

II. Barriers to Freedom of Artistic Expressions

Our investigations focus on main potential barriers to Freedom of Artistic Expressions (FoAE) as well as on actions, frameworks, strategies and instruments that are relevant in this context. First, we try to learn more about the development of the "political climate" in Europe and its influences on FoAE, followed by a discussion of more or less open censorship and, finally, by a look on social and community pressures that could impair artists and their work. Because of the *Compendium* context, this will be done mainly in a European perspective via an assessment of existing studies, an examination of cases and evidence found in the media.

The following arguments and examples were selected in order to clarify specific viewpoints that merit further debates. In other words: During the preparation of the texts, I did not focus on spectacular new revelations. Instead, I wanted to highlight a few recent cases and positions that could help to ask the right questions and bring us closer to appropriate answers. In the course of this *tour d'horizon*, some personal experiences are not avoided. Of course: All arguments and conclusions are those of the author(s) and do not bind the *Compendium* Association and its partners in any way. I appreciate alternative views and additional facts that could qualify, or add to, what is presented in the next three articles. In fact, the *Compendium* team hopes to complement the following results in the course of 2023 with additional results, including via web exchanges, surveys and other participative instruments.

*As a dog returneth to his vomit,
so a fool returneth to his folly.*
Proverbs 26:11, King James Bible, 1611

II.1 Tired of Democracy? Political climate trends and their impact on FoAE

Will autocratic governments, uncontrolled populism or so-called "illiberal democracies" soon become a regular feature – or even a norm – we have to live with in Europe? Is the idea of a common – and at the same time: diverse – European cultural space an outmoded concept, incapable of winning a majority of the citizens on our continent?

Hold it! *Doucement! Gemach!* (Hurrah, finally I managed to publicly use this fine German literary expression, my online dictionary deems to be "obsolescent"!). Okay, okay: I'll better try to approach our austere topic in a more serious manner...

Let me start with a few methodological caveats: With the aim to provide relevant empirical evidence for this exercise, hopefully even regularly collected facts that could enable trend analyses, I checked the literature, Internet platforms and had discussions with a number of specialists. However, a true **FoAE monitoring** proved to be a very difficult task, because it requires specific data that are raised, aggregated and evaluated in a uniform, comparable format over time in many, if not all, European countries. As well, due to recent structural updates of the *Compendium* country profiles, they could probably be used for FoAE content trend analyses only in 5 or 6 years. Clearly, that's still a long way off, so this and the following article(s) rely more on **case- or country-based information**.

