

Free University
Brīvā universitāte

FAKULTÄT FÜR PHILOLOGIE

Seminar für Slavistik /
Lotman-Institut für russische Kultur
Lehrstuhl für Slavistik
Gebäude GB 8/155
Universitätsstraße 150, 44801 Bochum

PROF. DR. YVONNE PÖRZGEN
Geschäftsführende Direktorin
Fon +49 (0)234 32-23370
yvonne.poerzgen@rub.de
www.rub.de/slavistik

25. Mai 2023

Letter of support for the Free University (Brīvā universitāte)

On March 31, 2023, the RF Prosecutor General's Office declared the activity of the Free University (Brīvā universitāte) as “undesirable” in Russia. We, the Seminar of Slavic Studies / Lotman Institute for Russian Culture, express our support for the Free University’s activities.

The Free University was founded in 2020 by professors expelled from Russian universities for political reasons. As far as we know, this is the only Russian-language university that has condemned the war in Ukraine while fulfilling its educational goals in Russia. It is now a university in exile, de-territorialized and decentralized, operating on a voluntary basis and with a horizontal management structure. One of the missions of the Free University is to provide high-quality education to those who want to keep up with the latest scientific trends. Many of the faculty and especially students (of whom there are thousands) still remain in Russia.

The Free University faces charges by the RF Prosecutor General's Office, who declared its activities as “undesirable” in Russia. The justification is: "foreign agents" take part in the university's activities, and the literature used in teaching “has a pronounced anti-Russian character”. Although the university's activities are aimed at the development of democratic institutions they are seen as a threat to the Russian state. Teachers and students would face criminal prosecution and actual prison sentences for the mere fact of participating in university activities, giving independent lectures, and attending seminars.

Independent education is not a crime. The true crime, in its highest form, including under Russian law, is the preparation, unleashing, and waging of a war of aggression. Therefore, the Seminar of

Slavic Studies / Lotman Institute for Russian Culture condemns the actions against the Free University.

Kind regards / Mit freundlichen Grüßen



Ruhr-Universität Bochum
Fakultät für Philologie
Seminar für Slavistik/Lotman-Institut
Universitätsstraße 150
D-44801 Bochum

Yvonne Pörzgen
Geschäftsführende Direktorin