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RIGHT TO WRITE

Screenwriters
and the growing threats
to Freedom of Artistic
Expression in Europe

A report by David Kavanagh and Carolin Otto
for the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe

SUMMARY

The contemporary rise of the far-right across Europe threatens Freedom of Artistic Expression and, with it, the practical conditions under which screenwriters work.

These movements prioritise control of the narrative: they seek to weaken independent media and cultural institutions, and to narrow the space in which plural, critical, or uncomfortable stories can be made and seen.

This report maps where such parties already govern (alone, in coalition, or through support arrangements), where they have come close to power, and how their agendas converge despite national differences. It describes a recognisable “playbook” that delegitimises journalism, intimidates critics, concentrates media influence, weaponises regulators, politicises cultural bodies, and either defunds or captures those public institutions that shape shared reality.

For screenwriters the most immediate risk is financial and structural: the direct attack on Public Service Broadcasting widely proposed by far-right parties undermines a central pillar of European audiovisual commissioning and production funding.

Alongside this is an ideological programme of restoration — cultural policy framed around an idealised past, moral policing, and a suspicion of contemporary diversity — creating pressure for conformity in what stories are developed, financed, and broadcast.

Even where formal censorship is avoided, the effect can be the same. Anecdotally, screenwriters already describe a chilling climate in which “controversial” themes are pre-emptively avoided and self-censorship is becoming an informal rule.

Finally, the report highlights a longer-term vulnerability. Far-right hostility to the EU’s imposition of regulatory frameworks, combined with the Trump administration’s hostility to regulation which it claims impinges on US companies, raises the prospect that the legislative and policy underpinning of Europe’s audiovisual ecosystem could be weakened, with lasting consequences for creative livelihoods.

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RIGHT TO WRITE

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FSE report 2026

FOREWORD

**By Carolin Otto, former President
of the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe**

Freedom of Artistic Expression must be zealously guarded. That the concept is sometimes difficult to interpret and pin down only makes its defence more important.

The free and unfettered production and dissemination of opinion and creativity is fundamental to our democratic polity. Citizens need to know what is true and to have the means to question and to change. In a community of many states with radically different histories the legislative, administrative and financial structures which are needed to ensure this fundamental freedom are unavoidably complex. But these structures are essential for cultural diversity, for freedom of expression.

Most of Europe's populist and far-right parties have a common, openly declared, intention to destroy this system. Facts are denounced as Fake News, ridiculous conspiracy theories are promoted against all evidence, enemies are conjured up to promote division and create distractions.

In particular most far-right and populist parties in Europe are united in their desire to emasculate or close down Public Service Broadcasting, or, if in power, to subordinate it to their agendas. Public Service Broadcasting is a key source of funding for production of TV fiction.

Many of these parties appeal to a past that never existed, of faith, family and fatherland, and are ready to censor those stories that do not fit this frozen mythology, this static and idealised vision of the past.

Selection (and its more common companion, rejection) is not censorship. But for the screenwriter trying to craft their story to appeal to the criteria (or prejudices) of the producer, broadcaster or funding agency the gap between the two can seem perilously short.

At FSE we know, and this brief report demonstrates, that in an increasing number of cases the line has been crossed and the normal, flawed but unavoidable, process of selection has been replaced by systems intended to limit the subjects and topics that can be addressed by writers, leading to wide-spread self-censorship.

To invest time and money in a story, which you know in advance is not going to be funded because its subject is unwelcome, makes little sense.

A system designed to repress certain subject matters — to “pre-reject” them — is an assault on Freedom of Artistic Expression.

In times when availability of unbiased and factual information is increasingly important FSE strongly supports the principles of Public Service Broadcasting. Broadcasters must be free of politically motivated interference in its work, especially when it broadcasts material critical of government or comments on problematic aspects of contemporary life. We also know that support for cultural diversity requires the involvement of public funds. But the agencies which disburse those funds must be free of political manipulation.

At the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe we feel that we must now put the issue of protection of Freedom of Artistic Expression more at the forefront of our work. Vigilance, though necessary, is not sufficient. We will seek to find partners who agree with our analysis, bring the issue to public and political attention and work to find the means and the strategies to campaign against this erosion of the freedom that enables creators, including screenwriters, to do their work.

INTRODUCTION

We seem on the verge of being overwhelmed by chaos. Apparently we are unable or unwilling to tackle the climate crisis that we know is happening; new technologies, now including generative AI, insist that we are simultaneously developing a technology to save the world which, we are told by the same people, is quite likely to destroy it; Trump, drives American farmers into bankruptcy and at the same time builds a \$300 m ballroom, and we cannot avoid the roar of bombs, falling now or rapidly being built, on our screens twenty four hours a day.

It would seem to be a time for calm and rational debate in the hope of finding solutions, but instead serious journalism and serious political debate are drowned in a tsunami of social media vitriol and generative AI slop.

Angry and disenchanting voters are turning to far-right actors in search of a simple and immediate answer.

As screenwriters we have a bigger role to play in this crisis than we may individually think. Our stories, along with arts and culture in general, play an essential role in exploring and describing the human implications of what we face. Not surprisingly most of the newly resurgent far-right parties would want us to fail in that task.

THE RISE OF THE RIGHT

Globally there has been a substantial shift in political beliefs and values in the last decade or so, which have led to a substantial rise in popular support for hard-right or extreme-right parties¹, or individual leaders who, whether in opposition or in government, oppose globalisation and rule of law principles which have dominated political and ideological thought since the end of the Second World War.

In Europe every one of the member states and all of the candidate countries now have at least one far right party (listed in **Annex 1**), which in many countries attracts 20% or more of the popular vote.

At the time of this report (March 2026) far right parties are in government, alone or in coalition, in seven EU member states:

- **Croatia** where the centre-right **HDZ** governs with the nationalist **Homeland Movement (DP)** since May 2024;
- **Czech Republic** where Andrej Babiš of **ANO** governs in coalition with **Motorists for Themselves** and the far-right **Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD)** (from Dec 2025);
- **Finland** where **The Finns Party** remains a junior partner in Petteri Orpo's four-party coalition;

¹. Such parties may be termed extreme right, populist, autocratic, etc. For the purpose of this document the term far-right is used throughout.

- **Hungary** where Orbán's **Fidesz-KDNP** governs and, since 2022, with a super-majority;
- **Italy** where Giorgia Meloni's **Fratelli d'Italia** heads the government (with **Lega** and **Forza Italia**);
- **Slovakia** where Robert Fico of **Smer-SD** governs in coalition with **Hlas-SD** and **SNS**;
- **Sweden** where the **Sweden Democrats** are not in the cabinet but provide formal confidence-and-supply under the negotiated Tidö framework.

In **Lithuania** **Nemuno Aušra**, a minority partner in a government led by the **Social Democrats (LSDP)** is widely described as a right-wing populist or radical-right party, though whether it should be categorised as "far right" is debated.

Four EU member states had far right parties in government, since overturned at election.

- In the **Netherlands** the **PVV** left the coalition government in June 2025 and were narrowly defeated in the subsequent election of October 2025.
- In **Austria** the **FPÖ** came first in elections in 2024 but were unable to form a coalition.
- The **Progress Party** took part in a coalition government in **Norway** until 2020.
- The **PIS** government was narrowly defeated in **Poland** in 2023 (although its candidate won the Presidential election, even more narrowly, in 2025).

In many other member states of the EU, far right parties are sufficiently widely supported that there is a realistic prospect that they could be in government in the near future. These include :

- **Austria** where the **FPÖ**, even though unable to form a coalition at the last election, remains highly popular.
- **France** where the **RN** remains a major force nationally; it has frequently led national voting-intention and presidential first-round polls through 2024–25.
- **Germany** where the **AfD** topped national polls at points as recently as February 2026 and voting intentions are at 35% and higher in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Saxony-Anhalt, Brandenburg and Thuringia,.
- **Portugal** where **Chega** surged to 23% in the 18 May 2025 general election, becoming the official opposition; it then under-performed in the Oct 2025 locals falling to 12%, but its candidate in the Presidential election achieved 33% in the runoff vote in February 2026.
- **Romania** where **AUR** remains popular (achieving 40% in one poll) despite the defeat of their candidate in the Presidential election.

One could also look to **Belgium** (VB), **Bulgaria** (Vazrazhdane), **Estonia** (EKRE), **Latvia** (LPV) and **Poland** (PIS) where voter support, measured by polling or by recent elections, remain high but participation in government may be problematic for various local reasons.

In the **United Kingdom Reform**, led by Nigel Farage, has led a number of national voting-intention polls in late 2025 and early 2026.

At the level of the **European Parliament** the three formal groups of the far right (that is to say the **European Conservatives and Reformists** group (although perhaps not all of its member can be classed as far-right); the **Patriots for Europe** group; and **Europe of Sovereign Nations**), with 190 MEPs between them (as at February 2026) would be the largest group in the Parliament (**EPP** 187, **S&D** 136) were they combined together. While it is true that their fragmentation limits their effectiveness (they not only differ on specific points — Ukraine, Russia, NATO, EU budget — they also have very significant differences in broader concerns such as the direction of the economy, the role of the state, etc.) they nonetheless do share a very wide agenda with similar aspirations to dismantle huge areas of contemporary political and cultural life.

SHARED POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Most of these parties have nationalistic perspectives and focus on issues which they consider relevant primarily to their own country.

The right is not monolithic ...

It is important to note the wide variation of political perspectives among these parties and not to overstate their similarities. For example, **Fratelli d'Italia** have moved to the centre under Giorgia Meloni while the **AfD** remains reluctant to consider compromise. The extent of Islamophobia, as distinct from general dislike of immigrants, varies for party to party as does support for Russia. Each party operates, at least in part, within its own national history and often in line with the particular perspective of a dominant individual. Many European far-right parties have become disenchanted with the Trump administration's attacks on European sovereignty, most egregiously in respect of Greenland.

In the cultural field there are also distinctions. The **AUR** in Romania and **The Finns Party** in Finland, for example, have relatively sophisticated cultural policy positions compared to most and during elections some far-right parties have found it necessary to respond to questions about cultural policy, for example **Vox** in Spain.

(and there are other political tendencies)

It is also true that, in some countries, other parties outside the far-right have policies which attack public service broadcasting and state support for artists and artistic production. Portugal's **Iniciativa Liberal's (IL)** cultural-policy approach is comparable to that articulated by Georges-Louis Bouchez and the **MR** in francophone Belgium. Both apply market-liberal principles to cultural funding, advocating subsidy cuts, and privatisation. Bouchez's rhetoric, however, more explicitly frames publicly funded culture as ideologically imbalanced. He has said² that he wants to integrate regional TV stations into the national broadcaster RTBF or privatise them and that he believes that the US system of support for the arts is superior to that in Belgium³.

To some degree other liberal parties such as the **Liberal alliance** in Denmark or the **People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)** in the Netherlands also call for reform of state funding of culture.

Serbia and Bulgaria are very different from one another, but neither is driven primarily by far-right ideology. Instead, both have relied on authoritarian methods to preserve power — control over institutions, pressure on media and opponents, and selective accountability — while borrowing far-right tactics opportunistically when it suits: nationalist signalling, scapegoating, and delegitimising protest and civil society as “foreign-influenced” or destabilising. In both, the far-right functions less as a governing doctrine than as a toolbox.

... but it does share many fundamental views.

Nonetheless the broad issues raised by the far-right parties and the strategies and tactics they adopt are strikingly similar from one member state to the next.

The far right sees the liberal consensus as a force that unmoors people from their traditions and communities. Egalitarianism destroys difference⁴. Feminism undermines male authority and the family, leading to population collapse. This demographic problem is exacerbated by immigration, which results in a dilution, and eventual extinction, of traditional ways of life. Globalisation hollows out whole communities whose members are abandoned. The west appears to them to be in terminal decline⁵.

2. <https://lpost.be/2025/02/26/pour-georges-louis-bouchez-mr-le-niveau-des-magritte-du-cinema-laisse-a-desirer/>

3. His remarks so irritated one of the other parties in the coalition government that they released a statement which said among other things “*We are living in an era where the spectre of extremism looms, where populism thrives on fear and isolationism. Faced with this creeping threat, culture is a beacon: it teaches complexity, empathy, and otherness. It is the antidote to simplistic thinking and division. It is no coincidence that authoritarian regimes, yesterday as today, are determined to muzzle or control it.*”

4. De Benoist's “right to difference” seems to mean difference from the outsiders, within the nation difference is abhorred.