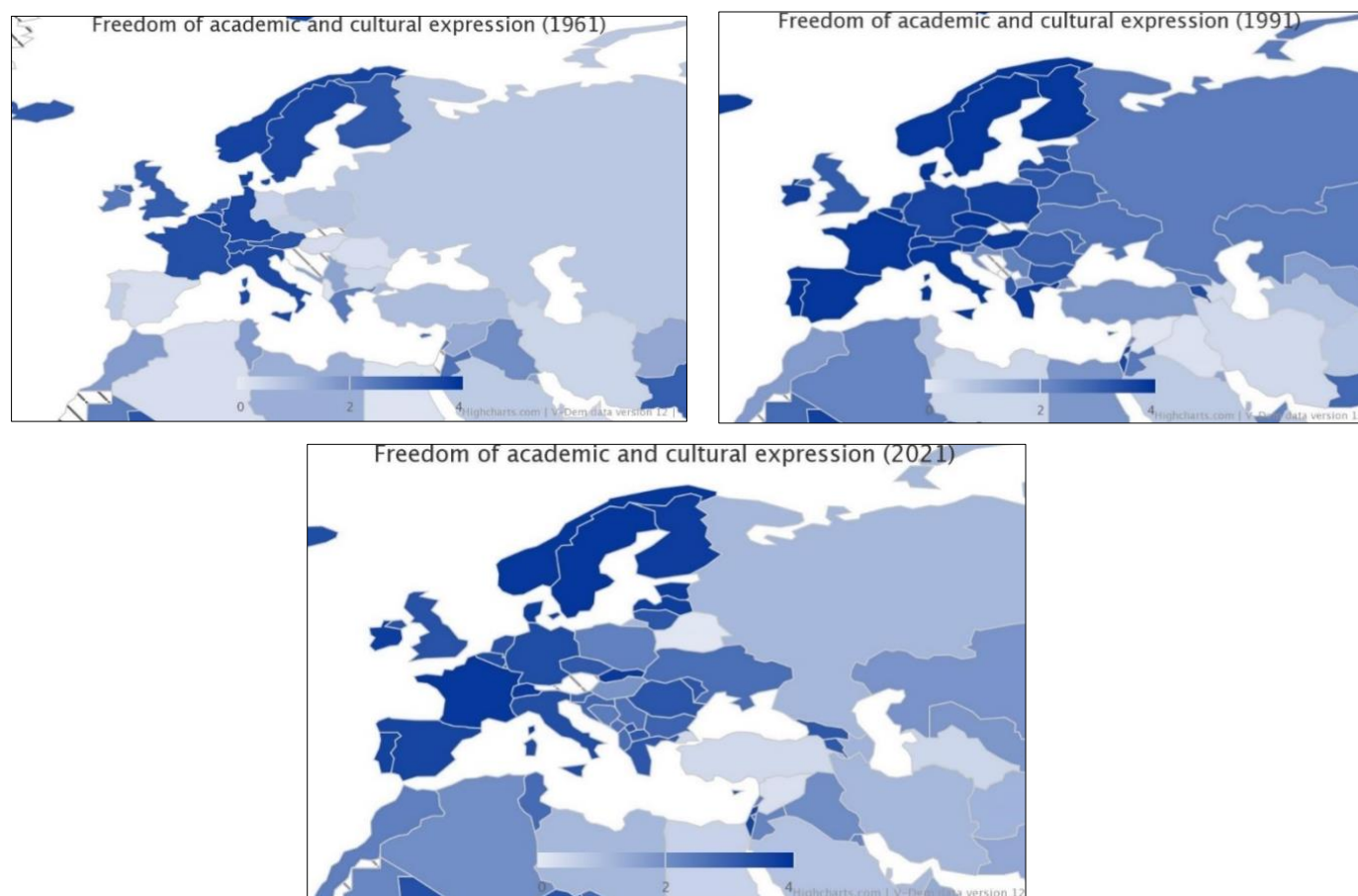
A few remarks on some of the resources consulted for this article:

- **Freedom and Governance index systems** such as e.g., the [Human Freedom Index](#) frequently follow libertarian ideas. The latter has a sub-index on "Freedom of Expression & Information", which ranks Switzerland, Norway and Ireland on top and Turkey at the end of the list of European countries. However, here and in other index systems we face the

problem that related indicators focus mainly on media freedom of expression. Another example: The [Bertelsmann Foundation Transformation Index](#) (BTI) 2022 lists, for the first time, more autocracies than democracies worldwide. In Central/Eastern Europe, we still find a majority of democratic countries, but more than half of them were considered as "defective" or "highly defective democracies"; some post-Soviet states, in particular Russia, Belarus and Azerbaijan, are classified as autocracies.

The only trend index that seems to come closer to our topic – and covers the whole of Europe – is [Varieties of Democracy \(V-Dem\)](#), based at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, assisted by over 3,700 scholars and other country experts. It consists of a large global dataset on democracy indicators with over 30 million data points for 202 countries. Among its many sub-indexes is one on "Freedom of academic and cultural expression (C) (v2clacfree)", managed by Svend-Erik Skaaning. It merits further investigations, but the following maps based on the V-Dem data already suggest first culture-related trends from 1961 to 2021, which coincide with other information gained during our research. The scale ranges between dark 4 (freedom fully respected by public authorities) to light 0 (no such respect at all). It looks as if we are heading back towards the worst times of the Cold War...

Long-term Trends of Academic and Cultural Freedom in Europe



Source: Based on 2022 data of the V-Dem Institute for 1961, 1991 and 2021

- **Professional organisations** in European countries often collect and publish information on policy developments and protest against cases of repression, albeit according to their own national priorities, which impedes comparisons over time.

- As an alternative, we looked for evidence at the trans-national **PEN International**. In the [2020 version](#) of its annual "case lists" (data in the latest [2021 list](#) is not compatible) of imprisoned, detained, indicted or otherwise threatened writers 220 verified cases are specified, 50 of which in Europe/Central Asia. Whether this situation could be compared with the – much higher (1320!) – figures in the two 2010 lists is doubtful and requires further investigation. In addition to such reports, the PEN and its partners provide support and advocacy for harassed authors and try to protect translation and linguistic rights.

