

# ***EUI ETHICS COMMITTEE***

## **EUI CODE OF PRACTICE ON FREE SPEECH**

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### **Section 1: General Principles**

1. As an international institution of higher education and research, the European University Institute (EUI) has wide-ranging interests and responsibilities in the fields of its research and teaching activities at the highest university level in Europe. Aiming to contribute to the development of the cultural and scientific heritage of Europe, the EUI also represents a leading international forum for the exchange and discussion of ideas and experience in the areas of study and research with which it is concerned. Following from its academic aims and responsibilities as defined by the Convention governing its establishment, freedom of speech is a bedrock value at the core of the EUI's central mission. Academic progress oftentimes is achieved through controversial ideas that challenge existing insights and conventional wisdom and that should be contested and developed through debate. In the interest of academic progress, it is hence among the EUI's key aims to protect and promote freedom of speech within the activities undertaken by its academic community. As freedom of speech does not mean a right to say anything at any place and any time, this obligation does not only include the responsibility to protect and promote free speech. Based on established international standards and frameworks, it also requires reflection on the limits of such freedoms in order to protect the rights and freedoms of others (see [Free Speech Reference Documents](#) on the Ethics Committee's website).

2. The EUI exists for the pursuit of learning and research. Its fundamental purpose can be achieved only if its members and visitors can work peacefully in conditions which permit freedom of thought and expression within a framework of respect for the rights of other persons. In accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (as well as other relevant international human and fundamental rights frameworks) the EUI therefore subscribes to the fundamental principle that every member of the EUI as well as every guest shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, freedom to hold opinions without interference, disability or disadvantage, and freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas.

3. This Code of Practice on Free Speech shall ensure that freedom of speech is secured for researchers, employees and other individuals associated with the EUI and for all persons authorised to be on EUI premises, including visiting speakers.

4. The EUI's Ethics Committee will be responsible for policy issues connected with the interpretation of this Code of Practice on Free Speech, and will consider matters relevant to this Code as circumstances require. It will submit proposals for reviewing this Code if need arises to do so, after appropriate consultation with relevant EUI bodies.

## **Section 2: Application**

5. This Code of Practice on Free Speech establishes that all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that researchers, visitors, other individuals associated with the EUI and all persons authorised to be on EUI premises, including external speakers, are safe from when they arrive at the EUI until they leave, and that they can say what they have come to say without being shouted down, intimidated or otherwise prevented from speaking.

6. The Code applies to public events including external speakers (including lectures and seminars) for which the audience has to register through the EUI's events registration service on any premises wherever situated, which the EUI is using. It does not apply to sessions that are convened as a part of a regular seminar series, unless the session in question is advertised to a broader public beyond the regular participants of the seminar series.

7. Activities covered in §6 above will be described in the remainder of this document as "events".

## **Section 3: Responsibilities of the EUI's authorities**

8. Event organisers are responsible for upholding and maintaining the principles set out in this Code of Practice on Free Speech during events.

9. The EUI's Ethics Committee may recommend procedures to ensure that events conform to the terms set out in this Code of Practice on Free Speech. These procedures will be published on the EUI's website.

10. The following list, which is not exhaustive, provides examples of the kinds of circumstances in which the EUI should not be convening or hosting an event:

- a. where the bounds of lawful free speech are exceeded such as by incitement to commit crimes or breach of the peace;
- b. where physical harm to persons, damage to EUI property or a breach of the peace is taking place; or
- c. where a visiting speaker is known to have engaged in the past in conduct that falls under item (a) or item (b) and there is reason to fear that he or she might do so again at the EUI.

#### **Section 4: Responsibilities of event organisers**

11. Event organisers are responsible in the first instance for assessing whether an event might be controversial or for other reasons require special treatment to ensure free speech, such as limited access or enhanced security arrangements.

12. Any event organiser, including any individual or group which wants to use the EUI's facilities to organise or sponsor an event, therefore has a duty to:

- a. comply with this Code of Practice on Free Speech and any prescribed procedures or measures which the EUI puts in place for the organisation, publicity and management of the event in question, including by being cognisant of Annexes 1 and 2 to this Code; and
- b. if need be, consult expertise available at the EUI (e.g. the Head of Department or the Director of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies; the Ethics Committee; the Head of the Communications Service; the Secretary-General or the President) on any proposal to modify, postpone or cancel an event, where modify means adaptation of title, or one or more speakers being asked not to participate in an event which otherwise goes ahead;
- c. plan for a Q&A session after any lecture or presentations by a panel, except for ceremonial events, such as the award of honorary doctorates.