5. *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, Spengler 1918; *The Death of the West*, Buchanan 2001: “... stark prospect of civilizational erasure...” IV.3.C. National Security Strategy of the United-States of America, November 2025.

But resolving these problems, in their view, is primarily a matter of going back : a restoration of undefined Judeo-Christian values, a return to “family” and “community”, and a renewed faith in the sovereign nation. What is striking is not only the vagueness of this promised destination, but the intellectual and emotional energy invested in it : the movement’s central imaginative act is not to propose a future, but to mythologise a past. And because that past is less a historical period than a consoling story — purified, simplified, scrubbed of conflict, inequality and contingency — its politics becomes an attempt to force societies into a template that never existed. In this sense, the programme is not merely conservative but anti-historical: it treats history as a catalogue of usable symbols rather than a record of change.

It is politics conducted as longing, a programme built on anemoia, nostalgia for a time that was never lived and, more importantly, never actually existed in the simplistic and pristine form imagined.

This sterile vision is anathema to creativity. It is necessarily hostile to art and artists. Creativity depends on friction with the present, on pluralism, on contradiction, on the capacity to imagine the unfamiliar; restorationist politics depends on conformity, moral policing, and the narrowing of what can be said, shown, or even thought. The far right’s vision of the future is subsumed in its hatred of the present; it can only promise salvation through excision of what it rejects — of “degeneracy”, of outsiders, of dissent, of complexity. And in the absence of a compelling alternative, its attacks on the problems it identifies become bombastic and exaggerated, providing the impetus for the ridiculous conspiracy theories of contemporary social media.

In practice, the far right primarily defines itself via opposition to the problems it identifies, not the solutions which it proposes. In power it either compromises with reality and slides back towards the centre or abuses the state power which it has acquired to launch even more repressive assaults on those with the temerity to disagree.

This brings them to a set of tactics designed primarily to defeat the despised liberal elite, seize power (through the ballot box) and retain it as long as possible.

In a sense they operate to a Playbook⁶ which can be known in advance.

6. *Project 2025*, the ninth volume of the Heritage Foundation of the USA *Mandate for Leadership* series lays out in extensive detail a full playbook of this kind.

THE GENERAL PLAYBOOK

This “Playbook” usually includes an insistence on **national identity**, usually poorly defined and a consequent, usually racist, abhorrence of immigrants and immigration. A concentration on nationalism implies a contradiction with ideas of human equality which are at the basis of human rights.

The defence of national identity also allows a rejection of global or international institutions and movements, especially where these institutions promote equal rights, which are presented as interference by outsiders.

Attacks on rule of law, often accompanied by a determination to close down anti-corruption efforts, usually focus on the judiciary rather than the police.

This Playbook usually also involves the creation of a concept of the deep state, with technocratic management of societies, and their economies, presented as interference in people’s lives by **unelected elites**.

These agendas serve two functions: they appeal to those voters who feel that their problems are not being addressed by the political elite and secondly, they encourage conditions where an extreme-right party can achieve power through democratic means, and retain it by manipulation of the democratic process once in power.

The importance of control of the narrative

This broad agenda is very largely built around one overarching concern.

The premise is that the decisive struggle is over the cultural frameworks through which people interpret what is true, normal, and legitimate; accordingly, any institutions that shape and authorise shared reality — independent media, public service broadcasting, universities, professional expertise — must be discredited or brought to heel. Hence the reliance on accusations of “fake news”; the delegitimation of public service media and independent journalism, and the cultivation of algorithmic, outrage-driven channels. If you can collapse trust in neutral arbiters and the very idea of truth, you clear the ground for a new consensus to be imposed.

The **undermining of freedom of expression** is, therefore, a necessary precondition to the achievement of all other goals^{7, 8}.

Undermining freedom of expression delegitimises previously trusted information and, once in power, gives a capacity to act against perceived enemies with little rational justification. Outlandish, unsubstantiated accusations can be made against people or institutions that have been declared to be the enemy.

7. “... not culture as one topic among many, but as the overriding priority cutting through them all”. *The New Right: Anatomy Of A Global Political Revolution*, European Council of Foreign Relations, February 2026

8. “All politics is downstream from culture.” Steve Bannon
<https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/graphics/2015-steve-bannon/>

Attacks on the media and freedom of expression are therefore not just another target but rather an enabling tactic. Far-right actors must seize control over what counts as “truth” if they are to make appeals to disaffected voters whose lives are negatively impacted by inconvenient realities such as climate change or immigration. Thus, the rejection of “legacy media”, which has to be entirely derided, and reliance on social media (and resistance to any attempt to regulate social media as constituting censorship).

Once in power they can capture broadcasters, intimidate independent media, and legally stigmatise foreignfunded speech while loudly declaiming its fake status.

The approach has echoes of the Nazi concept of “Gleichschaltung”⁹.

THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION PLAYBOOK

The usual pattern for this attack on established norms starts with the loud and continuous denunciation of all and any media as fake.

Generalised attacks on the media

This undermining is not necessarily achieved by direct censorship but often by bringing truth into disrepute¹⁰. Crude, general and aggressive attacks are meant to undermine the authority of legacy media in particular, with the effect both of making people suspicious of reported facts and of making editors and publishers amend or restrain coverage out of fear of being attacked.

Creating a general sense that all information is suspect stifles debate and discussion. Trust is then only to be found in what is instinctively known, or what is proclaimed by the leader.

EXAMPLES

AUSTRIA (FPÖ)

When he was vice-chancellor, Heinz-Christian Strache posted a graphic accusing the public broadcaster ORF and anchor Armin Wolf of “Fake News, lies and propaganda,” later apologising after ORF/Wolf sued. (*Die Zeit*, [spiegel.de](https://www.spiegel.de), [tagesspiegel.de](https://www.tagesspiegel.de))

GERMANY (AFD)

AfD rallies have featured chants of “Lügenpresse” (“lying press”); public radio Deutschlandfunk reported an Erfurt rally where the term was used alongside threats against opponents. (*Deutschlandfunk*)

9. “All of the German Volk’s social, political, and cultural organizations to be controlled and run according to Nazi ideology and policy” from An English Lexicon of the language of the third Reich.

10. There is little difference between Nazi assertions of “Luegenpress” and Maga denunciation of “fake media”.

GERMANY (AFD leaders personally)

AfD co-leader Alice Weidel has cast herself as a victim of “mainstream media” portrayals; *Der Spiegel*'s fact-check of her live talk with Elon Musk notes her complaint about being treated negatively by “Mainstreammedien”. ([spiegel.de](https://www.spiegel.de))

HUNGARY (Fidesz/Orbán)

During Covid and beyond, officials and pro-government outlets repeatedly labeled independent sites (e.g., *Index.hu*, *24.hu*) as spreading “false information/fake news”. Media watchdogs RSF and the International Press Institute documented the tactic while new powers were used against “fake news”. ([ipi.media](https://www.ipi.media))

ITALY (FDI / Giorgia Meloni)

Meloni has publicly dismissed criticism of her government's media record as “fake news”, writing that European debate is “increasingly polluted by fake news”; she has also waved away accusations of politicising RAI as “fake news of the left.” (*The Times*, [fanpage.it](https://www.fanpage.it))

NETHERLANDS (PVV / Geert Wilders)

Wilders has repeatedly generated “nepnieuws” (fake news) storms while attacking opponents and the media ecosystem — e.g., posting a doctored image of rival Alexander Pechtold surrounded by Islamists, which reputable outlets flagged as fake. (*The Washington Post*, *The Times of Israel*, *BNNVARA*)

POLAND (PIS)

Senior PIS figures framed hostile coverage as “fake news”; party executive Krzysztof Sobolewski announced a unit to combat “fake news,” while Jarosław Kaczyński told supporters that what they'd heard were “kłamstwa, fake newsy” (lies, fake news). (*Remix News*, [konkret24.tvn24.pl](https://www.konkret24.tvn24.pl))

Creation of a climate of fear among journalists

More even than the idea of equality before the law the concept of freedom of expression is fundamental to the functioning of our democracies. We rely on journalists to an extraordinary degree to provide transparency and to facilitate effective debate based on verifiable fact which is the core of our polity. Not surprisingly, given their goals, the far right is often prepared to test the boundaries of what is legal in their determination to restrain and constrain independent journalism.

(The use of slapp suits is, unfortunately, not limited to the far right).

EXAMPLES

SPAIN

Vox keeps a rolling media veto against *Cadena SER*, *El País* and others, despite a 2023 Supreme Court ruling. RSF documents four years of bans, insults and SLAPP suits. ([rsf.org](https://www.rsf.org))

ITALY

Senior ministers filed 90+ criminal defamation suits in 2024 alone; the culture minister threatened to pull adverts from *Domani* newspaper. ([Le Monde.fr](https://www.lemonde.fr)).

HUNGARY

Independent sites like *Telex* added to the state advertising blacklist; reporters need daily accreditation for parliament or risk fines.

SERBIA

The European Federation of Journalists has described coordinated bot attacks on Instagram accounts of independent Journalists. (europeanjournalists.org)

SPAIN

Comedians and journalists have faced a growing pattern of intimidation — online harassment, threats, and occasional physical assaults — by neo-Nazi/far-right agitators, including cases involving Héctor de Miguel and Elena Reinés. (eldiario.es)

One emblematic incident was the June 2024 assault on Jaime Caravaca during a performance in Madrid. (elpais.com)

The reaction of the Spanish far-right party **Vox** is response is often criticised as ambivalent — lacking clear condemnation — and in at least one case a **Vox**-linked senior member of staff praised the attacker. (eldiario.es)

Purchase or acquisition of media by friendly business interests

Control of media does not necessarily have to be exercised directly by government. Media can be acquired by business interests sympathetic to the far-right government.

EXAMPLES

POLAND

State-controlled oil group **PKN Orlen** bought **Polska Press**, the country's largest regional newspaper group, then rolled through editor changes. (*Reuters*, ecpmf.eu). Under a new CEO, Orlen later signalled plans to sell **Polska Press** to distance itself from political influence (2024 FT). (*Financial Times*)

CZECH REPUBLIC

Billionaire politician **Andrej Babiš (ANO)** acquired the **MAFRA** media group (e.g., *Mladá fronta DNES*, *Lidové noviny*), in 2013 later (2017) putting these assets in trusts under conflict-of-interest rules — amid ongoing criticism of influence. His party **ANO** won the October 2025 election and his appointment as Prime Minister was predicated on his returning his **MAFRA** assets to a trust fund, although criticism continues (*Reuters*, rsf.org, [Verfassungsblog](https://verfassungsblog.org))

SLOVAKIA

Investment group **Penta** took a stake in **Petit Press** (publisher of *SME*). A large bloc of *SME* journalists resigned en masse and founded *Denník N*, citing fear of editorial interference. (*Bloomberg*, *Euromedia Ownership Monitor*, *Media and Journalism Research Center*, www.sme.sk)

SLOVENIA

Hungarian businessmen close to **Fidesz** injected capital into **Nova24TV** (aligned with Janša's **SDS**), eventually holding a dominant stake; funding flows were reported repeatedly. (*Balkan Insight*, *Wikipedia*, *Media Ownership Monitor*)

BULGARIA

Oligarch/politician **Delyan Peevski** built a sprawling media portfolio long criticised as a lever of political power. (ipi.media, rsf.org)

Abuse of state resources such as state tools and regulatory bodies to harass independent media

In power, far right parties have access to state institutions and regulatory bodies whose services can be used to delay, refuse, harass media organisations that they disapprove of¹¹.