Nedim Türfent, journalist and poet, from Van High Security Prison/Turkey:
Your efforts are invaluable in being the voice of the voiceless[...] If I didn't hereby reiterate my thanks to PEN's efforts as the primary liberating locomotive of literature and arts, I wouldn't be able to rest my head on my "pillow" on this iron bunkbed with ease.
 (PEN INTERNATIONAL IMPACT AND LEARNING REPORT 2015-2019)

- In 2022, the **Council of Europe** published its regular [Report on FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN 2021](#). However, this "assessment of the state of freedom of expression in Council of Europe member States" focuses again on the overall environment for independent and pluralistic media as well as on threats against the safety of journalists. Other recent documents investigate [FoE in times of conflict](#). These topics, though important, provide only limited chances for a specific FoAE trend analysis.
- Similar to the CoE, **UNESCO** recently intensified its efforts to promote FoE in the Internet "at a time when the digital ecosystem offers new opportunities but also multiplies challenges for freedom of expression" ([Freedom of Expression Online](#), 2023).

- **International Advocacy bodies** like [Article 19](#), [Index on Censorship](#) or [Freemuse](#) deliver additional facts. The latter focused originally on artists in the music domain, but since the last decade it has gradually expanded its scope with the aim to cover all artistic professions. As a well-established advocacy body based in Europe, it tries to influence also cultural policies on this continent: In 2020, it published the inventory [Security, Creativity, Tolerance and their Co-Existence: The New European Agenda on Freedom of Artistic Expression](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic – a further chance to silence dissidents? *Looking outward, even as our annual Global Expression Report in 2020 showed that over half the world was living in a crisis of expression, we are painfully aware of how governments have used the pandemic to entrench repression. We foresee further declines this year. But, as the Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei has urged, it is in extraordinarily challenging times that we need to hold more than ever to common principles of freedom of speech and expression.*
 Paddy Coulter, Chair of the Board of ARTICLE 19 (Global Expression Report 2020)

For our research and future debates on its topic, an assessment of the annual reports of *Freemuse* (now published under the title "The State of Artistic Freedom" with the support of public bodies and NGOs in Sweden and Norway) are particularly useful because of their emphasis on violations of artists' security and on the suppression of FoAE – a unique feature in comparison with many other resources. That's why I will highlight empirical information from these reports both in this and in the next article. In its latest [Report from 2022](#), *Freemuse* examined 1251 acts of violation against artists and their FoAE in 103 countries and in the online space in 2021. Music (31%) still counts the largest number of cases, followed by visual arts (24%) and film (23%). 32% of the violations are reported from Europe – the largest numbers of cases in Turkey, Belarus and Russia – followed by North & South America (24%) and the Middle East & North Africa (17%).

Cases of repression against artists and their work 2021 (examined by Freemuse)

Forms of repression	Units*	Cases (%)	Countries
Killed	A	38 (3%)	12
Imprisoned	A	119 (10%)	24
Detained	A	253 (20%)	38
Prosecuted	A	133 (11%)	34
Abducted	A	3 (0.2%)	3
Attacked	A & E	24 (2%)	18
Persecuted	P	138 (11%)	43
Threatened/Harassed (incl. Online)	A	75 (6%)	34
Art or Venue destroyed/Damaged	W & V	127 (10%)	33
Travel Ban	A	13 (1%)	4
Sanctioned/Fined	A	31 (3%)	12
Blanket Ban	A	10 (0.8%)	7
Censored (incl. Online)	C	287 (23%)	57

* Units: A = Artists; C = Censorship acts; E = Events; P = Persecution acts; V Venues; W = Works
 Source: Based on data from Freemuse (2022), *The State of Artistic Freedom*

Unfortunately, due to changes in categories and representation, exact statistical comparisons with early *Freemuse* reports e.g., from 2015 or 2016, are difficult, but the general patterns seem to persist.

