

# CEU Open Society Prize Awarded to Polish Author and Activist Klementyna Suchanow

VIENNA, AUSTRIA, June 19, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The prestigious Open Society Prize of the [Central European University \(CEU\)](#) was being awarded this year to Polish author, researcher, and activist Klementyna Suchanow, one of the leading figures of Poland's pro-democracy movement and a prominent advocate for women's rights and democratic freedoms. She received the award during the Graduation Ceremony at CEU in Vienna on June 19.

Prof. Carsten Q. Schneider, Interim President and Rector of CEU, said: "By exposing the transnational alliances connecting Polish ultra-conservatives and far-right forces with Christian fundamentalists in the US, militant Catholic reactionaries in Europe, and Russian orthodox hardliners, she has alerted everyone committed to the basic values of open democratic societies around the world to the formidable new threats women's rights are once again facing today."

For many years, Suchanow remained primarily known as an author and literary scholar. It was only after the Polish government's attempt to introduce a near-total abortion ban in 2016 that she stepped into public life as an activist, co-founding the All Poland Women's Strike movement together with Marta Lempart. What began as resistance to a single legislative proposal grew into the largest anti-government protest movement in post-socialist Poland. Today, Suchanow is recognized internationally both for her role in defending democratic values and women's rights and for her investigative work exposing the transnational networks linking authoritarian, religious fundamentalist, and anti-democratic actors.

Reflecting on the recognition, Suchanow said:

"When I took to the streets of Warsaw to defend us against a conservative and undemocratic wave in 2016, it never occurred to me that someone would one day want to give me an award for it. On the first day, I felt terribly alone, but it quickly became clear that there are many more brave, wise, and righteous people out there, and thanks to our collective effort, we've managed—for now—to restore democracy in Poland. This award is ostensibly for me, but symbolically, it's for each and every one of us."

The CEU Open Society Prize is awarded annually to an outstanding individual or group whose achievements have advanced democracy and an open society—both founding principles of the university. Past recipients include Sir Karl Popper (1994), the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan (2008), Belarusian Nobel Literature laureate Svetlana Alexievich

(2015), Doctors Without Borders (2016), Austrian extremism researcher Julia Ebner (2024), and Russian opposition figure Yulia Navalnaya (2025).

### About Klementyna Suchanow

Klementyna Suchanow is a Polish author, researcher, and democracy activist. For many years, she worked as a literary scholar and writer before becoming one of the most prominent figures in the struggle against democratic backsliding and attacks on women's rights in Poland.

In 2016, she co-founded the All Poland Women's Strike movement after the Polish parliament launched efforts to ban abortion in the country. Over the following years, the movement grew into the largest anti-government protest movement in Poland's post-socialist history, mobilizing millions of citizens in defense of women's rights and democratic values. She later played a key role in the mass demonstrations triggered by the tightening of Poland's abortion laws in 2020 and 2021.

Suchanow is also widely recognized for her investigative work documenting the international networks linking far-right organizations, religious fundamentalists, and authoritarian actors. In her 2020 book *This Is War: Women, Fundamentalists, and the New Middle Ages*, she traced the transnational architecture of movements seeking to roll back human rights and democratic governance. Her research has also shed light on Russian influence networks and anti-democratic actors operating across Europe.

Despite facing surveillance, harassment, smear campaigns, and legal intimidation, Suchanow has remained a steadfast advocate for women's rights, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and judicial independence. Today, she is regarded as one of the most influential voices in the struggle for democracy and human rights in Poland and across Europe.

### About CEU

Founded in 1991 and based in Vienna since 2019, Central European University (CEU) is a non-profit private university with around 1,500 students from more than 100 countries pursuing bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs accredited both in the United States and Austria. With more than 200 outstanding faculty members and researchers, CEU maintains an excellent student-faculty ratio and consistent external recognition through prestigious research awards and third-party funded projects. CEU is committed to equal opportunity, diversity, open societies, and freedom of expression, values reflected in initiatives such as the Invisible University for Ukraine (IUFU).

The university also maintains a strong research presence in Budapest through the CEU Democracy Institute, the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archivum (OSA), the Roma Graduate Preparation Program (RGPP), the CEU Institute for Advanced Study (IAS), and the CEU Center for Ethics and Law in Biomedicine (CELAB). These activities are complemented by a wide

range of public educational programs, lectures, and cultural events organized by CEU's Civic Engagement, Arts and Culture Unit.

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