Academic Freedom: Challenges, threats, emerging issues

Early Career Researchers in Austria and Europe: Freedom is just another Word for …"

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The CFRS/International Council for Science

- ICSU/CFRS: Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the Conduct of Science
  - Freedom of movement;
  - Freedom of association;
  - Freedom of expression and communication;
  - Access to information, data and scientific material.
Two parts of the academic world

- “Western world”/developed countries vs
- Developing countries

- Western world: US/Canada + Australia+ Japan + Europe...
  - Europe: North and South
Developing countries /Iran

- **Omid Kokabee** (Iran)
  Experimental laser physicist at U. of Texas at Austin

  - During a visit to his family in Iran charged with "gathering and colluding against national security"

  - Later: acquitted from the primary charges, trialed for “communicating with a hostile government (USA)” and “illegitimate/illegal earnings”.

  - Omid has not been presented proofs nor has been allowed to talk with his lawyer, and he has denied the charges.

**Currently in jail** (in hospital)
Developing countries /Iran

- Bahá’í community leaders

  - Six scientists of the Bahá’í faith in Iran: Fariba Kamalabadi, Mahvash Sabet, Vahid Tizfahm, Saeid Rezaie, Mahmoud Badavam and Ramin Zibaei.

  - In prison for alleged “conspiracy against national security” and “conspiracy against the Islamic Republic of Iran”

  - Discrimination in science on grounds of religious beliefs
Developing countries

**Bahrein**
- 48 health professionals imprisoned because of having provided health care to those in need irrespective of their political, religious or ethnic orientation

**United Arab Emirates**
- Nasser bin Ghaith, scholar of economics, arrested

**Pakistan, Egypt, Thailand...**
Turkey

Turkish federal prosecutors have placed under investigation approximately 1,128 scholars, in apparent retaliation for their co-signing a public petition urging Turkish authorities to renew dialogue with factions in the southeastern area of the country.

More: Scholars at risk

http://scholarsatrisk.nyu.edu/
East vs West / Uzbekistan

- No “Western pseudo-science”
China

- No books promoting Western values
Developed countries/Japan

- Huge cuts on Humanities and SS in Japan
- Social Sciences and Humanities faculties in Japan are to close after universities were ordered to “serve areas that better meet society’s needs”.

**Social sciences and humanities faculties 'to close' in Japan after ministerial intervention**

Universities to scale back liberal arts and social science courses

September 14, 2015

By Jack Grove, Twitter: @ijro_the
Developed world/challenges

- Economic crisis
- Less funds: how do we allocate them?
- Research agendas: Netherlands/Germany...
- Excellence/Competition
- High Demands on scientists
Top Sectors

- The Dutch government has identified 9 areas for allocating funds, 9 “sectors of excellence”:
  - Agri-/food
  - Chemistry
  - Creative Industry
  - Energy
  - Hi-Tech
  - Logistics
  - Landscape
  - Life Science/Health
  - Water
The bright side

- Development
  - Substantial resources in key areas
  - Public-private cooperation = more money

but

- What about freedom of researchers?
The dark side

- Researchers of other disciplines are cut out of substantial funds, even if they are excellent
- Researchers within the discipline are “forced” to cooperate with industry (their research becomes output-oriented)
- Fundamental research is threatened (researchers in the Humanities, in mathematics, in theoretical physics have a hard time finding funds)
The dark side

- Allocation of funds based on excellence
  - No funds for disciplines that are “less fashionable”
  - No long-term planning of research
  - No planning capability of departments/research groups on long-term hiring
  - Huge pressure on researchers on project writing (even on topics that are not exactly of their interest)
  - PhD students forced to work on given topics
Time to act!

- Что Делать?
  - Acknowledge the problem
  - Look for creative solutions
  - Reaffirm the value of independent research
  - Fight for freedom 😊
Thanks!