Despite the somewhat ambivalent results of our search for reliable empirical FoAE trend indicators, it produced evidence that could benefit the *Compendium* research project even in cases, where this evidence does not specifically address the arts and related freedom of expression. Adding to current critical challenges like the rapid climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, growing and partly obscene social imbalances or the Russian attack on Ukraine, and often fuelled by these, some **general societal changes** (with chances to influence also FoAE) are mentioned in the latest UNDP [Human Development Report](#).

A few trends highlighted in the 2021/2022 Human Development Report

- *Political polarization is on the rise across the world*
- *In a reversal from just 10 years ago, democratic backsliding is now the prevailing trend across countries.*
- *Recent declines on the Human Development Index (HDI) are widespread, with over 90 percent of countries enduring a decline in 2020 or 2021.*
- *Perceived human insecurity is increasing in most countries — even in some very high Human Development Index countries.*
- *Negative affect is increasing for everyone, with persistent inequalities between groups.*
- *The consequences of substituting the digital for the real are complex... Sometimes, that spills over into real-life violence or into real-life policy.*
- *Rigidities in their many dimensions — in ideas, in networks, in narratives — act as a vise on human creativity... Agency and freedoms are antidotes.*

To these results we could add comments from scholars and statements from advocacy bodies, observing a "creeping authoritarianism around the world" (Quinn McKew, Executive Director ARTICLE 19, 2020) and with it a political climate that works to the detriment of free creative work.

In that context: We should not be naïve in times when freedom of thought and expression appears to be endangered in some European countries. Related restrictions may indeed be disguised by practices that are not obviously "illegal" or do not restrict artists directly, at first

sight. As will be discussed in the next article of our series, **indirect measures of mind control** such as, inter alia, financial restraints, a reorientation of arts institutions or the recruitment of partisan staff can easily replace open censorship or legal action against artists.

In the meantime, more empirical and theoretical research is available that addresses our topic of the relation between changes of the political climate and barriers to FoAI directly. The latest one examines developments in **Poland**: ["Cultural Control: Censorship and Suppression of the Arts in Poland"](#). This second report of the "Artistic Freedom Monitor" series, published in late 2022 by the Artistic Freedom Initiative, was funded by the SDK Foundation for Human Dignity. It has been prepared in partnership with the University of California Berkeley School of Law and Columbia University's Harriman Institute. Before going into details with specific policies and measures (cf. box), the Report first deals with the socio-political context in Poland and explains changes in the country's legal frameworks due to interventions of governments led by the ultra-conservative PiS party. Two specific Indexes at the end of the publication provide more details of 30 acts of censorship and suppression as well as of 23 interferences in the management of arts/cultural institutions.

"Cultural Control: Censorship and Suppression of the Arts in Poland", 2022

The Report details these main policies and instruments that constitute threats to FoAE:

- **Legal mechanisms of suppression.** Among these are Poland's current legal provisions concerning *Blasphemy* (which punish deemed religious insults especially against the Catholic church and led, during the last 5 years, to hundreds of complaints and many court cases, often against artists); *Defamation* (executed primarily to protect politicians or positions of the ruling PiS party) and assessments of the *Holocaust* (which denies any Polish involvement in that crime against humanity). In that context, also "*LGBT-Free Zone*" *Charters* are mentioned: "In 2019, roughly 100 regions and municipalities in Poland passed resolutions declaring themselves to be free from LGBT ideology."
- **Bureaucratic interferences into arts and culture**, including staff and programmatic changes or financial cuts in museums, theatres, festivals, music events and academies, heritage institutions and cultural diplomacy.
- **Political control of the media and public opinion**, including pressures on artists and cultural producers.
- **Intimidations by non-State actors** such as right-wing organisations or individuals targeting artists or vulnerable groups, dissenters and LGBTQ+.
- **Other experiences**, including self-censorship and discrimination of LGBTQ+ artists and cultural producers.

Note: In 2022, the Artistic Freedom Initiative published a similar [Report on Hungary](#), "Systematic Repression", which we will take up again in the next article.

In political statements and increasingly in the literature, we can find a term that is now frequently associated with dangers to freedom of expression, namely "**illiberal democracies**".

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."