EXAMPLES

BULGARIA

RSF (Reporters without Borders) documented **government-controlled ad and EU-fund flows that favoured pro-government media**. (rsf.org)

CROATIA

MFRR and EU Rule-of-Law reporting flag **lack of transparent criteria for state ads and political influence over public service media governance**. (ecpmf.eu, [European Commission](https://europeancommission.eu))

CZECHIA

Freedom House reports **state-owned firms de-facto subsidised MAFRA with advertising** during the pandemic. ([Freedom House](https://freedomhouse.org))

HUNGARY

- Government **declared a mega-merger of pro-government outlets “of national strategic importance”**, exempting it from competition/media scrutiny. ([Reuters](https://reuters.com), cmpf.eu, [Mapping Media Freedom](https://mappingmediafreedom.org))
- Watchdogs and complaints to the EU say **state advertising was steered to pro-government media**, starving critics and distorting competition. (rsf.org, [Financial Times](https://financialtimes.com))

POLAND

- **Broadcast regulator (KRRiT) put licence pressure on TVN/TVN24/TOK FM with delays, probes and fines** to create legal/economic uncertainty for a critical broadcaster later found unlawful. (ecpmf.eu, ipi.media, notesfrompoland.com)
- **Legislative/administrative pressure** aimed at forcing sale/restructure of a foreign-owned critical network (the “Lex TVN” push). ([ARTICLE 19](https://article19.org), [Reuters](https://reuters.com))

SLOVENIA

Government **suspended/withheld STA (the national press agency) funding**, drawing EU warnings and emergency appeals from press-freedom groups. ([euronews](https://euronews.com), ipi.media, [Balkan Insight](https://balkaninsight.com))

¹¹. These tactics are extensively analysed and understood under the general title of “media capture”. Some examples of this extensive research and analysis : <https://www.mdif.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/MDIF-Report-Media-Capture-in-Europe.pdf>; <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/IPI-Bulgaria-Media-Capture-Report-24-03-2022.pdf>)

Attacks on independent media where ownership of that media is outside the country or is supported by NGOs

If media cannot be influenced because it is foreign-owned or funded from outside the country, the fact of it's being foreign can be used against it, leveraging the idea that anything foreign is by its nature untrustworthy.

EXAMPLES

Hungary's May 2025 Transparency of Public Life bill would let the new Sovereignty Protection Office blacklist and ultimately **ban** organisations — including media — that receive any foreign money, mimicking Russia's foreign agent scheme. ([dw.com](#))

Dismissal of senior figures in cultural institutions

In keeping with the general approach of not knowing what they want, but knowing clearly what they are opposed to, far right parties in power try to seize the decision-making systems of cultural institutions, especially those that provide selective state funding to artists. This is often done, at first, by the dismissal, usually without any serious attempt at a credible justification, of senior managers and decision makers in the cultural institutions, including those responsible for selective distribution of state funds to artists, and their replacement by party loyalists with little regard for suitability or qualifications. These new appointees will both reorient expenditure of state funds to support the vague cultural agenda of the new power, usually something unclear about national cultural identity, and loyally support restructuring of the machinery of state support to the arts. Much effort is invested in trying to ensure that these changes are done in such a way as to make it difficult for them to be undone in the event of electoral defeat.

EXAMPLES

ITALY

- Under political pressure, CEO of RAI public broadcaster Carlo Fuortes resigned; allies of the government parties (incl. Roberto Sergio/Giampaolo Rossi) were installed and high-profile hosts exited. ([ipi.media](#), [Politico](#))
- Government cut short the term in office of the board of the Experimental Cinematography Center and expanded its power to appoint new leaders at the historic film school. ([Politico](#))
- A former far-right activist was appointed president of MAXXI (Rome's national museum of contemporary art). ([Politico](#))
- *Le Monde* reports a pattern of replacing management at museums and cultural institutions viewed as "too left-leaning". ([Le Monde.fr](#))
- A wave of departures/cancellations (e.g., star presenters) occurred at RAI amid accusations of heavy political influence. ([The Guardian](#), [Le Monde.fr](#))

SLOVAKIA

- Minister for Culture Šimkovičová dismissed general director Matej Drlička of the Slovak National Theatre. ([culture.gov.sk](#), [ta3.com](#))

- Minister for Culture Šimkovičová removed long-serving director Alexandra Kusá of the Slovak National Gallery a day later and installed an interim head. ([Denník N, Správy STVR](#))
- Minister for Culture Šimkovičová dismissed three members of the Council of the Fund for the Support of the Arts (Alžbeta Lukáčová, Katarína Kövesdi Cvečková, Rastislav Steranka). ([culture.gov.sk](#))
- Minister for Culture Šimkovičová fired director Pavol Ižvolt of the Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic and named a replacement. ([culture.gov.sk](#))
- International and Slovak media described the SND/SNG moves as part of a wider “arts crackdown/purges”. ([The Guardian](#))

Censorship

Direct censorship is unusual. Outright repression is usually unnecessary.

EXAMPLES

SPAIN

In Toledo (Castile La Mancha) a **Vox** supported council cancelled a theatre piece because actors appeared in underwear, triggering national rows about artistic freedom. ([euronews](#))

Direct attack on public service broadcasting defunding, replacing boards

In Europe Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) remains the main source of information for most citizens¹². Significant monies are invested using various formulae, by, for example, charging a separate licence fee. The publicly funded nature of PSB makes it a prime and relatively easy target.

Two somewhat contradictory tactical goals are pursued by far-right parties. On the one hand concerted efforts outside of power aim to defund public service broadcasting by any and all means. Once in power, however, control of public service broadcasting can seem useful.

EXAMPLES

AUSTRIA

- FPÖ entered 2025 coalition talks on the promise to abolish the ORF household levy and cut the broadcaster’s budget. ([publicmediaalliance.org](#))
- FPÖ coalition blueprint reallocates press subsidies toward “alternative patriotic media”. ([illiberalism.org](#))

12. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20231115IPR11303/tv-still-main-source-for-news-but-social-media-is-gaining-ground>
<https://www.ebu.ch/research/membersonly/report/trust-in-public-service-media>

BELGIUM

The **Vlaams Belang** party wants VRT to be restricted to “programmes with societal value” with entertainment separated, presumably to a private station. (dewereldmorgen.be)

FRANCE

Le **Rassemblement National** would privatise France Télévisions and Radio France, saving “€3 billion for other priorities”. ([guardian.com](https://www.guardian.com))

GERMANY

AfD wants “Rundfunkbeitrag abschaffen” (scrap the ARDZDF fee) in its 2024 European manifesto; Thuringia leader Björn Höcke says he would simply cancel the state treaty if he became minister-president. ([welt.de](https://www.welt.de))

HUNGARY

Replaced the licence fee in 2002; now the state simply tops up loyal media through subsidies and government advertising.

ITALY

Prime Minister Meloni majority installed loyalists as newsdirectors, prompting the first 24hour journalist strike in May 2024 and a fiveplace slide to 49th in RSF’s index. ([Aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com))

NETHERLANDS

- **PVV** pledged to scrap the NPO entirely (“nutteloos”) and redirect the budget elsewhere.
- Media minister Eppo Bruins (NSC, but was dependent on **PVV** support until the party left the coalition) introduced a €156 million cut, merging 11 broadcasters into 4-5 and abolishing membership criteria. This policy has not been continued by the newly elected minority government (established January 2026) although its own policy is not yet clear.

SPAIN

- **Vox** conditioned a 2023 Ceuta coalition on stripping a critical local site of all public adverts (€2.5 m potential). ([rsf.org](https://www.rsf.org))

SWEDEN

- A Swedish parliamentary inquiry driven by the **Sweden Democrats** is redesigning SVT/Swedish Radio’s remit for 2026, raising fears of politicised funding renewal. ([publicmediaalliance](https://www.publicmediaalliance.com))
- The **Sweden Democrats** have sought to limit SVT/SR inflation increases to 1% and to delete references to “equality” and “diversity” from their mission statement. Tshi proposal is moving through parliament under the Tidö bloc government ([thelocal.se](https://www.thelocal.se))

SPAIN

Vox conditioned a 2023 Ceuta coalition on stripping a critical local site of all public adverts (€2.5 m potential). ([rsf.org](https://www.rsf.org))

WHY DOES THIS MATTER TO CREATORS INCLUDING SCREENWRITERS ?

Funding TV fiction

At a very practical and direct level most far right parties in Europe have a stated ambition, which they have acted on when they are in government, to destroy or reduce Public Service Broadcasting. This is discussed above with many examples.

TV Fiction production in Europe — particularly TV series — relies heavily on public service broadcasters (PSBs). In 2023, 55 % of European TV fiction titles were commissioned by PSBs, (31% by private broadcasters and 14 % by global streamers)¹³.

Across 2015-2023, Europe produced on average about 14,800 hours of TV fiction per year; in 2023 this comprised over 1,200 titles, about 23,000 episodes; soaps represented about 61% of total hours¹⁴.

Public Service Broadcasters spent € 7.2 billion on original European content in 2023 (excludes news and sports rights)¹⁵.

A reduction in funding for PSBs will lead to a reduction in the volume of work available for screenwriters and many others.

Funding Feature film

A second key pillar of funding for production in Europe is the system of state funding, usually through independent state funding agencies, primarily of feature films, but increasingly also of TV Series. Direct public funding of those films constituted 27% of production costs. If production incentives (which constitute 20 % of production costs) are added then 47 % of financing for European theatrical live-action fiction films in 2022 came from public sources¹⁶.

At a rough estimate the value of this funding is about € 3.1 billion across Europe (EU27 + UK + NO) (but has not been comprehensively calculated since 2014). Production incentives (EU27 + UK + NO) were budgeted at € 4.3 billion in 2024¹⁷.

13. <https://www.obs.coe.int/en/web/observatoire/-/downturn-in-european-tv/svod-fiction-production-the-number-of-titles-fell-across-all-formats>

14. <https://rm.coe.int/audiovisual-fiction-production-in-europe-2023-figures-december-2024-a-1680b2dbda>

15. <https://rm.coe.int/investments-in-original-european-content-2024-edition-september-2024-g/1680b17ccf>

16. <https://www.obs.coe.int/en/web/observatoire/-/direct-public-funding-and-production-incentives-added-up-to-47-of-the-financing-of-european-live-action-fiction-films-in-cinemas-in-2022>

17. <https://rm.coe.int/iris-state-aid-and-the-audiovisual-sector-en/1680b63085>

In feature film production Europe produced an estimated 2,358 feature films in 2023, 1,460 fiction and 898 documentaries, the highest outturn since 2019¹⁸.

Far right parties in Europe differ in their views on funding arts and culture, including film, from public funds. The **Geert Wilders party (PVV)** in the Netherlands demanded the ending of all public funding to arts and culture, the **Finns Party** in Finland makes a cogent argument in favour of creativity while supporting decreases in funding, and the **AUR** in Romania argues for an increase, citing specifically the need to support independent artists.

Nonetheless there are numerous examples of cuts in funding to arts and culture, including for film development and production.

Comparison with production volume in the United States

The relatively positive picture for film and television production in Europe is in marked contrast — while acknowledging, of course, the difference of budget size and market dominance — to the situation in the comparable market of the United States.

The number of original scripted series released in the US was 599 in 2022 and 516 in 2023^{19, 20, 21}. This is about 60% of the number produced in Europe.

The number of feature films produced in the United States in 2023 is 510²² less than half of the volume produced in Europe.

Legislative basis for film and television production in Europe

State aid to culture, including film and television production, is an exception to the normal prohibition on state aid imposed at an EU level by the provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

Article 167(4) of the treaty provides that the Union “shall take cultural aspects into account” and therefore Article 107(3)(d) of the treaty allows aid “to promote culture and heritage conservation where it does not adversely affect competition and trade to a degree contrary to the common interest”²³.

The criteria for assessing state aid schemes for films and other audiovisual works in Europe is set out in the Cinema Communication of 2013²⁴.

18. <https://www.obs.coe.int/en/web/observatoire/-/key-trends-2025-report-just-published>

19. <https://variety.com/2023/tv/news/peak-tv-tally-599-original-scripted-series-aired-2022-1235489699/>

20. <https://variety.com/2024/tv/news/peak-tv-tally-original-scripted-series-aired-2023-1235902886/>

21. <https://www.axios.com/2024/02/12/peak-tv-decline-scripted-shows-low>

22. <https://www.wipo.int/en/web/global-innovation-index/w/blogs/2025/global-film-production>

23. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12008E107>

24. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:332:0001:0011:EN:PDF>

This Treaty provision provides the basis of the so-called cultural exception which excludes the film and television industries from trade negotiations. The European Council's declassified negotiating directives for TTIP (9 October 2014) explicitly state that "Audiovisual services will not be covered" by the services chapter, however this is not an explicit legislative requirement²⁵.

There are a number of other EU legislative provisions that provide a secure footing for film and television production in Europe. The AVMS Directive, at Article 16, requires a majority proportion of transmission time of European broadcasters to be devoted to European works, (excluding news, sports, etc.)²⁶.

Article 13 of the AVMSD requires a 30 % share of European works in catalogues of online services and prominence of those works²⁷.

The Directive requires the Commission to present an evaluation of its effectiveness and impact by 19 December 2026²⁸.

