



EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES – CRITICAL FUTURES

The Roles of Universities in European Integration

Working Groups' Plans

The whole document (points 1-5) is also intended to help working groups and the steering group plan for the last year of the project and think ahead to the design of the final conference. At the next workshop, there will be two lengthy sessions for group work and we would like the form to be completed by the end of the workshop and the results presented in the final plenary.

1. Overall aims (Text for updating the project's website)

What is the title of your working-group? **Academic freedom's 'silent spring'**
 Names of people in your working group Amelia Veiga, University of Porto; Giulio Marini, University College London; Susan Wright, DPU Aarhus University.
 Lead contact Susan Wright

What is the topic you are working on, why is it important, what have you done so far and what are you planning to do and achieve? *(Please specify why it is important for the future roles of universities in Europe)*

Why is academic freedom important? Academic freedom is granted by society not as an individual academic's right, but as a duty for the whole collective endeavor of universities. Academics have the social responsibility to analyse what is happening in a field and think otherwise for the benefit of society, and this is especially important when building post pandemic Europe.

What is the problem? A common repertoire of governance and management reforms has been introduced in many universities as part of strategies to integrate European research and teaching. Governments and university leaders proclaim their support for academic freedom and hold that their reforms do not challenge academics' freedom to research, teach and speak in public. Yet the inaugural search conference for this project identified how, in ways that have not been very visible, the changing conditions of academic work have been impinging on

academic freedom and changing university values. Why haven't academics reacted more strongly to protect the core value of their work?

How to conceptualise the issue? One participant at the inaugural conference likened academics to frogs in a pot: if they were thrown into boiling water, they would immediately jump out, but when the water temperature rises gradually they attune themselves and end up boiled. In this working group's subsequent discussions, the metaphor 'Silent Spring' drew on Rachel Carson's 1962 book, which showed the quiet way that agricultural practices had changed and devastated the countryside, until suddenly she noticed there were no birds singing in the spring any more.

Research questions. The group is exploring the following questions: Why is academic freedom important for Europe's future and values? How can we understand any erosion of Academic Freedom across time, and point out its implications or consequences? How are governance and management systems undermining academic freedom? What alternatives exist and what changes do we propose so that universities can play an effective role in critical issues facing Europe's future?

Progress so far. At a Zoom meeting on 24 June 2020, we clarified our approach.

1. Identify which systems of governance and management are silently undermining academic freedom and how? There are at least four aspects of governance and management relevant to this topic
 - a. Legal protections of academic freedom
 - b. Organisational arrangements within HEIs to discuss external contracts and protect academic freedom
 - c. National and institutional evaluation and audit systems for research and teaching
 - d. Drivers that can be contradictory (e.g. pressures to obtain external funding, demonstrate social relevance and impact, change publication patterns to count in rankings).
2. Each of the above is quite noisy and visible, and governments proclaim that systems of governance and measurement are not touching academic freedom. Often the connections between the above issues affect academic freedom, but academics seem not to express concern because they assume academic freedom is not connected to the above issues. We seek to reveal how what impacts academic freedom is what these noises are silencing. How to break the silence?

| |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2. Plan of work to be completed during 2020 and to bring to the workshop on 14-16 December 2020 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What are you aiming to achieve by June 2020? What are you aiming to complete and bring to the December workshop? <i>(Please specify tangible things e.g., literature review, empirical research, working paper, writing funding application, a policy proposal)</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A collaboration with other organisations is planned, to achieve a three-tiered (local, European, international) understanding of current issues affecting academic freedom. If our interest is focused on management and governance issues affecting academic freedom, this is complemented and enriched by collaboration with: |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| - a meeting of 'Higher Education Policy and Practice', part of the Danish Higher Education Network (DUN) to discuss current pressures on academic freedom in research and teaching, |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

This file was saved in: \\uni.au.dk\Users\au148152\Documents\suir\Danish Higher Education\CHEF\Critical Futures - European Univs\Sub-projects\Academic freedom\Academic Freedom Working Group Plan.docx on the 30/08-2020 at 0:23

including notable scandals. This will provide detailed material on the consequences of attenuating academic freedom. (date to be determined)

- international webinars of PATHES (scholarly association for educational philosophy) on academic freedom and activism. This provides a qualified and international philosophical debate on concepts and practices of academic freedom.

At the December workshop, the working group will meet and identify issues arising from the above events that could contribute to the project's post-pandemic study and can be fed into an event organized by this working group in the spring 2021.

3. Interlocutors

Which organisations (EU, EUA, Council of Europe....) policy makers or university leaders should be invited to the December workshop to join the discussion of your working-group? *(They will also be invited to give feedback on future ways for the project to generate dialogue with policy/change makers).*

Council of Europe, EUA, Education International, EURODOC, ESIB

4. Plans between December 2020 and the final conference in December 2021

What are your plans for work during 2021 *(Note: There will be one more workshop and then the final conference to bring together the results of the working groups).*

Spring 2021: hold an event on how governance and management systems impinge on academic freedom and what alternatives exist and what changes do we propose so that universities can play an effective role in critical issues facing Europe's future?

Produce a working paper or article on our findings.

5. Resources

Do you need any funding to enable you to do this work? Please say what is needed, why and how much it costs. *(The project has a very modest budget to cover small expenses).*

Maybe some costs if the spring 2021 event is an actual workshop rather than a webinar. Funding for our interlocutors to attend the Dec 2021 conference.

6. Final conference June 2021

We are thinking of each working group organizing a session at the final conference on the roles that universities can play in the critical issues facing the future of Europe. What is your working-group planning to contribute to the final conference? *(Please specify what you will bring... results, new ideas, alternative systems, new ways to engage with policy-makers).*

We plan to organise a conference session that brings into conversation all the relevant parties: European interests (Council of Europe), university leaders (EUA), academics (EI) graduates (EURODOC) and students (ESIB). To discuss the findings of the working group and seek solutions to strengthen academic freedom.