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

Bonet and Zamorano explain that, based on obsessive cultural, political and religious beliefs, a number of fine-tuned cultural policy instruments are served up again to support intended societal changes: Popular events and nationalistic or revisionist ideologies are to shape public mindsets and cultural policies at the expense of critical artistic work and open-minded arts education that does not evade problematic aspects of history. From the past e.g., during communist or fascist times, the practice of distinctive clientelism with special support or honours for loyal minions is already known and today traces of similar favouritism are claimed in some countries.

Often **Hungary** and its Prime Minister Victor Orbán, in particular, are being cited as striving for an "illiberal" form of democracy and as examples for a rebirth of nationalism in Europe during the last decades. Is that a correct observation?

Excerpts from an [Address of Victor Orbán on 26 July 2014](#)

In his speech to an ethnic Hungarian audience in Băile Tuşnad / Tusnádfürdő (Romania), Orbán proclaimed his intention to turn Hungary into a state *"that in character it is not of liberal nature."* Citing as models, he proclaimed his intention to *"abandon liberal methods and principles of organizing society, as well as the liberal way to look at the world [...]. Today, the stars of international analyses are Singapore, China, India, Turkey, Russia [...]. and if we think back on what we did in the last four years, and what we are going to do in the following four years, then it really can be interpreted from this angle. We are [...] parting ways with Western European dogmas, making ourselves independent from them. [...]. If we look at civil organizations in Hungary, [...] we have to deal with paid political activists here. [...] [T]hey would like to exercise influence [...] on Hungarian public life."*

As pointed out by scientific observers, our legacy of political and legal systems is diverse and still-existing remnants do not always correspond to prevalent narratives of how a proper democratic system in Europe should be looking like. According to Gábor Halmai of the European University Institute, Hungary can indeed serve as an example for "a new, hybrid type of regime, between the ideal of a full-fledged democracy and a totalitarian regime...".

Gábor Halmai: ["Illiberal constitutionalism in Eastern and Central Europe"](#) (2021; excerpts)

The borders between democratic, authoritarian or dictatorial regimes are blurred, and there are a lot of different hybrid systems, such as the current Hungarian regime... The strengthening of populist and extreme nationalist movements across Europe is incompatible with the values of the liberal democracy... Unfortunately, an outsize fear of threats, physical and social, lately, for instance, the refugee crisis... strengthened illiberal systems, such as Turkey and authoritarian regimes such as Russia all over Europe, and in the case of Hungary even inside the EU... There is a growing gap between the old and the new Member States, and the support of populist parties has been strengthened even in the old Member States.

Increasingly, these and developments in other countries alert artists, writers or critics in the media and networks, such as Stephen Pogány (Warwick University), who does not hesitate to call Hungary "Europe's Rogue State" ([Social Europe](#), 28 November 2022). They wonder what such tendencies could mean for a diverse culture that is often – despite the ambivalence of that term – labelled "liberal", and whether they may even help preparing a **return of (Neo-)Fascism**. Even more explicit – and pessimistic – has been the Hungarian philosopher Gáspár Miklós Tamás. In an interview, shortly before his death in January 2023, he described the political and cultural future of his country and Europe in the following words:

Gáspár Miklós Tamás on Post-Fascism, 2022

"Where do I see fascism? Everywhere. Fascism, especially post-fascism, is not a dictatorship in the traditional sense. It is not carried out by the state, but by a population sympathetic to violence and exclusion. Post-fascism brings this terrifying, irrational momentum into the public sphere, the most important element of which is discrimination - see migration, see gender issues." (hvg 360°, 22 December 2022)

This verdict triggers a question on **future research regarding FoE**. In the social sciences, the category "trust" is frequently used when issues of governance, social cohesion and individual well-being are examined. Institutions, governments or the EU as well as the economy and certain professions are often in the focus of related studies. However, to what extent can we trust that our fellow citizens – including ourselves! – really accept democratic values, including respect for FoAE? Tamás' intervention suggests that a kind of early warning system on extremist positions might be helpful. At least we could try to fine-tune existing surveys and indicators to better catch the "trustworthiness" of whole populations, not least with regard to their susceptibility to neo-fascist cultural stereotypes. Just hoping for a next election may not be the best option.