#### **Section 5: Responsibilities of EUI members and others admitted to the EUI's premises**

13. All researchers and academic staff members of the EUI, including honorary and visiting staff, and all persons authorised to be present on EUI premises, including visiting speakers, have a duty to:

- a. comply with this Code of Practice on Free Speech and any prescribed procedures or measures which the EUI puts in place for the organisation, publicity and management of an event;
- b. take steps consistent with their personal safety to ensure that the principle of freedom of speech is upheld at the EUI; and
- c. observe good order at any event which they organise. Good order will include the speaker(s) being heard clearly, being informed about the EUI's general practice of Q&A sessions after speeches and them being able to access and leave an event safely.

## **ANNEX 1: BRIEFING FOR THE CHAIR OF A PUBLIC EVENT AT THE EUI**

The purpose of this briefing is to provide essential, useful information and tips for best practice during EUI events.

For the sake of academic neutrality, the Chair should not express their own views on the subject matter of the event in a manner that would risk impacting on the freedom of speech of any of the panellists. At controversial events it is not prudent to have someone in the chair whose own views mean they may not be seen as a neutral chairperson.

### **Pre-event issues**

It can be useful before going onto the stage to discuss the practical issues with the speaker(s) to prevent any confusion on stage and/or once the event has started. It is useful to:

- Brief the speaker(s) that the EUI has a Code of Practice on Free Speech which protects free speech and which the speaker(s) has(ve) joint responsibility with the EUI to uphold.
- Confirm the proceeding of the event, e.g. introduction by chair, lecture or panel, running order, speaking time, technical issues of presentations, Q&A session and give speaker/s idea of when the event will end.

### **Proceedings**

For the chair of an event, the following constitute examples of good practice:

- Welcome the audience to the EUI for the event and say which part of the EUI is hosting (if relevant) and whether the event belongs in a series (if relevant).
- Briefly set out the proceedings including highlighting the Q&A session.
- Provide some short biographical information on the speaker(s).
- Keep the speaker(s) to time.
- Q&A session: Be proactive and be willing to interrupt someone who does embark on a speech rather than a question.

## **ANNEX 2: GUIDE TO CHAIRS OF PUBLIC MEETINGS IN THE EVENT OF DISORDER**

### *PROTESTS/DISRUPTIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR*

Serious protests or disruptions at EUI events are rare, but it is important that those acting as chair are fully aware of available options. The chair of any public event is an important figure as they are the persons in charge including during incidents of disorder. If you have any concerns that the event you have agreed to chair is likely to attract protest or if you find out that protest or disruption is planned at the event then please raise them with the event organisers and consult expertise available at the EUI (e.g. the Head of Department or the Director of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies; the Ethics Committee; the Head of the Communications Service; the Secretary-General or the President).

If there are indications prior to the event that protests may occur or the speaker(s) and/or the topic is controversial, one possible option is that when introducing the event the chair can highlight to the audience the importance of free speech within the law and that there will be the opportunity for questions to the speaker(s) later in the event.

### *GUIDELINES*

The guidelines given below are meant to inform cases in which you are chairing a public meeting which is being disrupted, for example by repeated heckling, verbal abuse or offensive signs, behaviour or language. In such cases, you can issue the following declarations in the first instance:

"As chair of this public meeting I remind you that it is the policy of the EUI to ensure freedom of speech for all speakers. Please stop disturbing this meeting."

Be clear and direct, but also remember that interrupting a speaker can be tolerated as a spontaneous expression of disagreement, but not if it continually disrupts the speaker and infringes thereby on free speech rights.

If the person(s) continue(s) to disrupt the meeting the following warning can be issued: "You are disrupting this meeting. Unless you stop I will ask you to leave the meeting. Please stop disrupting the meeting."

If the disruption continues, you can say "I have asked you to stop disrupting this meeting. I am reminding you that, adhering to highest academic standards, the EUI is determined to ensure freedom of speech for all speakers. Unless you stop disrupting this meeting immediately, I will need to ask you to leave."

ALLOW TIME FOR COMPLIANCE, but if the individual(s) fail(s) to comply you will need to ask the person(s) to leave.

In case of continued disruption or escalation of disruption it is at your discretion to terminate the event.