

Freedom, It's Personal

Freedom. A small, yet, extremely powerful word. Being members of the Western world, most of us enjoy our freedoms on a daily basis without giving it much thought. Alas, what was once granted may be easily forgotten. We get used to enjoying free and independent press, and having unlimited access to information. We take the ability to make choices, associate, act according to our own conscience, and say what we think out loud for granted. We stop noticing just how lucky we are until our freedoms are taken away from us. This is why we should protect them and make sure they remain intact. If necessary, we must take action, as "disobedience is the true foundation of liberty" – as H.D. Thoreau would say.

Yet, even in this part of the world, not every country guarantees the same personal freedoms, or their extent granted by the constitution may vary. On top of that, nothing is set in stone – the rules of the game called *freedom* may (although should not) fluctuate and undergo changes. Sometimes, the direction of these changes is undesirable. New governmental, political or social bodies do not shy away from trying to push the limits to bring their own vision of what a citizen should or should not be able to do in life. The time is now for civic society to take responsibility for to keep them in check, and to question every change that may potentially have a detrimental effect on our personal freedoms. After all, *ubi dubium, ibi libertas*.¹

Responsibility. Without it, no freedom can nor should be fully realized. Each and every individual must assume responsibility over his or her own life. As a society, we must be able to trust one another and rely on each other's choices. It is the only way we can grow stronger as a whole. Unfortunately, to put it in Kirkegaard's words, it is very often the case that we "demand freedom of speech as a compensation for freedom of thought which [we] seldom use." Although the former should never be denied, the latter has to be its a prerequisite.

It is our job to ensure not only that others respect our personal freedoms, but also that we ourselves know their value and power. Therefore, we felt that it is our responsibility to devote the 8th issue of *4liberty.eu Review* to personal freedoms in the region. The issues related to freedom of the press, the rule of law, NGOs, paternalism, and freedom of religion in the context of education have been thus tackled from the perspective of Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, among others. We hope that closely following and drawing our attention to the recent developments in this regard will help us safeguard our personal freedoms. Because protecting them is *our* job. It's personal.

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¹ Where there is doubt, there is freedom.