

# Freedom of Artistic Expressions in Europe

## A quick look at challenges, contradictions and trends

Some thoughts and images supporting the contribution of  
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# Current policy issues definitely cloud my topic...

...but I cannot seriously address all of them in 10 minutes:

- **Ukraine** – also a war of media, words, images (and art?)
- **Fake news** (only a Russian specialty?)
- **Autocratisation vs. democracy** & civil liberties
- **"Identity" politics** and "social" media bubbles
- **"Cancel Culture"**
- **Censorship** (open and hidden)
- **Community Arts** & activism vs. the individual artist...?
- **Anti-Semitism** (and other -isms!)
- **Boycott** (which I principally oppose), sanctions...

Let's start with the last four issues:

# Poster of artists' collective Taring Padi removed



@ documenta fifteen in  
Kassel, June 2022 – missed  
chance for a critical discourse



# Other examples of images deemed to be offensive

(from Jyllands-Posten and Charlie Hebdo)



**CHARLIE HEBDO**

28 OCTOBRE 2020 / N° 1475 / 3€

**ERDOGAN**  
LE PRIVÉ, IL EST TRÈS DRÔLE



ANCE



# Images of "visible minorities", e.g. Roma, Muslims, Jews can play a main role in discriminatory practice, according to surveys

Cartoon by Saleh Memecan - from an exhibition at the Conference "Muslim Integration in the West", ASMA Society & Cordoba Initiative, Copenhagen 2006



## Another issue: Can democracies be "illiberal"?

*Different governments in Europe are advancing corporatist mechanisms to foster a homogenizing and conservative understanding of culture. Illiberal practices framed within these policies include a delegated censorship and several measures based on xenophobic claims. Despite the importance of this phenomenon, the available literature on cultural policies has not adequately addressed it so far.*

Lluís Bonet and Mariano Martín Zamorano: Cultural policies in illiberal democracies (2020)

# Hail to the champion of "Illiberal Democracies"

(Victor Orbán at a border police ceremony, 7 March 2017)

YouTube<sup>DE</sup>

Search



any kind of artsy-crafty human rights mumbo-jumbo.



# **Discovering our mixed identities...** **...artists' views can often be an eye-opener!**

**John Phillip Mäkinen: "Children of the Revolution"**

(at the 2007 Biennale of Young Artists, Tallinn/Estonia)





# Artistic Freedom or Freedom of Artistic Expressions?

- **Artistic Freedom (AF)** is generally understood as the right to unobstructed artistic activity and to the free performance, dissemination and enjoyment of all types of works of art.
- A literal translation of AF into some other languages, including German, actually evokes a different term which, after a re-translation into English, reads like this: "**Artistic License**" (creative work diverging from usual practices or meanings).
- In some interpretations, including that of **UNESCO** (2019), AF goes far beyond cultural rights and policies in the strict sense, includes e.g. the freedom of movement and association or the protection of social and economic rights, including a right to support of artistic activity.

# Main UN legal instruments

- The ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights*** (1948) – its Article 19 reads as follows:  
*‘Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.’* Similar:
- The ***International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*** (1966);
- UNESCO’s 2005 ***Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions***.

NOTE: "Artistic Freedom" is not explicitly mentioned in these legal instruments. This is another reason why "**Freedom of Artistic Expressions**" could be an appropriate terminological solution for ongoing studies and debates in the *Compendium* context.

# Barriers to Freedom of Artistic Expressions

Current investigations in the *Compendium* context focus on potential **barriers to Freedom of Artistic Expressions (FoAE)**, e.g.:

1. **Political climate** (influencing/restricting FoAE such as e.g., via autocratic governments; populism; closed communities)
2. **Censorship**
  - a. *institutionalised*, via laws, including
    - ex-ante ('prior restraint') or
    - ex-post (after publication)
  - b. *indirect* (e.g., orchestrated via societal or commercial actors)
  - c. *Self-censorship*
3. **"Cancel Culture"**, a recent social media phenomenon
4. **Restrictions on accessibility** of artistic content.

Hot issues such as e.g., **cartoon conflicts, blasphemy, defamation** or the once dominating **"obscenity"** will likewise receive attention.



# Resources

Web platforms, the literature and a survey among *Compendium* experts will (hopefully) provide relevant empirical evidence and we hope to deliver meaningful results in the course of this year.

Comparative data and other inputs are, inter alia, expected from:

- **Advocacy bodies** such as *Freemuse* or *Article 19*
- **Freedom or democracy index systems** such as *CATO* or *V-Dem* (Problem: media focus of freedom of expression indicators)
- **Professional organisations**, e.g. PEN International
- **The Council of Europe** and **UNESCO** (with focus on Human Rights issues) and, clearly, also
- The **Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends content** itself (which proves difficult as regards long- or medium-term trends).

