

Against Attacks on Science: uniko appeals to Chancellor Nehammer before Orbán visits Austria

On the occasion of Viktor Orbán's state visit, Universities Austria (uniko) once again points out the massive threat to academic freedom and university autonomy in Hungary. During Orbán's term of office, the former flagship country has slipped into the bottom half of the Academic Freedom Index and achieved the worst score within the European Union in its 2021 survey. Uniko's president Sabine Seidler appeals to Austrian chancellor Nehammer to address serious violations of academic freedom as well as the Hungarian government's attempts to curtail university autonomy and silence critical voices: "The Academic Freedom Index confirms what we have been observing with great concern for years. We must not allow universities, as an essential element of democratic societies, to be subjected to political influence and control," Seidler emphasises.

Already in 2020, uniko - together with the rectors' conferences of Germany, Poland, Slovenia and the Czech Republic - made an urgent appeal to the Hungarian government. The government had transferred all management powers of the Budapest University of Theatre and Film Arts (SZFE) to a new board of trustees directly appointed by the government in order to exert political influence. This followed the forced move of the Central European University (CEU) to Vienna and the restriction of the autonomy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. However, the developments in Hungary are not the only cause for concern. In other countries, too, freedom of science and teaching is under threat. For this reason, on the initiative of uniko, ten European rectors' conferences signed the "Vienna Statement" back in 2018 - even then without Hungary's participation.

Details:

[Universities for Enlightenment] (<https://u4e.info/>)

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