The European Media Freedom Act applies from August 2025, and the new AI Act is proving difficult to put into effective operation.

The far-right parties have in general been divided about these regulations. A significant majority of them opposed the Media Freedom Act at the European Parliament for example (although a majority supported the passage of the AI Act).

The Trump administration in the US has made clear its dislike of EU legislation, in the digital field in particular²⁹.

Far right parties often oppose EU imposed regulation such as that which underpins, or facilitates the film and television industries. Aside from their general dislike of EU regulation, it is not clear what position they will hold in the event of any effort to reverse or amend the existing legislative infrastructure on which our industry, and consequently the livelihoods of screenwriters, depend. In the next years it seems certain that there will be challenges to this essential infrastructure.

The threat

The principal reason for the relative stability of film and television fiction production in Europe compared to the substantial decline in the US is state support, both legislative and financial, and including Public Service Broadcasting.

25. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11103-2013-DCL-1/en/pdf>

26. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:02010L0013-20181218>

27. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32018L1808#d1e3155-1-1>

28. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32018L1808#d1e3155-1-1>

29. <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/07/22/state-department-attacks-europe-free-speech-00468916>
<https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/society-equity/rubio-orders-us-diplomats-launch-lobbying-blitz-against-europes-tech-law-2025-08-07>

The determination of far-right parties to cut, cancel or control Public Service Broadcasting is a direct attack on a key pillar of audiovisual funding in Europe and thereby the volume of work potentially available to screenwriters.

It is not clear whether far right parties are more interested in cutting this funding entirely or in taking it over to get control of what is being written and produced. In any event their approach is not benign.

EXAMPLES

HUNGARY

- Dávid Jancsó, the Oscar-nominated editor of *The Brutalist*, said: “Governments can decide whether to spend taxpayers’ money on propaganda films or on films that will win awards. In Hungary the decision was for propaganda movies.” (*The Guardian*)
- Film organisations in Hungary signed an [Open Letter](#) addressing the problem of “those [film-makers] who, after the umpteenth rejected film project, have realised that they have no chance of getting state support.”

NETHERLANDS

“Stop art and culture subsidies. The funding of the NPO (public service broadcaster) will be terminated entirely.” From the 2024 election manifesto of the **Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV)**.

THE CHILLING EFFECT

In many respects the most important and invidious impact of the attack on Freedom of Expression is not just the direct limitations which may be imposed, but also the self-imposed limitations of self-censorship as writers, producers and directors limit and amend the projects that they propose, or are allowed to propose, for funding.

What makes this difficult to address is the fact that the systems of selection of projects by state, regional and broadcasting gatekeepers, as well as by private companies, already establishes an environment where subjective decisions as to the creative, commercial and audience potential of film and television projects are made, even at early development stage. This is a system clearly wide open to abuse if malignactors were to have control of these funds and the subjective decision-making process on which it normally operates.

This has occurred in its most extreme form in Hungary. The NGO Magyar Művészeti Akadémia (MMA) was written into Hungary’s Fundamental Law (or constitution) in 2011, meaning that its position cannot be altered without amending the constitution, and elevated to a public body with almost total control in cultural policy and funding. Over the years it has been given more and more authority. Its first director under the new arrangement committed to supporting works “reflecting a Christian Nationalist ideology”³⁰.

30. <https://artmargins.com/hungary-in-focus-forum/>

Something similar occurred in Poland under the PIS government, leaving the post-PIS government with severe difficulties in reversing or restructuring elements arts and culture infrastructure.

The Slovakian minister for culture embarked on a widespread process of dismissal of directors of cultural organisations and institutions and their replacement by persons often entirely unqualified.

Knowing what happens when a far-right party comes to power broadcasters and production companies are also adapting their production and development portfolios in response to this unstable and shifting political landscape. Their risk management strategies see them moving away from stories which might attract the opprobrium of increasingly powerful far-right actors.

This chilling effect must also apply to creators themselves. Although explicit evidence of this would obviously be hard to come by, individual creators, including screenwriters, must be aware of what is happening and be tempted to adjust their approach in response. Self-evidently screenwriters pitch projects to those they think will be interested. Realising that romantic comedies, escapism and historical dramas, that demonstrate the innate capacity of their compatriots to defeat foreign invaders, are now the required genres writers may decide to put their immigrant or LGBTQ stories in the bottom drawer.

At the European Screenwriters Day in Berlin on 13 November 2025³¹ representatives of the thirty-one guilds and unions which are members of the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe, and many individual screenwriters, discussed the draft of this report, and, based on anecdotal experience, expressed considerable concern that this anticipated chilling effect was already in operation and that there is already a widespread reluctance on the part of commissioners and funders to fund projects at development stage which seemed in any way potentially controversial or difficult.

ANCILLARY ISSUES

In speaking about the threat to production of film and TV programmes and the consequent challenge to screenwriters it is not intended to ignore that fact that there are many challenges to the industry at present. The transfer of advertising in significant part to social media is causing problems for commercial broadcasters in particular but also for those Public Service Broadcasters who rely, at least in part, on advertising sales; technological advances in production and distribution are disrupting the existing structures and introducing instability; AI in particular, while unlikely to challenge highly creative roles, will probably have a major impact on employment and therefore on the structures of the industry; the accessibility of the new technologies are already leading to vast overproduction of material, only a tiny fraction of which can find an audience.

³¹. <https://federationscreenwriters.eu/european-fight-for-authors-rights-fse-and-ddv-host-the-first-european-screenwriters-day-in-berlin/>

That there is a general dissatisfaction with Public Service Broadcasting in many countries is certainly true, whether this is genuine or exaggerated by malign actors on social media is unclear.

This plethora of potentially existential threats makes media and the arts in general, and the film and television industries in particular, especially vulnerable to the social and/or political threats associated with the policies and tactics of the far right.

NORMALISATION OF EXTREMIST POSITIONS

A version of this chilling effect is the impact which the electoral success on the far right has on other parties. They, especially, but not exclusively, from the centre right, are tempted to adopt positions taken from the far-right playbook in order to appeal to disaffected voters.

In the Netherlands a policy of the far right while in government which led to a plan to restructure Public Service Broadcasting, including a cut in overall funding of €156 million, was being implemented by Eppo Bruins, Minister of Education, Culture and Science and member of the EPP-aligned Nieuw Social Contract party, until the collapse of the government.

By adopting far-right rhetoric or policies, centre-right parties run the risk of legitimising extremist discourse and normalising hardline stances.

EXAMPLES

According to Chatham House "Centrist parties have tried to adopt far right narratives on immigration at both national and EU level..." ([chathamhouse.org](https://www.chathamhouse.org))

BEYOND EUROPE

The Playbook described here is not limited to Europe although there are noteworthy differences. In general, European far-right parties are not anti-science, anti-research, anti-statistics in the way that the current US administration appears to be and clearly a significant reason for the hardening of censorship in Russia is in the context of the invasion of Ukraine. However similar tactics to those adopted by far-right parties in Europe are also used in autocratic and authoritarian states.

EXAMPLES

RUSSIA

- Limits on use of VPNs ([moscowtimes.org](https://www.moscowtimes.org))
- Ban on licences for film distribution (duma.gov.ru)

UNITED STATES

Closing the Corporation for Public Broadcasting ([nbcnews.com](https://www.nbcnews.com))

INDIA

Reporters Without Borders report that government advertising budgets are steered away from critical outlets, while pro-government media benefit. ([rsf.org](https://www.rsf.org))

THE UNITED STATES

“In Britain, and across Europe, free speech, I fear, is in retreat”³² said United States Vice President JD Vance during a speech at the Munich Security Conference on 14 February 2025.

Even a cursory glance at the political situation in the United States would suggest that the United States itself, under its current administration, has, at best, an ambivalent approach to free speech.^{33, 34, 35, 36, 37}

The current US administration is usually described as autocratic or authoritarian rather than far-right. However, it has operated to date very much in line with the playbook described in this report. The range, depth and number of initiatives aligned with that playbook is far too extensive to list here but examples include initiatives intended to :

- **Capture/politicise institutions** that shape narratives such as museums, arts centres, universities.
- **Weaponise regulators** (broadcast licensing/communications rules) to discipline critics.
- **Use of funding and procurement and closure of organisations** to force ideological compliance.
- **Target intermediaries** (lawyers, academics, NGOs) to raise the cost of dissent.

For example, an executive order called for removal of “improper, divisive or anti-American ideology” from the Smithsonian Institution which comprises twenty-one museums in the US. ([Reuters](https://www.reuters.com))

An Executive Order in May 2025 directed the Corporation on Public Broadcasting (CPB) to cease funding of NPR and PBS. ([The White House](https://www.whitehouse.gov)). The CPB voted in January 2026 to dissolve itself. ([AP News](https://www.apnews.com))

32. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-vice-president-the-munich-security-conference-0>

33. <https://www.wga.org/news-events/news/press/2025/tony-gilroy-spike-lee-ilana-glazer-adam-mckay-liz-merriwether-and-more-than-2300-wga-members-and-allies-sign-open-letter-decrying-recent-attacks-on-the-free-press>

34. <https://www.icnl.org/usprotestlawtracker>

35. <https://www.americantheatre.org/2025/05/02/trump-proposes-elimination-of-nea-and-neh/>

36. <https://pressfreedomtracker.us/>

37. <https://pen.org/pen-america-v-escambia-county/>

Budget provisions to remove funding from the National Endowment for the Arts have not been implemented by Congress. (*The Washington Post*) (*Artnet News*) However forced compliance with administration-aligned priorities has resulted in a federal judge ruling that a new NEA policy denying grants to projects “promoting gender ideology” violated the First Amendment. (*Reuters*) The chilling impact on potential applicants is obvious.

The closure “for renovations” of the Kennedy Centre is just one more example.

Given that twenty-one of the twenty-seven member states of the European Union have higher places in the RSF Press Freedom Index than the US, which is at fifty-seven on the Index it is difficult to treat the Vice-President’s comments seriously.

However, the United States Congress House Judiciary Committee, which has a Republican Party majority, “Subpoenas Big Tech for Information on Foreign Censorship of American Speech” on 26 February 2025 and commissioned an Interim Staff Report titled “The Foreign Censorship Threat: How the European Union’s Digital Services Act Compels Global Censorship and Infringes on American Free Speech”³⁸ which was released in July 2025.

The report, in its opening line states that “The Digital Services Act is the European Union’s comprehensive online censorship law.”

The motivation behind the sudden concern for free speech seems to be limited to lobbying on behalf of US tech companies against the Digital Services Act.

This is confirmed in a Reuters report in July of 2025 that the Secretary of State of the United States had ordered US diplomats to launch lobbying blitz against Europe’s tech law³⁹.

This opens a worrying prospect that United States pressure in respect of EU legislation which is meant to regulate tech companies might be folded into trade talks, despite insistence by the EU that it will not, and lead to a weakening of the general legislative basis of the European film and television industries.

38. https://judiciary.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-judiciary.house.gov/files/2025-07/DSA_Report%26Appendix%2807.25.25%29.pdf

39. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/society-equity/rubio-orders-us-diplomats-launch-lobbying-blitz-against-europes-tech-law-2025-08-07/>

GENERAL RESPONSE OF CIVIL SOCIETY TO THE THREATS POSED TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION BY FAR-RIGHT PARTIES

Thanks, in significant measure, to pioneering and determined work by journalists, their trade unions (European Federation of Journalists)⁴⁰, and other organisations dedicated to protection of freedom of expression, there is widespread reaction to and rejection of the threat posed to freedom of expression by far-right parties.

NGOs

Attached as **Annex 3** is a list of laws and treaties relating to freedom of artistic expression. **Annex 4** is a listing of some of the organisations working on this issue, including those solely or primarily dedicated to freedom of expression, wider human rights organisations with strong freedom of expression mandates, journalism and media freedom organisations, and intergovernmental and judicial bodies with freedom of expression mandates.

Interestingly many of these organisations focus their specific campaigns on the situation in particular countries, for example Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. Relatively few organisations concentrate on a broader analysis.

European Union

Also annexed, as **Annex 2**, is a brief description of the provisions of the Media Freedom Act which was officially adopted by the European Parliament on 13 March 2024 and formally approved by the Council on 26 March 2024⁴¹. It entered into force upon publication on 11 April 2024 and becomes directly binding across the EU from 8 August 2025, with key provisions phased in from November 2024 to May 2025⁴².

