts arising? The aim is to discuss what challenges exist between individual and institutional freedom, particularly in the university context. What are the main learnings we should take from the current debates and what consequences for action should be drawn from it for the present and the future?

15:15-15:30: **Coffee Break**

15:30-16:30: **Panel Discussion**

Addressing Polarized Conflicts: The European Role in Conflict Resolution

- Moderation: Dr Maysoun Zein Al Din, Managing Director of the North Rhine-Westphalian Academy for International Politics in Bonn
- Dr Sven Koopmans, EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process
- Drs René van der Linden, Former President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Dutch Diplomat

In recent years, the EU has sought to position itself as a key player in international conflict resolution. This panel will explore the EU's role, particularly in highly polarized regions such as the Middle East, and examine whether the EU's diplomatic and economic influence has lived up to its potential in fostering peace and stability. What strategies has the EU employed to mediate between deeply entrenched sides in conflicts? How can the EU balance its role as a mediator with the geopolitical interests of other international powers?

This discussion will not only reflect on the EU's past efforts but will also question its future capacity to influence conflict resolution in a fragmented global order. Can the EU offer innovative solutions, or is it limited by internal divisions and external pressures? These and other crucial questions will be debated by our panel of experts.

FESTIVE EVENING EVENT

Tuesday, 5 November 2024, Coronation Hall, Aachen Town Hall

Markt, 52062 Aachen

7:00 to 9:30pm

- Bettina Stark-Watzinger, German Minister of Education and Research
- Sibylle Keupen, Lady Mayoress of the City of Aachen
- Dr Jürgen Linden, Chairman of the Charlemagne Prize's Board of Directors
- Prof. Dr Thomas Prefi, Chairman of the Charlemagne Prize Foundation
- Moderation: Dr Angela Maas, Journalist and Moderator, Member of the Charlemagne Prize's Board of Directors

In a festive dinner atmosphere in the historic halls of Aachen's Coronation Hall, we will reflect on the day's discussions. Bettina Stark-Watzinger, Federal Minister of Education and Research, will give the keynote speech. The dinner will conclude with the awarding of scholarships to the new Fellows of the Charlemagne Prize Academy, and mark the end of the Summit.