Clearly, illiberal authoritarianism may not necessarily lead to a return of a fully-fledged fascism and recent power shifts or election results, for example, "the humbling of Johnson and Trump were encouraging signs not only of democratic resilience but also of the global retreat of the nationalist-populists", according to Jonathan Freedland. However, he has to admit that backlashes are possible like in the case of Benjamin Netanyahu, who "is back in power in Israel atop a coalition that includes those once shunned as part of the untouchable, racist right" (The Guardian, 23.12.2022). And indeed, an "erosion of democracy" cannot be ruled out says Israeli philosopher Yuval Kremitzer in a recent interview (taz, 29.10.2022).

The Italian writer and philosopher Umberto Eco discussed the question of neo-fascism already 25 years ago, after Silvio Berlusconi first brought post-fascists to power in 1994. He outlined a list of features "typical of what I would like to call **perennial or primordial fascism**. These features cannot be arranged into a system; many of them contradict each other and are also characteristic of other types of despotism or fanaticism. But it is enough that one of them is present, and fascism has a crystallisation point around which it can develop." (cf. box)

From illiberal democracy to a new fascism?

Umberto Eco's 14 characteristics (1997)

- 1. Cult of tradition** and of a traditionalism that also takes up myths of primeval revelations, which inevitably results in cultural "syncretism".
- 2. Rejection of modernity:** "The rejection of the modern world masqueraded as a condemnation of the capitalist way of life, but it was primarily directed against the spirit of 1789 (and of course of 1776). The Enlightenment and the Age of Reason were seen as the beginning of modern depravity."
- 3. Cult of action for action's sake:** "For an action to be beautiful in itself, it must take place without any prior reflection... Culture (is) suspect as soon as and insofar as it is identified with critical attitudes. Distrust of the intellectual world has always been a symptom of primal fascism, from the famous statement attributed to Goebbels 'When I hear talk of culture, I draw my revolver' to the frequent use of expressions such as 'degenerate pack of intellectuals', 'eggheads', 'radical snobs', 'rats and blowflies'."
- 4. Rejection of criticism:** "In modern culture, the scientific community praises dissent as a means of increasing knowledge. For primal fascism, dissent is treason."

5. **Exploitation of fear of otherness and diversity:** "Ur-fascism grows and seeks consensus by exploiting and deepening the natural fear of otherness ... Therefore, Ur-fascism is by definition racist."
 6. **"Appeal to the frustrated middle classes...** who suffered from economic crisis and/or political humiliation and were afraid of pressure from subaltern social groups."
 7. **Obsession of a conspiracy:** "The followers must feel besieged. The easiest way to conjure up a conspiracy is through an appeal to xenophobia. However, the conspiracy must also come from within; therefore, Jews are usually the best target, since they offer the advantage of being both inside and outside at the same time."
 8. **A sense of humiliation** from openly demonstrated wealth and the strength of enemies: "However, the followers must also be convinced that they can defeat the enemies."
 9. **Armageddon complex:** "Since the enemies must and can be defeated, there must be a final battle...".
 10. **Contempt for the weak and strengthening of the feeling of a mass elite:** "Ur-Fascism can only preach folkish elitism: Every citizen belongs to the best people in the world..."
 11. **Education to heroism:** "The Ur-Fascist hero longs for heroic death, which is preached to him as the best reward of a heroic life."
 12. **"Machismo** (which means not only contempt for women but also rejection and condemnation of all non-standard sexual habits, from chastity to homosexuality)"
 13. **Qualitative populism:** "For primal fascism, individuals have no rights as individuals, while the 'whole of the people' is conceived as a quality, a monolithic entity expressing the common will of all... In our future, a TV or internet populism could base on the emotional response of a group of selected citizens being presented and accepted as the 'voice of the people'."
 14. **Newspeak** modelled on Orwell's '1984': "We must be prepared to identify other forms of newspeak, even if they take the innocent form of a popular talk show."
- Eco warns: "Primal fascism can come in the most innocent of garments. It is our duty to expose it and point the finger at each of its new forms - every day, all over the world."

Based on: Umberto Eco, Cinque scritti morali, 1997

Perhaps not everyone will share Eco's criteria and fears. Let's face it: even artists and writers are not always immune to some of the ideological temptations mentioned by Eco. Especially with regard to democratic processes, cultural diversity and freedom of artistic expressions, a constant, objective monitoring and examination of political and legal changes is indicated, for which the *Compendium* can provide important foundations.