The Act is intended to safeguard media pluralism and editorial independence — requiring ownership and state-advertising transparency, limiting political/state interference, and to protect journalists from surveillance.

It's extensive provisions are wide and very far reaching. Concern has been expressed as to the difficulties that will occur in enforcing its remit.

40. <https://europeanjournalists.org/projects/mapping-and-defending-media-freedom-in-europe/>

41. [European Media Freedom Act \(EMFA\)](#)

42. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1083/oj/eng?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Response of the creative community

The creative community in many countries have opposed changes introduced or proposed to Public Service Broadcasting and to the far-right parties.

- Petitions were signed by substantial numbers but had little impact so far in the **Netherlands**.
- In **Slovakia** marches, petitions and a threatened strike made clear the unity of purpose of the Slovakian arts community but again with limited impact;
- The Screenwriter's Guild in **France** published condemnations of the announced plans of RN to privatise Public Service Broadcasting;
- In **Lithuania** opposition to the appointment of a member of a far-right party in the coalition as Minister for Culture led to his resignation after one week;
- In the **UK** the Writers Guild of Great Britain has launched a major campaign on the issue ⁴³.

43. <https://writersguild.org.uk/standing-up-to-censorship-a-policy-position-statement/>

ACTION BY FSE AND ITS MEMBERS

The Federation of Screenwriters in Europe (FSE), gathered at its General Assembly in Berlin on 14 November 2025⁴⁴, unanimously adopted the following resolution :

- Recalling the FSE’s 2018 commitment to address harassment and bullying through a collective, guild-led initiative,
- Willing to extend the initial report commissioned by the FSE in 2023, entitled *Screenwriters in Europe and the threat to Freedom of Artistic Expression*,
- Taking note of the new FSE report *Right to Write : Screenwriters and the Growing Threats to Freedom of Artistic Expression in Europe*,
- Recognizing the mounting pressures on freedom of artistic expression across Europe, particularly in the face of political extremism,

Resolves as follows :

The FSE encourages each member guild to establish, within its own structure, a small committee or contact point dedicated to monitoring and reporting developments that may affect freedom of expression, including :

- individual incidents of censorship or pressure,
- public statements by political or media figures,
- controversial appointments to cultural institutions,
- or any relevant press coverage or media content.

These committees or contact points will report regularly to the FSE, sharing the relevant findings they have gathered. This shared material will contribute to building a collective European overview of the threats and trends affecting freedom of artistic expression.

The FSE may use this information to advocate at the European level and to seek support from institutions or non-governmental organisations, with the aim of either establishing a dedicated European Observatory on freedom of artistic expression in audiovisual writing or ensuring that this specific field is fully integrated into existing frameworks.

This resolution shall also serve as a public statement of the FSE’s commitment to defending freedom of expression and will be communicated broadly to underline the importance of this issue.

44. <https://federationscreenwriters.eu/fse-agm-2025/>

CONCLUSION

History has not ended. Societies are not frozen in time, neither in the present nor the past. Our capacity, individually and collectively, to imagine, to try to understand what is wrong and to rehearse what might be, is core to our capacity to change, to resolve problems and to shape a different, perhaps better, future.

This is the function of storytelling. Story-telling depends on and re-enforces our capacity for empathy, understanding what another person might do, or think, or say and recreating that in an audience.

We live in a time of authentic crisis.

But these crises cannot be resolved by denying that they exist.

“Truth” and “fact” are so denied that the capacity to question or challenge is radically undermined.

For understandable reasons many people feel hopeless and despairing. We have to see this as a time to create a ferment of debate, of discussion, of trying to imagine solutions and resolutions. A time, hopefully, of action.

Many of the far-right parties seem determined to offer the exact reverse — limitation, restriction, silencing.

Without freedom of expression — the right to speak, to write, to declaim — stories wither and fall silent, facilitating and promoting despair. Screenwriters have a right and a responsibility to resist the corrosion of freedom of expression, to oppose those who would tell them what, how and whether they can write and to insist on the power and value of their stories.

RIGHT TO WRITE

Screenwriters
and the growing threats
to Freedom of Artistic
Expression in Europe

2

Annexes

Annex 1 – A listing of far-right parties in Europe

European Union far right parties

Listing the European Parliament grouping to which the party belongs assists in placing the party on an ideological spectrum. Roughly speaking the European Conservatives and Reformists is closest to the political centre, Europe of Sovereign Nations furthest away.

Country	Party	Party name in English	Ideology	Recent Status	EP Group
Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ)	Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)	National conservatism, far-right populism, Euroscepticism	Won 2024 elections with 28.8% of vote; excluded from government after coalition talks failed.	Patriots for Europe
Belgium	Vlaams Belang (VB)	Flemish Interest (VB)	Flemish nationalism, right-wing populism, anti-immigration	Significant gains in 2024 EU elections; not in national government	Patriots for Europe
Bulgaria	Възраждане (Vazrazhdane)	Revival (Vazrazhdane)	Ultrnationalism, Russophilia, anti-EU	Gained parliamentary seats in 2023; polarising force	Europe of Sovereign Nations
Croatia	Domovinski pokret	Homeland Movement	Right-wing populism, nationalism, social conservatism	Coalition partner in government since 2024	European Conservatives and Reformists
Cyprus	Εθνικό Λαϊκό Μέτωπο (ELAM)	National Popular Front (ELAM)	Ultrnationalism, anti-immigration, anti-Turkish sentiment	Holds seats in parliament; increasing visibility	European Conservatives and Reformists
Czech Republic	Svoboda a přímá demokracie (SPD)	Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD)	Right-wing populism, anti-EU, anti-Islam	Stable parliamentary representation; vocal EU critics	Europe of Sovereign Nations
Denmark	Dansk Folkeparti (DF)	Danish People's Party (DF)	National conservatism, anti-immigration, Euroscepticism	Support declined post-2019; minor parliamentary role	Patriots for Europe
Estonia	Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond (EKRE)	Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE)	National conservatism, anti-immigration, Euroscepticism	In government 2019–2021; now in opposition	None (EKRE MEP left Aug 2024)

Country	Party	Party name in English	Ideology	Recent Status	EP Group
Finland	Perussuomalaiset	Finns Party	National conservatism, anti-immigration, soft Euroscepticism	In government since 2023 as junior coalition partner	European Conservatives and Reformists
France	Rassemblement National (RN)	National Rally (RN)	Nationalist, social conservatism, opposition to EU integration	RN has significant parliamentary strength; Marine Le Pen remains influential in polls. But as of mid-2025, not in government	Patriots for Europe
Germany	Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)	Alternative for Germany (AfD)	Right-wing to far-right populism, nationalist	In May 2025 classified as "confirmed right-wing extremist"; enforcement paused 8 May pending court review.	Europe of Sovereign Nations
Greece	Ελληνική Λύση (Elliniki Lysi)	Greek Solution (GS)	Greek nationalism, anti-immigration, social conservatism	Parliamentary party since 2019	European Conservatives and Reformists
Hungary	Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség	Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance	National conservatism, right-wing populism, illiberalism	Governing party since 2010 under Viktor Orbán	Patriots for Europe
Italy	Fratelli d'Italia (FdI)	Brothers of Italy (FdI)	National conservatism, right-wing populism	In government since October 2022 under PM Meloni	European Conservatives and Reformists
Italy	Lega	League	Right-wing populism, Euroscepticism	Coalition partner in Meloni's government since 2022	Patriots for Europe
Ireland	National Party; Irish Freedom Party	National Party; Irish Freedom Party	N/A	Extra-parliamentary; no representation	None
Latvia	Latvija Pirmajā Vietā (LPV)	Latvia First (LPV)	Right-wing populism, nationalism, anti-elite	Entered Saeima in 2022 elections	Patriots for Europe
Lithuania	Nacionalinis susivienijimas	National Alliance	Right-wing nationalism, anti-globalism	No MEPs; marginal electoral support	None

Country	Party	Party name in English	Ideology	Recent Status	EP Group
Luxembourg	Alternativ Demokratesch Reformpartei (ADR)	Alternative Democratic Reform Party	National conservatism, soft Euroscepticism	Minor party with parliamentary presence	Non-Ins-crits (expelled from ECR Sept 2025 for pro-Russia statements)
Malta	Imperium Europa	Imperium Europa	Anti-immigration, Christian nationalism	Extra-parliamentary; contests EP elections; no representation	None
Netherlands	Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV)	Party for Freedom (PVV)	Eurosceptic, nationalist, anti-Islam populism	Entered government July 2024 in Schoof cabinet; exited coalition in June 2025.	Patriots for Europe
Netherlands	Ja21	JA21 ("Right Answer 21")	Right-wing populist; eurosceptic; anti-immigration; law-and-order	Founded Dec 2020 (split from FvD); 9 seats in the 2025 election.	None
Netherlands	Forum voor Democratie (FvD)	Forum for Democracy (FvD)	Far-right ; national-conservative ; hard-eurosceptic ; anti-immigration.	7 seats in the 2025 election.	None
Poland	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS)	Law and Justice (PiS)	National conservatism, Christian democracy with populist overtones	Held power 2015–2023; now in opposition.	European Conservatives and Reformists
Poland	Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość	Confederation Liberty & Independence	Far-right populism; Polish nationalism; hard Euroscepticism; anti-immigration	6 MEPs after 2024 EP elections (~12.1%); significant opposition force	Patriots for Europe
Portugal	Chega	Enough (Chega)	Right-wing populism, nationalism, authoritarian leanings	Third-largest party in 2024; rising influence	Patriots for Europe
Romania	Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor (AUR)	Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR)	Ultrnationalism, anti-globalism, Orthodox Christian traditionalism	Second-largest party in 2024 EU elections	European Conservatives and Reformists

Country	Party	Party name in English	Ideology	Recent Status	EP Group
Slovakia	Slovenská národná strana (SNS)	Slovak National Party (SNS)	Right-wing nationalism, social conservatism	Parliamentary party, part of coalition 2023	Europe of Sovereign Nations
Slovenia	Domovinska Liga (DOM)	Homeland League (DOM)	National conservatism; Anti-immigration populism	Small far-right	None
Spain	Vox	Vox	Spanish nationalism, anti-feminism, anti-immigration	Third party in parliament; supports minority government	Patriots for Europe

United Kingdom and EFTA States - Far Right Parties

Country	Party	Party Name in English	Ideology	Recent Status
Iceland	Flokkur fólksins	People's Party	Populism, social conservatism	Small parliamentary party; not in government
Liechtenstein	Vaterländische Union (VU)	Patriotic Union (VU)	Conservatism, monarchism	Alternates in coalition government with Progressive Citizens' Party
Norway	Fremskrittspartiet (FrP)	Progress Party (FrP)	Right-wing populism, anti-immigration	Major opposition party; formerly in coalition government
Switzerland	Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP) / Union démocratique du centre (UDC)	Swiss People's Party (SVP/UDC)	National conservatism, right-wing populism, Euroscepticism	Largest party in Federal Assembly; in government via Federal Council
United - Kingdom	Reform UK	Reform UK	Right-wing populism, Euroscepticism, anti-immigration	Major gains in 2024 general election; significant opposition force

EU Candidate Countries - Far Right Parties

Country	Party	Party name in English	Ideology	Recent Status
Albania	Partia Lëvizja e Legalitetit	Legality Movement Party	Monarchism, nationalism, conservative values	Minor party; no significant parliamentary presence
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata (SNSD)	Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD)	Bosnian Serb nationalism, social conservatism	Dominant in Republika Srpska entity government
Georgia	საქართველოს პატრიოტთა ალიანსი	Alliance of Patriots of Georgia	Georgian nationalism, pro-Russian stance	Lost parliamentary representation in 2020 elections
Moldova	Partidul Țor	Shor Party	Right-wing populism, pro-Russian stance	Banned by Constitutional Court in 2023
Montenegro	Demokratski front (DF)	Democratic Front (DF)	Right-wing nationalism, pro-Serbian stance	Dissolved as coalition in 2023; member parties still active
North Macedonia	ВМРО-ДПМНЕ	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE)	National conservatism, right-wing populism	Largest party in parliament; in government since 2024
Serbia	Српска радикална странка (SRS)	Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	Ultranationalism, far-right populism	Minor party; formerly major force in 1990s
Turkey	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP)	Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)	Turkish nationalism, right-wing populism	Junior coalition partner in government since 2018
Ukraine	Всеукраїнське об'єднання "Свобода"	All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda"	Ukrainian nationalism, right-wing populism	Minor parliamentary representation; active in regional politics

Annex 2 — The main provisions of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA)

Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a common framework for Media Services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act)

Text with EEA relevance

The European Media Freedom Act (eur-lex.europa.eu) establishes a unified regulatory framework covering radio, audiovisual media, and press across the internal market of the EU — areas previously only partially harmonised under the 2010 Audiovisual Media Services Directive.

