“Advocacy for academic freedom and human rights: internationalization in a fragmented world“

Utrecht University | Ruhr University Bochum

Utrecht Network | Scholars at Risk | Cost Action ‘Democratization at stake?’ - No.23149

Summer School Schedule

13-14 August 2026 (online/self-guided) and 17-21 August 2026 (in situ)

Location: St Janskerkhof 3 (google maps), rooms 021-022

30 July 2026

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Thursday, 13 August 2026

10:00-11:00: Introduction to the Summer School and Self-Guided Learning (Bart van de Laar, Utrecht University | Iris Vernekohl, Ruhr University Bochum & Utrecht Network)

Teams link to follow.

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Thursday, 13 August & Friday, 14 August 2026

Prior self-guided online learning

Participants of the summer school are expected to engage in self-guided online learning via the following means:

1) **Readings**
   Critically read the obligatory introductory literature provided in the reading lists per day in Teams Classes (you are invited via a separate personal access email).

2) **MOOC “Dangerous questions: why academic freedom matters”**
   Please take the 90-minutes self-paced MOOC on academic freedom developed by Amnesty International and the Scholars at Risk Network. You can access the MOOC and get a certificate of participation here:

   https://academy.amnesty.org/learn/courses/437/dangerous-questions-why-academic-freedom-matters

3) **Podcasts “Fragile freedom”** and **“Free to think”**
   In addition to the MOOC, please listen to the listed episodes of the following podcasts
   - **STOAS Podcast „Academic freedom in the EU – defending a pillar of democracy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKFAAGkVjoE**
   - **Free to Think Podcast** (Episodes No. 40, 39, 37, 34, 28, 23, 20) https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/podcast/
   - **Fragile Freedom Podcast** (Episode 1/Belarus): https://fragile-freedom.podigee.io/

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Monday, 17 August 2026

Concepts and status quo of academic freedom and human rights in global perspective

09:00-09:45: **Welcome, introduction and getting to know each other:** (Bart van de Laar, Utrecht University | Iris Vernekohl, Ruhr University Bochum & Utrecht Network).

09:45-11:45: **Lecture & group work: Academic freedom as a fundamental academic value: meaning, scope, frames of reference** (Prof. Liviu Matei, King´s College London, Global Observatory on Academic Freedom, and Magna Charta Observatory).

12.00-13:00: **Lecture**: **Beyond regulation: an institutional perspective on protection of academic freedom and institutional autonomy (in the European Union)** (Jurgen Rienks, Neth-ER, and Utrecht University).

13:00-14:00: *Lunch break*

14:00-15:30: **Guided group work: Status quo of and threats to academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and democracy around the world** (Prof. Adam Braver | Roger Williams University & Scholars at Risk Network | Dr. Reina Zenelaj, Epoka University & Cost Action Democratization at Stake? | Jakob Epple, Ruhr University Bochum).

15:45-17:00: **Fireside chat: Being "at-risk": Personal experiences from higher education institutions and scholars at risk** (Moderator: Prof. Adam Braver, Roger Williams University and Scholars at Risk Network, Speakers: Dr Alejandro Jasinski, Eberle Programme Fellowship University of Konstanz | Prof. Dr. Liviu Matei, King´s College London | Dr. Stella Nyanzi, Philipp Schwartz Fellow at Ruhr University Bochum).

18:30-21:00: **Tapas dinner**

Champañeria Los Amigos, Voorstraat 56, Utrecht (google maps).

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Tuesday, 18 August 2026

Protecting academic freedom: institutional, regional, and global advocacy initiatives

09:00-09:30: **Reflection on first day**

09.30-10:45: **Lecture: Academic freedom as a human right and related enforcement mechanisms** (Prof. Dr Katherine Fortin, Utrecht University)**.**

11:00-13:00: **Lecture & Guided Group Work: Implementing the right to academic freedom: what role for universities and the university community**? (Bart van de Laar, Utrecht University | Iris Vernekohl, Ruhr University Bochum).

13:00-14:00: *Lunch break*

14:00-15:30: **Guided Group Work: Major (advocacy) initiatives in support of academic freedom and scholars at risk** (Prof. Adam Braver, Scholars at Risk Networks & Rogers Williams University | Iris Vernekohl, Ruhr University Bochum & Utrecht

Network | Dr. Reina Zenelaj, Epoka University & COST Action Democratization at Stake?)

15:45-17:15: **Fish bowl discussion: Protecting students, scholars and the freedom to think: reflections from different contexts and (advocacy) initiatives** (Moderated by Iris Vernekohl. Speakers: Prof. Marco Borracetti, Scholars at Risk Italy Section, tbc | Prof. Adam Braver, Scholars at Risk Networks | Katariina Järve, European Student Union | Prof. Liviu Matei, King´s College London | Dr. Reina Zenelaj, Epoka University & OPEN COST Action | N.N. Cost Action Democratization at Stake?)

19:30-21:00: **Utrecht Summer School Closing Ceremony 2026 – optional**

Dom tower Utrecht, St Michael's Chapel

Sign up via the social programme page, https://utrechtsummerschool.nl/closing-ceremony

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Wednesday, 19 August 2026

Introduction to human rights and public policy advocacy for academic freedom and scholars at risk

09:00-09:30: **Reflection on second day**

09:30-10:30: **Personal reflections on advocacy for/of a scholar at risk** (Dr. Stella Nyanzi, Ruhr University Bochum)

10:45-12:00: **Interactive lecture: How to develop effective and convincing advocacy strategies in support of academic freedom and at-risk students and scholars?** (Katariina Järve., European Student Union | Iris Vernekohl, Ruhr University Bochum & Utrecht Network |)

12:00-13:00: **Introduction to advocacy cases and group building**: (Bart van de Laar, Utrecht University | Prof. Adam Braver, Scholars at Risk at Risk | Dr. R. Cost Actino Democratization at Stake?)

13:00-14:00: *Lunch break*

14:00-17:00: **Guided group work/Case work: Advocacy for academic freedom – Part #1, Case-specific academic freedom and advocacy campaigns** (Bart van de Laar, Utrecht University | Prof. Adam Braver, Scholars at Risk Network & Roger Williams University| Jakop Epple, Ruhr University Bochum, Dr. Reina Zenelaj, Epoka University & COST ACTION Democratization at Stake?)

18:30-20:30: **Joint dinner at Hofman**

Hofman Restaurant (google maps)

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Thursday, 20 August 2026

Developing advocacy campaigns for academic freedom and at-risk scholars

09:00-09:30: **Reflection on third day**

09:30-13:00: **Group work/Case work: Advocacy for academic freedom and human rights Part #2, Developing a *theory of change* of a case-related advocacy campaign**

13:00-14:00: *Lunch break*

14:00-17:00: **Group work/Case work: Advocacy for academic freedom and human rights Part #III: Designing an advocacy campaign**

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Friday, 21 August 2026

Presenting and reflecting on advocacy projects

09:00-09:30: **Reflection on fourth day**

09:30-13:00: **Group work/Case work: Advocacy for academic freedom and human rights Part #IV: Preparing a convincing presentation** (*in powerpoint*) **of the developed advocacy strategy/campaign**

13:00-14:00: *Lunch break*

14:00-16:00: **Presentation and discussion of group work**: group presentations of advocacy campaigns and panel, including members from Utrecht Network, Scholars at Risk Network COST ACTION Democratization at Stake?)

16:00-16:30: Joint reflection, wrap up & **summer school certificats**

16:30-17:00: **Networking & farewell**

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