

Abstract: “In 2012, Academic Rights Watch, a private foundation run by academics at major Sweden universities, started monitoring academic freedom in Sweden, mainly by publishing fully documented cases of academic violations on a website, and writing opinion pieces in major newspapers. These activities inspired a nation-wide debate in the Swedish media, which was followed, in 2021, by an addition to the Swedish Higher Education Act requiring universities to protect and promote academic freedom. Moreover, many cases documented by Academic Rights Watch involve academics who have been silenced for expressing views that challenge commonly held convictions or hurt the feelings of some individuals or groups, and in 2023, the new liberal Minister of Education commissioned a governmental investigation into cancel culture at Swedish universities. In the lecture, Erik J. Olsson, professor of theoretical philosophy at Lund University and co-founder and Chairman of Academic Rights Watch, describes the strategic thinking behind the foundation’s work, and reasons about what, in his view, has made it surprisingly successful despite the modest resources needed for its operation.”