Major objectives include:

- Protecting editorial freedom and media pluralism. Member States must ensure media independence and ban political interference in editorial decisions across both public and private media. (*European Parliament*)
Relevant provisions: Articles 4 & 5; Recitals 16–20
- Safeguarding journalistic sources and privacy, banning state use of spyware or other surveillance that endangers journalists (*CMPE*)
Relevant provisions: Article 4(2) & Article 5; Recitals 22–24
- Ensuring secure, sustainable funding for public-service media, including predictable financing and rules on board appointments to protect independence (eur-lex.europa.eu).
Relevant provisions: Article 5; Recitals 25–28
- Mandating transparency of media ownership, with public disclosure of legal, beneficial ownership and contact details to deter concentration (eur-lex.europa.eu).
Relevant provisions: Articles 6 & 7; Recitals 29–31
- Regulating state advertising, requiring public authorities to allocate ad budgets via transparent, non-discriminatory criteria (*European Parliament*).
Relevant provisions: Article 24; Recitals 46–49
- Monitoring media market concentration, requiring Member States to assess major acquisitions for impact on pluralism and independence (eur-lex.europa.eu).
Relevant provisions: Article 21; Recitals 40–44
- Preventing unjust takedowns of professional media content by very large online platforms under the Digital Services Act framework (eur-lex.europa.eu).
Relevant provisions: Article 17; Recitals 37–39

- Guaranteeing audience-data transparency, covering measurement methods and access for providers and advertisers (eur-lex.europa.eu).
Relevant provisions: Article 19; Recitals 45–46
- Introducing user “customisation” rights on connected devices (like default media apps on smart TVs) to avoid platform lock-in (eur-lex.europa.eu).
Relevant provisions: Article 23; Recitals 50–52
- Creating a new EU regulatory body, the European Board for Media Services, staffed by national authority representatives and replacing ERGA, operational from February 2025 (eur-lex.europa.eu).
Relevant provisions: Articles 8–13; Recitals 32–36

Calendar for application according to Article 2:

8 November 2024

Article 3 (recipients’ rights)

8 February 2025

Articles on providers’ rights, duties, regulatory authorities, Board setup

8 May 2025

Additional transparency and customisation rights

8 August 2025

Full regime in force across all Member States
(eur-lex.europa.eu, eur-lex.europa.eu, [European Commission](https://eur-lex.europa.eu))

Annex 3 — Laws and treaties relating to freedom of expression and artistic freedom

This Annex is drawn for the first version of this report published three years ago and prepared by Sara Whyatt.

Freedom of artistic expression is protected under most regional and international human rights treaties, most often under the broader remit of freedom of expression in general.

United Nations “Mechanisms”

Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects the right to freedom of expression. States declare their commitments to the principles in the Declaration through signing the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which expands on the original Declaration, including its Article 19 on protecting freedom of expression. Another is the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 15 of which protects the rights to take part in cultural life and freedom of creative activity. All European states are signatories or have ratified both these Covenants. There are a range of “mechanisms” notably the Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression and in the field of culture, to whom individual complaints can be made through set procedures, and who may raise these with the relevant governments¹.

European Convention on Human Rights

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is the key rights mechanism within Europe which, like the ICCPR and ICESCR, refers to the 1948 UN Declaration on Human Rights. Complaints on breaches of the Convention can be brought before the European Court on Human Rights and if the Court finds that a State has violated these rights, they are required to give redress and compensation².

While both the ICCPR and ICESCR refer to artistic and creative freedom of expression, the ECHR Article 10 relating to protection of freedom of expression, does not make specific reference to the arts. It does, however, refer to States having the right to require licenses for broadcast, television, and cinema.

1. For full details of all special rapporteurs and other UN mechanisms go to: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx>

2. ECHR/Council of Europe, *The European Convention on Human Rights: A living instrument* (2020) https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_Instrument_ENG.pdf

UNESCO

Protection of freedom of artistic expression lies within the Guiding Principles of the UNESCO 1980 Recommendation Concerning the Status of the Artist that recommends member states to protect and defend artists in their freedom to create, and that they be given the full protection of their rights as provided under human rights law³. Freedom of expression is also referred to as a fundamental right within the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Specific to public sector media, the UNESCO 2005 convention underlines the need that it must be “made, financed and controlled by the public; that it is neither commercial nor state-owned, hence free from both political interference and commercial forces;” and that it “is based on pluralism, and editorial independence, with adequate funding and made both accountable and transparent”⁴.

State signatories to the 2005 Convention is required to report on its adherence every four years in what is known as the Quarterly Periodic Review process. Governments are required to consult with civil society organisations, with one of the areas for reporting being artistic freedom.

A Caveat

While the UN human rights treaties and European Convention give protection to freedom of expression, it is worth noting that both contain “exceptions” and that restrictions can be applied to expressions that damage “the rights and reputations of others” and which threaten “national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals”.

While few would argue that there should not be some boundaries set to freedom of expression where lives and security could be at threat, there is vagueness and broad interpretation of what can be considered a danger. This has led to instances where legitimate expressions have been shut down by governments referring to these exceptions. These have included works of art exploring the roots of attraction of young persons to join ISIS as promoting terrorism, satirical portrayals of people in power as reputation damaging, themes on LGBTQ and women’s rights as undermining morals, more recently challenges to government policy on COVID as endangering health, and so on.

3. The text of the UNESCO 1980 Recommendation Concerning the Status of the Artist can be found here: <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-concerning-status-artist>

4. Merkel, Christine M. (2018) *Enlarging choices: cultural content and public service media* in UNESCO 2005 Convention Global Report – 2018. (p. 59)

Developments within Europe

The Council of Europe has passed several statements and recommendations over the years on the importance of protecting the independence of public broadcast services as an essential element of a healthy democracy. The Council has recently raised alarm about the growing political interference and the impact of populism on media freedom⁵. Although the Council's focus is mainly on public service media, this, of course, sits within public broadcasting as a whole, which the Council describes⁶ as "particularly suited to foster pluralism and awareness of diverse opinions ... enabling different groups in society to express themselves and to exchange ideas".

In his 2017 report, *Public service broadcasting under threat in Europe*, the Council's then High Commissioner on Human Rights, Nils Muižniek⁷, wrote of growing polarization in society leading to greater mistrust in institutions, such as public broadcasters. A key means to counter this trend and build public trust, he points out, is to produce high quality content. However, he refers to several European states where public broadcast services are being challenged through censorship, political interference, and withdrawal of funding.

There are other welcome developments in Europe towards ensuring that artistic freedom is included in the wider protection of freedom of expression.

In October 2021 the European Parliament passed a comprehensive resolution⁸ on the Status of the Artist that provides a framework for improving working conditions for artists that replicates and expands on the UNESCO 1980 Recommendation on the Status of the Artist. The resolution calls for ensuring fair pay and access to social and economic rights, to cross-border mobility, copyright income, and, pertinent to this report, defence of artistic freedom. This resolution was passed with a majority of 543 votes, with fifty against and 107 abstentions. It has been forwarded to the European Commission and is awaiting a formal reply. Specific to freedom of artistic expression, the resolution calls on the EU to "foster and defend artistic freedom", to carry out research on the topic, have structured dialogue with artists, legal experts, and relevant stakeholder to provide a framework and common standards. It also calls for greater sanctions for those states that fail to comply with their obligations.

This is part of a trend within EU bodies to extend protections on freedom of expression to artists' rights. The November 2020 Council of Europe Manifesto on Freedom of Expression of the Arts and Culture in the Digital Era⁹ highlights the need for protection for the arts within the larger freedom of expression remit, and

5. The Council of Europe website includes a useful page on public service media : <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/public-service-media>

6. <https://rm.coe.int/leaflet-public-service-media-en/1680735c27>

7. Muižniek, Nils (2017) *Public service broadcasting under threat in Europe* : <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/public-service-broadcasting-under-threat-in-europe#main-content>

8. <https://cultureactioneurope.org/news/the-ep-backs-the-call-for-a-eu-wide-status-of-the-artists/>

9. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/manifesto-on-the-freedom-of-expression-of-arts-and-culture-in-the-digital-era>

to address the growing attacks on the arts. The Manifesto initiative is accompanied by a showcase of works of arts from Council of Europe member states that address artistic freedom, a rolling program that will feature new works every six months.

In November 2021, the European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC) held a workshop for its members on artistic freedom and to discuss a strategy on how best EUNIC members can promote this right. These initiatives come alongside a growing number of similar debates, panels and workshops hosted by European NGOs, arts, culture, and civil society groups.

This welcome increased focus within European institutions runs alongside recommendations to strengthen media freedom protections for example in the Media Freedom Act (*Euractiv*) that would build on the EU's Audio Visual Media Services Directive¹⁰ capacity to monitor and sanction harms to press freedom. The Directive provides a framework for governance of public media that includes countering the politicisation of public broadcast services. It should be ensured that the Act should include within its remit curtailment to creative freedom across the audio-visual sphere.

10. digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/audiovisual-and-media-services

Annex 4 — A partial list of organisations working to defend Freedom of Expression

Solely or Primarily Dedicated to Freedom of Expression

- ARTICLE 19 — <https://www.article19.org>
- International Press Institute (IPI) — <https://ipi.media>
- Reporters Without Borders (RSF) — <https://rsf.org>
- Freedom House — <https://freedomhouse.org>
- Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) — <https://cpj.org>
- Index on Censorship — <https://www.indexoncensorship.org>
- IFEX (International Freedom of Expression Exchange) — <https://ifex.org>
- PEN International — <https://pen-international.org>
- Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) — <https://gfmd.info>
- Media Defence — <https://www.mediadefence.org>

Wider Human Rights Organisations with Strong Freedom of Expression Mandates

- Amnesty International — <https://www.amnesty.org>
- Human Rights Watch — <https://www.hrw.org>
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) — <https://www.fidh.org>
- CIVICUS — <https://www.civicus.org>

Journalism & Media Freedom Organisations

- International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) — <https://www.ifj.org>
- European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) — <https://europeanjournalists.org>
- Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF) — <https://cmpf.eu.eu>
- Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) — <https://www.mfrr.eu>
- European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) — <https://www.ecpmf.eu>

Intergovernmental & Judicial Bodies with Freedom of Expression Mandates

- European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) — <https://www.echr.coe.int>
- UNESCO - Communication and Information Sector — <https://www.unesco.org/en/communication-information>
- Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media — <https://www.osce.org/fom>
- Council of Europe - Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists — <https://www.coe.int/en/web/media-freedom>
- UN Human Rights Committee — <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/ccpr>

RIGHT TO WRITE

**Screenwriters
and the growing threats
to Freedom of Artistic
Expression in Europe**

3

**What FSE members
report from
their countries**

Is the issue of freedom of expression and attacks on the arts in general, and public service broadcasting in particular, an issue in your country and in your guild ?

BELGIUM - ASA

"It is. While not specifically about what we can write (yet), but mostly because Culture funds are diminished, and as we exposed above, Culture and Public service broadcasting is on permanent threat to be privatized and/or scrutinized by the right and far-right."

BELGIUM - SCENARISTENGILDE

"There is currently no explicit restriction of freedom of expression in Flanders. However, in recent legislative periods, mainly under the impulse of the centre-right party N-VA, there have been systematic cuts in funding for public broadcasting, the Flemish Audiovisual Fund (VAF) and other cultural institutions. There is probably a certain ideology behind this.

It is also known that the N-VA would like to cut the funding received by the Scenaristengilde and other professional associations in our sector."

BULGARIA - BAFTRS

"Independent media monitoring organisations, including Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the International Press Institute (IPI), have criticised the public broadcaster and the two major private national broadcasters for lacking editorial impartiality, prioritising politically aligned narratives, distorting or omitting certain news topics, and providing disproportionate attention to preferred political players.

Independent investigative journalism continues to face pressure in Bulgaria. Numerous experienced reporters have been dismissed due to editorial interference. Media freedom organisations have documented instances in which political figures, including Delyan Peevski, have attempted to restrict journalists' accreditation to parliament or influence dismissals of critical reporters. These developments indirectly affect the broader field of artistic expression."

