

## Press release

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

Blandina Mangelkramer

03/13/2025

<http://idw-online.de/en/news848914>

Miscellaneous scientific news/publications, Research results  
Cultural sciences, Politics, Social studies  
transregional, national



## Anti-pluralist Parties Threaten Academic Freedom

**Increasing influence of anti-pluralist parties is often associated with lower academic freedom in the respective country. This is one of the findings of the latest Academic Freedom Index (AFI) which is being released March 13, 2025. Scholars at Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU) publish the index every year in collaboration with colleagues at the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg. It covers 179 countries across the world.**

This year's Academic Freedom Index reveals that eight countries covered by the index have statistically and substantially higher levels of academic freedom in 2024 compared to ten years ago, while the scores in 34 countries or territories have declined.

Among the countries where the decline in academic freedom was statistically and substantially significant, there are several democracies, such as Argentina, Finland, Greece, Israel, Portugal, and the United States, to name a few examples. In Austria and Germany, the decline of academic freedom was also clearly measurable but in these two cases, the drop remains small and is not yet substantially significant, according to the authors of the report.

While academic freedom continues to be much better protected in democracies than in autocracies, these examples illustrate that academic freedom can come under pressure in democracies as well. Therefore, this year's report on the Academic Freedom Index zooms in on countries that hold multiparty elections.

### Electoral success of anti-pluralist parties as a driver

The 2025 AFI Update explores the electoral success of anti-pluralist parties as a plausible factor that can drive the decline of academic freedom. Covering a period of 50 years, the data in the report shows the following correlation: Countries where anti-pluralist parties have little-to-no political influence tend to have high levels of academic freedom, while academic freedom typically withers where anti-pluralists are influential.

However, the presence of anti-pluralist parties in the opposition does not appear to be a salient explanation for academic freedom decline; more specifically, academic freedom is at risk when anti-pluralist parties join the government.

### Spotlight on Argentina, Poland and the United States

By delving into three cases – Argentina, Poland, and the United States – the AFI Update highlights how anti-pluralist parties undermine academic freedom once they are in power. In all three cases, anti-pluralist politicians in government sought control over academia using similar methods, particularly by reducing institutional autonomy, the freedom to teach, and defunding or attacking research that contradicts a national or state-level government's political vision. A particularly noteworthy decline was recorded in Argentina, where the AFI score dropped from the very high value of 0.97

to only 0.69 within just one year after (on the scale 0-1, low to high). The case of Poland, on the other hand, highlights that academic freedom declines can be stopped when anti-pluralist parties lose power. Poland once had the excellent AFI score of 0.98 in 2014, that is prior to the 2015 parliamentary and presidential elections. It then reached a low point in 2022, with an AFI point estimate of 0.73, but after the 2023 parliamentary elections, academic freedom in the country has recovered and was now assessed with 0.87 on the AFI scale.

## Data

This year's Academic Freedom Index Update is based on data from V-Dem's version 15 release, which draws on assessments made by 2,363 country experts from around the world. The data cover the period from 1900 to 2024. All data are publicly available and include a total of more than one million data points at the coder level. The aggregate index is composed of five indicators, namely the freedom to research and teach; the freedom of academic exchange and dissemination; the institutional autonomy of universities; campus integrity; and the freedom of academic and cultural expression.

## Open Access and Visualization

The data used for the 2025 AFI Update are available open access to facilitate further studies. Please also visit the website [academic-freedom-index.net](https://academic-freedom-index.net), where you will find an interactive visualization of the data, country profiles, and information on the index project. Easy-to-use graphing tools are also available for anyone interested; they can be consulted by researchers, students, university administrators, research funders, and policy-makers.

### Further Information:

Prof. Dr. Katrin Kinzelbach  
Dr. Lars Lott  
Dr. Angelo V. Panaro  
Institute of Political Science  
Phone: +49 1522 839 04 00  
[katrin.kinzelbach@fau.de](mailto:katrin.kinzelbach@fau.de)  
[lars.lott@fau.de](mailto:lars.lott@fau.de)  
[angelo.panaro@fau.de](mailto:angelo.panaro@fau.de)

### contact for scientific information:

Prof. Dr. Katrin Kinzelbach  
Dr. Lars Lott  
Dr. Angelo V. Panaro  
Institute of Political Science  
Phone: +49 1522 839 04 00  
[katrin.kinzelbach@fau.de](mailto:katrin.kinzelbach@fau.de)  
[lars.lott@fau.de](mailto:lars.lott@fau.de)  
[angelo.panaro@fau.de](mailto:angelo.panaro@fau.de)

URL for press release: <https://academic-freedom-index.net/>