This article cannot end without a look at **Russia**. When on 24 February 2022 Russian soldiers invaded Ukraine in what was called a "special military operation", President Vladimir Putin justified this step inter alia with the need for a "denazification" of the neighbouring country. Later on, Russian state-sponsored narratives about Ukraine being a "fascist state" were frequently used to "de-legitimise Ukraine's right to self-defence" ([Institute for Strategic Dialogue](#), 2022). At the same time, dissidents questioning this rhetoric were persecuted in Russia; many artists and intellectuals have chosen to emigrate (and could not always count on a warm welcome in their exile countries). Today it seems that the above label of a "fascist" Ukraine could actually backfire on the originators, especially when it is perversely combined with antisemitic stereotypes or with statements like that of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who compared the US and European support for Ukraine with Adolf Hitler's "final solution" to eradicate the Jews ([Reuters](#), 18 January 2023). Indeed, UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace – in a speech at the National Army Museum in London following the invasion of Ukraine – compared Putin, his inner circle and

generals with the fascism and tyranny of 70 years ago, repeating the mistakes of totalitarian regimes of the last century (linkiesta.it, 20 May 2022). How to assess this war of words and the implications Russia's attack for the future of cultural cooperation in Europe?

Karl Schlögel, the veteran historian of Eastern Europe, is considered as one of the best experts on Russia and its history – and has even been respected as such in that country: In 2014, he was to receive the Russian *Pushkin Medal*, but did not accept it because of the Crimea occupation in that year. Following the war against Ukraine, he had to thoroughly reorient himself and, in an open letter 2022, warned of a potential genocide.

Russia: Fascism or 'Putinism'?

Excerpts from an interview of Karl Schlögel with *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 3 January 2023:

How would you describe the Russian system?

There are different approaches or models. Some emphasise the mafia state, others the kleptocracy in which social and state property is redistributed into the hands of oligarchs. There is the view that today's Russia is an autocracy, the revival of the tsarist legacy, while others speak of a postmodern order or even fascism.

And what does Karl Schlögel say?

I believe that the terms I have just mentioned name essential aspects of the system, but that Putinism is something new. A lot of things come together: the power-centredness and the weakness of Russian civil society, the absence of the middle class, the staging of power in the public sphere, the sophistication in the handling of public relations, which is not just a synchronisation but a game with the power of the media, these people all have Hollywood behind them. And then there is the sound of holy Russia next to the medal ceremony for the murderers of Butscha.

Where is Putin in this picture?

He is almost a syncretic figure. Think of the famous picture of him with the candle in the Cathedral of the Saviour at Easter Vigil, the one with the Mussolini torso on horseback, his appearance in 2010 singing "Blueberry Hill" and strumming on the piano. And then again, the obsessive, bursting-from-the-inside hate speech on the eve of the attack - I believe that Putinism represents a new form that we have not had to deal with before.

Some call the new system "Russism", in reference to fascism.

Looking at fascism and Nazism in relation to the Russian system is instructive, but analogies are not quite appropriate because you are dealing with something specific and new for which you still have to find the terms. It is striking that the Russian-Soviet-Stalinist line, the specific Russian heritage, does not appear in this discussion. But how can this be faded out for a post-Soviet Russia? Putinism draws on an independent historical fund. Well-known practices are reactivated: show trials, forced self-criticism, targeted killings, unleashing denunciation against "enemies of the people" and "foreign agents", torture and the camp system. Even mobilisation followed old patterns. Mass deportations, resettlement, what the Nazis once called "Umvolkung".

Now we know the ingredients of Putinism. What is the point of merging them?

We don't know what this will lead to beyond the current police state. We don't even know yet whether Ukraine, whether Europe will withstand the Russian violence.

Obviously, East-West stereotypes, geopolitical strategies and military challenges alone do not render proper answers to the question of how to communicate, now and in the future, with artists and other cultural actors from Russia. Schlögel gives a hint, when he reminds us of the fact that the Russian Federation is, despite reborn "imperial" ambitions, not composed of just a

"Russian world" and actually a multi-ethnic state. In a FoAE perspective, it will be important to consider both cultural legacies and individual positions with regard to the acceptance of diversity, when one day the issue of rebuilding bridges to the, undoubtedly rich, arts and heritage of this country appears again on European cultural policy agendas.