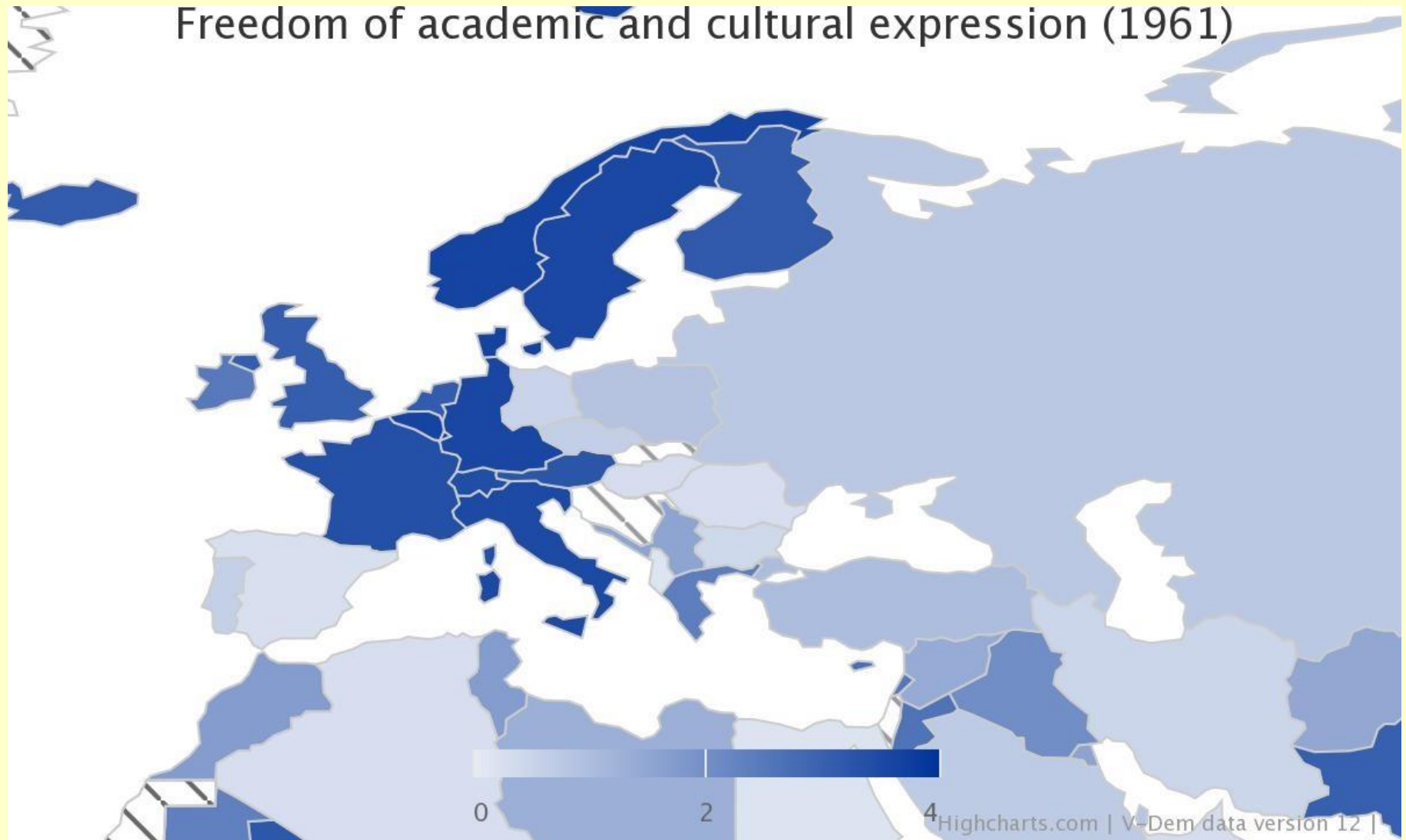
All of you are of course invited to contribute own ideas. Should we possibly extend the survey to all *Compendium* users?

