Freedom and Democracy Dialogues—the Contest over Open Society

“Politics Captured by Business or Business Captured by Politics? Private Interests and Party Financing in Democracies”

a lecture by

MARCRY WALECKI

Introduction: John Shattuck, President and Rector
Moderator: Gabor Toka, Head, Department of Political Science

Date: Monday, October 8, 2012
Time: 5:30 p.m.
Venue: Popper Room (CEU, Nador u. 9)

Without having sufficient financial resources to spend on media campaigns and public events, parties would be seriously limited in reaching citizens with their message. However, the source of money that flows to political candidates comes increasingly from large-scale corporate and private interests that are seeking to influence public policy. Does this practice allow concentrations of private money to exercise hidden and undue influence on candidates? Would the sponsored parties and candidates thus represent the interests of businesses or lobby groups, instead of the citizens? If so, how does the right to be heard and speak depend on the availability of financial resources in modern democracies? In general, what is the proper role of economic interest groups in democratic governments? Should political campaigns be funded by public money? Should private contributions be banned or limited?

Marcin Walecki is Chief of Democratic Governance at the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Walecki has worked in more than 30 countries, with a focus on research and implementation of programs ranging from anti-corruption, political finance and public ethics, political party assistance and development, and integrity of public administration, to election administration. He has been a consultant to several major international organizations. Walecki holds a PhD in Political Science from Oxford University and an MA in Law from the University of Warsaw. He is a former Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute, and a board member of the International Political Science Association Research Committee on Political Finance and Political Corruption.

Freedom and Democracy—The Contest over Open Society
Twenty-one years ago CEU was founded by George Soros, Vaclav Havel, and other open society advocates, on the ashes of the Communist collapse in Central Europe. The new University was committed to democracy and civil liberties, and adopted the promotion of an open society as its mission. Democracy is now surging again as a rallying cry across the Middle East and elsewhere in the world, and new tools like the Internet and mobile phones can accelerate civil society empowerment and community action. However, at the same time these values are being widely contested in ways that were unimaginable in the euphoria of 1989. As CEU’s founding notions of open society face growing opportunities and challenges, the University is hosting a series of lectures and debates where academics, government officials, and civil society representatives can reflect on this contemporary contest.

Reception to follow
RSVP by October 7, 2012 to dialogues@ceu.hu