CROATIA - SPID

"Although freedom of expression is constitutionally protected, artists and media professionals in Croatia increasingly operate in an environment shaped by historical revisionism, political pressure and polarisation. Cultural institutions and public service broadcasting are frequent targets of attacks related to migration, minority rights, LGBTIQ+ content and interpretations of 20th century history, particularly antifascism. The right to freedom of expression has been co-opted by the far-right discourse in legitimising extremist perspectives entering the mainstream public space and shifting the narrative against those who want to, for example, sanction fascist salutes, claiming they are the ones promoting censorship."

ESTONIA - ESG

"Yes, it is an issue. Far-right actors in Estonia continue to target the arts, NGOs, and public service media whenever they find a culture-war trigger, most often LGBT content. These patterns are identified in the international reports referenced above. However, at this stage the situation is characterised more by pressure, rhetoric, and periodic flare-ups than by any immediate existential threat to public service broadcasting or the arts sector as a whole.

In addition, EKRE — the primary source of these political attacks — has recently undergone major internal turmoil, including the expulsion of senior members in 2024 ahead of chairman elections, the loss of hundreds of members, and the subsequent formation of a splinter party by former insiders. While EKRE remains electorally relevant (with 8.2% in the October 2025 local elections, a significant drop from its 16% share in the 2023 general election), its participation in future coalitions is unlikely in the short term.”

FINLAND - SUNKLO

“In Finland, freedom of expression in general is not (yet) in concrete jeopardy. Artists are not systematically harassed on political grounds, but there are alarming signs of that happening towards some academic researchers and scientists. While some subjects are polarising (e. g. immigration, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, sexual identity), discussion usually remains at least semi-civilised – while singular aggressive citizens may voice their concerns in unorthodox ways, organized extensive harassment rarely emerge. When it comes to freedom of speech and expression, courts and authorities seldom intervene: for example, per the Finnish Supreme Court ruling KKO:2022:1, calling a far-right pundit a ‘nazi clown’ did not constitute defamation. Freedom of speech is restricted by bans of defamation, ‘dissemination of information violating personal privacy’, ‘violating the sanctity of religion’ and ‘agitation against a population group’, but these provisions have not been applied to artistic works. We are not aware of Finnish screenwriters being particularly afraid of ideologically motivated harassment, whether it be personal or systemic.

Attacks on the arts in general do worry our members. Yle has faced extensive budget cuts, and more are likely to come. Artists’ unions have also had their funding cut: the Association of Finnish Film Directors, for example, was recently stripped of all public funding. The necessity of the state-funding of art has been called into question by the Finns Party and the National Coalition, the latter currently being the prime minister party. Although the right-wing parties do recognise the importance of Finnish art and culture to an extent, we find that their nationalist viewpoints, economic utilitarianism and calls for a freer market (in order to give the public what it ‘really desires’) promote an unnecessarily narrow understanding of the function and significance of art.

Finns Party representatives have persistently and publicly accused Yle of partiality. We have not yet seen this affect the selection of projects by Yle, but these attempts at undermining public service broadcasting have most likely influenced the decisions pertaining to Yle’s diminishing budget. These decisions (will) noticeably impact Finnish TV production, as Yle obviously plays a significant part in the entire ecosystem.

The Finnish Film Foundation, who is responsible for allocating public funding to production companies, makes decisions independently of partisan politics. Political pressure has not noticeably affected the selection of projects by the Foundation.”

FRANCE - LA GUILDE

“La Guild has published several statements expressing concern about the rise of the far right to power and recurring calls for the privatisation of public services and the abandonment of their values and missions (diversity, equality, plurality, etc.).

At present, attacks and restrictions on freedom of expression, as well as ideological pressure, do not seem to affect cinema films and audiovisual works. On the other hand, we are seeing the emergence of ideologically biased counter-narratives, particularly in the area of beliefs and identities. This cultural soft power does not hesitate to distort historical reality in order to promote extreme or fundamentalist beliefs, and seeks to render invisible or discredit representations (including narratives) that do not fit into its sphere of thought.

Examples:

- Performances cancelled due to fundamentalist extremists¹;
- Films *Vaincre ou mourir* (2024) — a historical account biased by a desire for religious proselytism^{2,3,4,5}, and *Sacré cœur* (2025) — co-financed and promoted by the Bolloré group^{6,7,8} whose 'far-right' orientation is undeniable;
- Long overshadowed by Vincent Bolloré and Xavier Niel, Pierre-Edouard Stérin made a name for himself with his *Périclès* project⁹, which aims to devote €150 million to promoting far-right ideas. What is the strategy behind...;
- The creation of a specialised Master's degree in screenwriting and storytelling at the Institut Catholique de Vendée¹⁰, with the support of the Le Puy-du-Fou theme park, known for its biased and questionable representation of history. This can be seen as a way of instilling a form of ideology in screenwriters from the outset.

GERMANY - DDV

"Attacks on freedom of expression and the arts are increasingly being discussed and are coming into focus. There have not yet been any 'hard' attacks apart from those by rightwing populists, but it is noticeable that their worldviews and narratives are increasingly being adopted by people who do not consider themselves to be on the far right. Within the country itself, public broadcasting is heavily criticized, but less so within the guild — after all, it is the largest employer. Reforms are considered necessary but are not happening quickly enough — while voices calling for the abolition of public service broadcasting are growing louder nationwide. Whether and to what extent these are amplified by right-wing accumulators (social media, etc.) or useful idiots remains to be investigated."

ICELAND - FLH

"Populistic attacks on public funding of artists grants is a regular, annual thing. Similar criticism of RUV (national broadcaster) is also a recurring theme."

1. <https://lesjours.fr/obsessions/anna-von-hausswolff/ep6-civitas/>
<https://observateur.info/article/106602/actualites/france-lintegrisme-catholique-interdit-des-concerts>
2. https://www.liberation.fr/culture/cinema/vaincre-ou-mourir-lhistoire-comme-champ-de-bataille-culturel-pour-les-reacs-20230123_JWU37RD56NH7NG4RODRSKLRLKE/
3. <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/cedric-lepine/blog/050923/vaincre-ou-mourir-de-paul-mignot-et-vincent-mottez>
4. <https://cinedweller.com/movie/vaincre-ou-mourir-critique-du-film-et-test-blu-ray/>
5. <https://www.ecranlarge.com/films/critique/1463354-vaincre-ou-mourir-critique-dun-puy-sans-fond-de-nullite>
6. https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/que-sait-on-de-sacre-coeur-le-film-chretien-propulse-par-les-medias-du-groupe-bollore-20251014_YLSEV3IDGNC7TGNDWGGRRXBSM/
7. <https://www.breizh-info.com/2025/10/19/252466/sacre-coeur-le-film-catholique-qui-bouleverse-le-box-office-francais-interview-des-realisateurs/>
8. <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/la-fabrique-de-l-information/pierre-edouard-sterin-le-millionnaire-a-l-assaut-de-l-opinion-publique-5472072>
9. <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/la-fabrique-de-l-information/pierre-edouard-sterin-le-millionnaire-a-l-assaut-de-l-opinion-publique-5472072>
10. <https://www.lesechos.fr/pme-regions/pays-de-la-loire/linstitut-catholique-de-vendee-et-le-puy-du-fou-ouvrent-le-premier-mastere-specialise-scenario-et-storytelling-2102766>

IRELAND - WGI

“There is a growing vocal minority that are anti-public service broadcasting and anti-mainstream media, seeing them as being puppets of the government. This is evidenced in particular by the drop in people paying their TV licence fee, and is used to discredit PSB news and current affairs coverage. In 2018, a mural by the artist Maser supporting the Repeal The 8th campaign was removed from the wall of the Project Arts Centre. The Arts Centre were threatened with the loss of its charity status by the Charities Regulator if it didn't remove the mural.

Additionally, the 2024 proposed bill on hate speech legislation was dropped after criticism from politicians and legal advisors (and Elon Musk).”

ITALY - WGI

“No, it's not. We have democracy, and whether there's a right-wing or left-wing government, freedom of expression isn't an issue. Another issue is the preventive censorship that colleagues could apply, hoping to gain the approval of the members of the new committees on state funding. But these are personal choices, nothing mandatory.”

LITHUANIA

“While public service broadcasting has been a subject of heated debate for quite some time, the issue has become particularly intense in recent months, especially following the formation of the new government.

Nemuno Aušra is a Lithuanian political party that was invited to form a coalition with the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party and currently participates in the government. Although the party's fiscal policies could be described as centre-left, its social stance is distinctly right-wing. According to Europe Elects, it is classified as a right-wing party and is known for its strong populist, Eurosceptic, and nationalist positions.

During the government formation process, it became clear that this party would control the Ministry of Culture. This decision triggered widespread protests from artists, cultural workers, and other members of the cultural sector, as the party not only nominated an inexperienced and unqualified candidate (who resigned after just over a week) but also repeatedly expressed disdain toward people working in the cultural field, including artists and cinema professionals.

In recent years, the party's leader has consistently attacked Lithuania's national broadcaster, LRT. Now, in response to the largely unified opposition from the cultural community, he has intensified his attacks against cultural institutions in general, spreading misinformation about their funding and the people who receive public support. Specifically focusing on people protesting, which include quite a lot of accomplished filmmakers that have gotten funding before and now are being smeared by the party leader.

At present, Lithuania still lacks a new Minister of Culture, and the situation continues to deteriorate. While many within the cultural sector are striving to protest and prevent this populist party from taking over the ministry, there remains a significant risk that they will succeed — raising serious concerns about the future of cultural policy and the specific issues outlined below ¹¹.”

11. This article might outline the situation more clearly: <https://www.e-flux.com/notes/6783404/it-may-be-the-last-time-lithuanian-art-and-culture-resisting-a-takeover-at-the-height-of-hybrid-warfare>

LUXEMBOURG - LARS

"No. We just have one broadcaster and they produce one weekly magazine about art. So freedom of expression and art are not being attacked. Art is just treated secondarily."

ROMANIA

"Given the result of the recent election, we think the freedom of expression and attack on the arts could have been an issue, but thankfully, this was avoided."

SERBIA - USS

"After the start of the large student and civic protests, there has been a tendency for authors who took part in the protests to find it increasingly difficult to obtain funding from national broadcasters as well as from the Film Center of Serbia. In addition, the Film Center did not issue any calls in 2025, and funding for the production of TV series and films from broadcasters is going mainly to authors and producers close to the authorities."

SLOVENIA - DSR SCENARISTI

"Generally not, although there have been attacks on individual artists or artistic practices, typically originating from right-wing parties."

SPAIN - FAGA

"This is not a widespread problem, but political control of the media in autonomous communities governed by right-wing parties has been growing as the social and political climate in the country has become increasingly tense. As example, the Chief of Staff of the President of Madrid's Regional Government has used the media to attack and build a legal case against the Attorney General."

SWITZERLAND - SCENARIO

"The NZZ (Neue Zürcher Zeitung) tends to oppose a non-discriminatory and pluralistic society and has recently criticized widespread and thus diverse cultural funding in Switzerland. For attacks on the public service see SRG-Initiative above."

UNITED-KINGDOM - WGGB

"Yes. This is something we have been working on for some time and it has been the subject of motions to our AGM and the TUC. Full details will soon be available on our campaign pages which we can send over when they are live."

Do you see any evidence in your country that political or ideological issues are impacting the selection of projects by funding agencies or broadcasters ?

BELGIUM - ASA

“What we are witnesses of is the desire to ‘depoliticized’ Culture, which is an obvious desire to obviously do the opposite: neutered projects of their social potential. It is still an ongoing process, whose full potential will probably be felt next year when RTBF actual General Manager will be replaced by a new one chosen by MR Party.”

BELGIUM - DE SCENARISTENGILDE

“Fortunately, the VAF assessment committees are still able to operate independently at present. In theory, the board of directors (which consists of politically appointed individuals) can block projects, but to our knowledge this is not currently happening. Fortunately, the VAF assessment committees are still able to operate independently at present. In theory, the board of directors (which consists of politically appointed individuals) could block projects, but to our knowledge this has not yet occurred. Nor are we aware of any projects being rejected by broadcasters on the grounds of politically sensitive content.”

BULGARIA - BAFTRS

“Even though such concerns exist, particularly around the procedures in the public broadcaster, there is currently no evidence that can be laid out. Beyond political and ideological issues, the greatest concern expressed by filmmakers relates to possible corruption risks in the distribution of public funding by the broadcaster.”