# Trends of 4 main Cultural Policy orientations

(based on my 'quick & dirty' content analysis of *Compendium* terms for the 2018 ENCATC Congress in Bucharest – not replicable due to new grid)

Terms	2007	2017	Focus	2007	2017
identity	43	46	Traditional	206 = 41.4%	194 = 33.1%
heritage*	150	142			
folk(lore)	13	6			
quality	28	53	Arts-related	130 = 26.2%	193 = 32.9%
artist(s)	83	114			
<b>freedom (of expression)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>26</b>			
management	21	44	Managerial	73 = 14.7%	114 = 19.5%
(creative) industries	33	52			
efficient(cy)	19	18			
(un)equal(ity)	19	16	Socio-cultural	88 = 17.7%	85 = 14.5%
(cultural) participation	58	56			
intercultural	11	13			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>586</b>		<b>497 = 100%</b>	<b>586 = 100%</b>

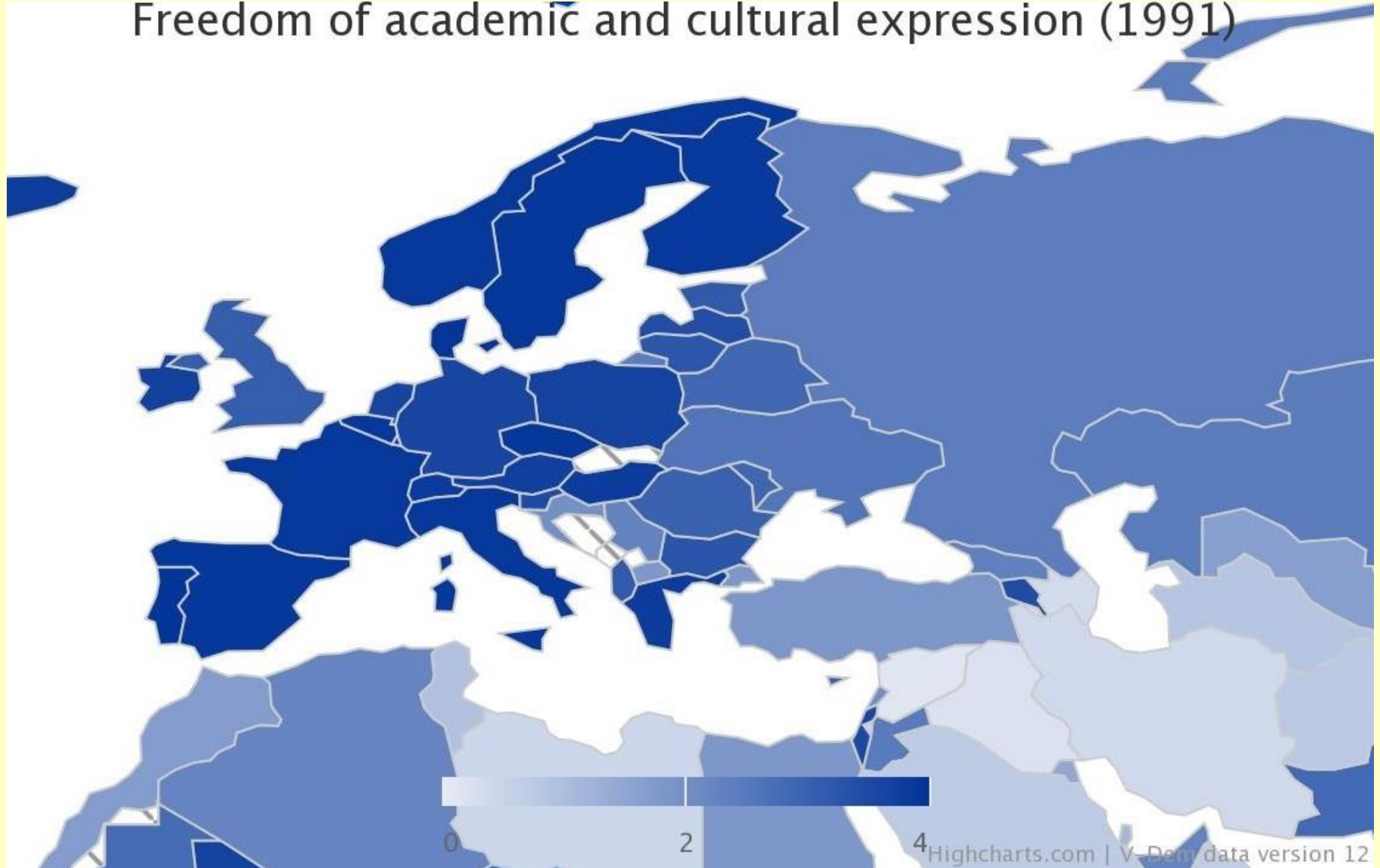
Potentially a credible (academic) source from Sweden:  
**The *V-Dem* data files – a 60 Years overview (I)**





# The *V-Dem* data files – a 60 Years overview II

Freedom of academic and cultural expression (1991)



# The *V-Dem* data files – a 60 Years overview III

Freedom of academic and cultural expression (2021)

