



Introduction

Greetings and welcome to the first quarterly newsletter of 2025 of the Center for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences / Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe (KFG) "Universalismus und Partikularismus in der europäischen Zeitgeschichte" at the School of History at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München.

As we prepare for the start of a new semester, we look forward to welcoming Senior Fellows Till van Rahden, Carsten Herrmann-Pillath, and Reinhard Schulze. Their contributions will, for the first time, orient the KFG's research towards China, offer a fresh comparative perspective on Europe and the Middle East, and introduce a new provincialized intellectual history of Europe. We'll leave a more expansive introduction of all of the new fellows and their projects to the upcoming edition of the quarterly newsletter.

In the opening segment of this newsletter, we'll introduce some news regarding our mailing list. Please read this segment carefully as your feedback is required in this matter.

Next, we are pleased to present an interview with Angelika Nußberger, one of the three Distinguished Fellows of the KFG, on the importance of universalism in law and its role in today's society. The interview was conducted by The KFG's cooperation partner, the [L.I.S.A. Science Portal](#).

The third section spotlights recent publications by the KFG that we published in close cooperation with the [Collegium Carolinum](#) and the [Academy for European Human Rights Protection](#).

Last but not least we'll introduce you to some updates regarding our presence in the social media space.

To stay up to date, subscribe to this newsletter if you haven't done so already: kfg20@lrz.uni-muenchen.de.

Mailing List

To introduce research focusing on Eastern Europe to a wider audience, we invite all current recipients of this newsletter to register to the mailing list “Osteuropaforschung München” managed by us along with our cooperation partners, the [Collegium Carolinum](#) and the [Munich Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies](#). This mailing list will keep you informed about selected events on Eastern Europe in Munich, including public lectures, study days, and other activities of interest. On average, you will receive two to three invitations per semester. If you would like to be added to this mailing list, please send a registration request to kfg20@lrz.uni-muenchen.de.

Interview with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dr. h.c. Angelika Nußberger

The KFG cooperation partners, the Gerda Henkel Foundation and the associated [L.I.S.A. Science Portal](#), asked Angelika Nußberger, one of the three Distinguished Fellows, five questions about her contribution to the ideas underpinning the KFG’s research:

L.I.S.A.: *Professor Nußberger, you are one of the three Distinguished Fellows of the Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe Universalism and Particularism in European Contemporary History (KFG) / Center for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and are now in charge of the program for the current semester. This semester's thematic focus is on law, which may seem surprising at first glance given the KFG's focus on contemporary history. Where do you see the bridge between law on the one hand and history on the other?*

Prof. Nußberger: One of the main topics of the research group is ‘human rights’. Human rights are part of applicable law, think of the *Déclaration des droit de l'homme et du citoyen* of 1789, which is an integral part of the French constitution of 1958, the Magna Carta of 1215, whose fundamental postulates have found their way into common law, or the catalogue of Fundamental rights in the German Basic Law of 1949. All three texts are historical documents and the subject of extensive historical research. At the same time, they can serve as a basis for court decisions in the present day. In jurisprudence, we think about historical and dynamic interpretation and the way in which we can derive answers to present-day questions from legal texts from another time.

[...]

L.I.S.A.: *What would be the legal, but also the political prerequisites for establishing a universally applicable law, for example for crimes against humanity? After all, there have long been codified human rights and a court such as the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Both lay claim to universal validity. Where then lies the problem?*

Prof. Nußberger: The ‘codified human rights’ you are talking about do not apply universally. The European Convention on Human Rights applies to 46 states, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights to 53 states. The most ratified convention is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which 196 states have committed themselves. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (153 states) and many rules of international humanitarian law also have a high ratification rate. Unfortunately, however, this does not mean that the resulting obligations are understood in the same way. And the ‘law on the books’ does not have to be the law that is actually practiced.

Courts that could help to guarantee the uniform interpretation and implementation of the law have an increasingly difficult standing; just think of the sanctions recently imposed by the USA against the International Criminal Court.

[...]

L.I.S.A.: *Finally, let's take a look at the KFG program for which you are responsible. What are the main topics to be expected and what issues will be at the center of the program?*

Prof. Nußberger: I am responsible for the topic of 'Human Rights'. Personally, I am interested in the extent to which the claim of universally valid human rights could be realized in extreme situations, especially in wars, in the period from the 1990s to the present. Within the KFG, there are a number of interesting projects on human rights that use historical and legal analysis to address the East-West dynamic in the development of fundamental and human rights and in many cases also go back to the Cold War era.

Publications

The KFG is proud to announce its first two publications. The first print edition was released in collaboration with the [Collegium Carolinum](#), while the online publication originates from the "Memocracy" conference, held in June 2024 in partnership with the [Academy for European Human Rights Protection](#).

- Schulze Wessel, Martin/Volf, Darina (eds.): Changing Times, Persisting Legacies. The Uneven Development of East-Central Europe since 1989, Göttingen 2025.
- The Omnipresence of Divergent Historical Narratives in Law and Politics, in: Verfassungsblog. On Constitutional Matters; <https://verfassungsblog.de/category/debates/memocracy-history-law-politics/> [15.02.2025].

Bluesky

The KFG moved from X (formerly Twitter) to Bluesky to continue taking part in a space for open discourse that aligns better with the values of thoughtful debate. You can now follow the KFG on Bluesky ([@kfguniversalism.bsky.social](#)) for the latest updates, events, and insights. We look forward to staying connected with you there.