CROATIA - SPID

“There is no formal system of censorship; however, projects addressing fascism, anti-fascism, historical accountability, migration or minority rights are perceived as particularly sensitive. This perception can indirectly influence commissioning, funding decisions and editorial caution within publicly funded institutions. Our guild has lost financing from the Ministry of Culture and Media for a programme that has been presenting queerfeminist practitioners and perspectives, despite the fact that the advising committee expressed a positive response and recommended funding it. This is not the only example of projects and programmes that can be labelled as leftist or supporting different minority perspectives that have lost funding from the Ministry of Culture in the past years — numerous other relevant NGOs and actors from the independent scene have also been denied funds although their programmes have been going on for years, have regular audiences and local and international relevance and importance.”

ESTONIA - ESG

“Overall, Estonia’s funding bodies and public broadcasters operate with strong professional standards, and there is no indication that political or ideological preferences systematically influence project selection. The Estonian Film Institute, public cultural funds, and ERR commissions support a broad range of themes and approaches, including work that engages with socially or politically sensitive topics.

Although far-right actors occasionally criticise publicly funded arts projects, these pressures have not resulted in changes to funding allocations or commissioning decisions. Selection processes remain independent, jury-based, and widely regarded as insulated from partypolitical interference.”

FINLAND - SUNKLO

"We do not know of notable funding agencies or broadcasters exhibiting significant political or ideological biases. Most, if not all, major Finnish media outlets are quite apolitical after all."

FRANCE - LA GUILDE

"Reduction in cultural budgets in local authorities (regions, departments, town halls), which are financial choices, but also political and ideological ones, leading to a limitation of diversity of expression and sometimes a selection of projects based on biased criteria rather than artistic ones and diversity of expression."¹²

Only two regions continue to support the cultural sector at the same level as last year. Some departments are also preparing to reduce subsidies."¹³

GERMANY - DDV

"Although there is no real 'hard' rejection of political or ideological topics by funding agencies or broadcasters, editorial offices at public broadcasters in particular are increasingly expressing a desire to produce content that is 'apolitical', 'escapist', or 'appealing to the majority of the population.' Projects are rejected because they could be 'too political' by public broadcasters. However, this is currently less a matter of ideological orientation and more a case of anticipatory obedience, a desire to avoid controversy. More in non-fictional productions there is an official strategy by public broadcasters to make so called non-woke or very conservative perspectives more visible in the programme.

The German art and media funding system is strongly based on federal structures. In some federal states (Bundesländern) with an already existing political influence by AfD especially regional and local funding for arts and theater, even small local doc film projects, show more political and ideological impacts on funding decisions."

ICELAND - FLH

"No."

IRELAND - WGI

"I don't think we're seeing this. As above, funding bodies are seen as being 'woke' and part of the establishment."

ITALY - WGI

"The only recommendation given is to prioritize stories about real Italian events or real-life Italian historical figures. This section already existed among those funded by the Ministry, but since the current government took office, the funding for it has been increased. There have been no cases of censorship or censorship on public television. The authors, journalists, and unions at RAI reported this immediately. I repeat, this would be very serious in Italy."

12. https://www.franceinfo.fr/culture/c-est-extremement-consequent-dans-les-regions-le-milieu-culturel-s-inquiete-des-baisses-de-subventions-massives-decidees-par-les-collectivites-pour-2025_6992360.html

13. <https://france3-regions.franceinfo.fr/auvergne-rhone-alpes/rhone/lyon/200-personnalites-denoncent-la-politique-culturelle-regionale-de-laurent-wauquiez-2767698.html>

LITHUANIA

"So far, I can't say that I do. However, many of us who are taking part in the protests against the aforementioned party firmly believe — based on the party's statements and actions — that if it gains control of the Ministry of Culture, this is precisely what will happen.

When several people resigned in protest from various cultural boards and commissions, the party leader remarked that he would have no difficulty replacing them with others who would 'do the job'.

LUXEMBOURG - LARS

"No. Not really."

ROMANIA

"Not really. We have very few projects funded but so far there have been no ideological pressures."

SERBIA - USS

"In the last ten years the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia, Film Centre of Serbia and the National Broadcasting Corporation issued a few calls for pitches with either particular or general 'national' subjects. Some of these calls were clear and related to productions of a TV show about the Nemanjic Dynasty or films about the First World War. However some calls were unclear and proposed only a 'national topic' as the criteria. These competitions resulted in controversy, accusations of regime-inspired bias and so forth eventually leading to discreditation of institutions that provide public funding. Also there were controversies about the selection of Serbian submission for Academy Awards and accusations of political influence. Overall, political bias is more present in the relationship of the funding bodies and producers than creatives."

SLOVENIA - DSR SCENARISTI

"As a rule, no."

SPAIN - ALMA

"Definitely there is a trend for appealing a wider audience at the cost of losing unique projects. There are many factors influencing this shift, the ideological issue being probably one of them. For example, a colleague was asked to remove the queer subplot from a series because "the moment right now wasn't for those kind of stories". So yes, broadcasters and agencies are taking less and less risks.

Also, there is a tendency towards cultural assimilationism and oversimplification in terms of race, sexual orientation... Speaking in numbers, there has been a descent of queer characters who can pass the Vito Russo test: from 59,75% in 2022, to 40,46% in 2024, (source: EAO)."

SPAIN - FAGA

"Not in an obvious way, but there are cases in which, subtly and under other pretexts seemingly unrelated to political censorship, changes and limitations are demanded in order to secure funding."

SWITZERLAND - SCENARIO

"Funding agencies continue to support projects with a pluralistic approach despite budget cuts to cultural funding imposed by parliament, which make this more challenging. Broadcasters (see the SRG-Initiative) face political and ideological pressure and therefore act cautiously. Perhaps they tend to forms of self-censorship due to both the political climate and financial dependency."

UNITED-KINGDOM - WGGB

Yes. Generally the industry is becoming much more risk averse, and we are seeing repeated attempts in contracts to restrict the political behaviour of writers and other creators as a condition of funding/production. Further details will be available on our website soon."

In your view are screenwriters in your country self-censoring on political or ideological grounds in selecting projects to pitch to funding agencies?

BELGIUM - ASA

"That would require a survey to properly answer to that question. Our guess is that everything has become more careful, mostly because of 'audience' and the fear of losing it, even from Public service broadcasting.

Broadcasters insistently demand 'light-hearted', 'family-friendly' or procedural content, which inevitably influences the projects that production companies submit to them, and therefore the projects they seek from screenwriters. This may not strictly speaking be self-censorship, but it is difficult to deny that we have this injunction to be 'consensual' and 'entertaining' in mind when we think about a project..."

BELGIUM - DE SCENARISTENGILDE

"Not that we are aware of."

BULGARIA - BAFTRS

"Some screenwriters avoid pitching politically sensitive projects due to concern that funding or broadcast opportunities may be negatively affected."

CROATIA - SPID

"At present, we have no concrete evidence or documented cases of systematic self-censorship among our members on political or ideological grounds.

There is a general awareness that certain internationally sensitive topics, particularly content perceived as pro-Palestinian or explicitly critical of Israeli government policies, may be considered controversial in the current European and global climate. In that context, some authors may exercise caution when developing or pitching such projects."

ESTONIA - ESG

"I do not see evidence of screenwriters in Estonia self-censoring on political or ideological grounds when developing or pitching projects. Writers continue to pursue a wide variety of subjects — including those touching on social issues, minority rights, and political themes — without apparent concern that such choices would negatively affect their prospects with funding agencies or broadcasters.

The independence and professionalism of Estonia's funding and commissioning systems create an environment where writers feel able to take creative risks. While public rhetoric can at times be hostile toward certain topics, this has not led writers to avoid them or adjust their artistic intentions."

FINLAND - SUNKLO

"We are not aware of this happening."

FRANCE - LA GUILDE

"Partly yes, particularly due to fears that the RN (National Rally) party could come to power in the near future, a party that makes no secret of its desire to change the state cultural system (privatisation, etc.) and its policies. Developing projects today with a socially engaged theme (on diversity, identities, gender, immigration, etc.) runs the risk of becoming impossible to implement tomorrow if the current levers and support are no longer in place, if freedom of expression is threatened or restricted.

Already, projects dealing with ecology, religion, the political system, economic conflicts of interest, health issues, lobbies, etc. are difficult and perilous to bring to fruition (for example, the obstacles encountered by Pierre Jolivet in developing and shooting the film *Les algues vertes* — among other things, no municipality gave him permission to film on the beaches)¹⁴. This leads to exclusionary choices in the themes developed by the authors, or self-censorship in the degree to which they represent these themes, so as not to significantly reduce the chances of the project seeing the light of day.

Nevertheless, authors try to develop projects that fit in with a progressive ideology, because it is in their nature as authors to 'say things' and to express a point of view: their own."

GERMANY - DDV

"There are currently no indications of this. The topics and projects brought to the attention of funding agencies are still very diverse and political. So far, there has been no sign of self-censorship, especially among young writers and authors."

ICELAND - FLH

"No."

IRELAND - WGI

"We don't believe so."

ITALY - WGI

"It's an entirely personal choice, dependent on various factors, such as the producer overseeing the project, the broadcaster, and whether there's an anniversary. But it's not a priori censorship. For example, 2 November will mark the 50th anniversary of Pasolini's death, and institutions are organizing major events throughout Rome and Italy: exhibitions, events, film restorations."

14. <https://www.lesoir.be/524658/article/2023-07-10/pierre-jolivet-sur-les-algues-vertes-que-de-difficultes-pour-parler-de-quelque>

LITHUANIA

"I haven't exactly encountered these problems or haven't heard about them."

LUXEMBOURG - LARS

"No, I do not think so and I hope not. Some writers are avoiding some genre because they are harder to finance overall."

ROMANIA

"No."

SERBIA - USS

"As in every culture there are subject matters that are more or less provocative and easier or tougher to greenlight. If we bear that in mind, obviously screenwriters work with the knowledge of such limitations and eventually proceed as they see fit. Overall Serbian cinema and television produce a diverse slate of works in every sense. However, diversity can always be improved."

SLOVENIA - DSR SCENARISTI

"As a rule, no. "

SPAIN - ALMA

"A representative from the local government of a major Spanish tourist island attempted to censor a writer participating in a screenwriting workshop partially funded by that local government. The script deals with immigration, social exclusion, and other related issues. The writer faced the dilemma of having to completely change her series and focus on more 'positive' themes, such as the impact of tourism on the island, due to pressure from the local government. Fortunately, the writer stuck to his initial proposal and ultimately developed the series he wanted to create.

Héctor de Miguel, a comedian popularly known as Quequé, released a statement announcing his decision to temporarily step away from the media. The comedian acknowledges that the controversy sparked by a parody about a famous TV host has determined his decision. "I don't want to be a martyr." In his statement, Héctor de Miguel refers to the cascade of explicit threats that both he and his colleagues have received. The announcement came almost at the same time as one of his live performances was due to take place as part of a nationwide theatre tour. The show had sold out and was cancelled, according to people close to him, due to Héctor de Miguel's assessment of that date: neither the safety of his team members nor his own could be guaranteed. There was a real and credible risk that had been communicated both publicly and privately through messages on social media and Telegram channels.

To understand the seriousness of the situation, it is not difficult to find some of these explicit threats. Several accounts with tens of thousands of followers, such as the police union Jusapol, Alt Right España, and Desokupa — all of them linked to the far right and to organisations with neo-Nazi ideology — initiated the targeting.

Some members of the Cadena SER team who work on the programme alongside Héctor de Miguel had previously experienced serious incidents that led them to fear for their safety, to the point of needing bodyguards at one of the performances, or seeing their home addresses or their mother's face circulated on social media.

This time, in the channel of one of these far-right agitators, there was even talk of organising to figure out how much money would be needed to cover the legal consequences of attending the shows to physically attack them.

Marcelino Madrigal, a social media specialist who analyses hacks, cyberattacks and other online threats, especially those linked to the far right, examined 3,652 reply messages directed at eight posts on the social network X in the case of Héctor de Miguel.

The conclusion of his report is clear: "A common narrative of attack is identified, with repeated personal accusations and expressions of discredit directed at the same target. The volume and persistence of this type of response generate an effect of continuous targeting."^{15, 16}

SPAIN - FAGA

"No."

SWITZERLAND - SCENARIO

"We can't detect any self-censoring of screenwriters on political or ideological grounds."

UNITED-KINGDOM - WGGB

"Yes, respondents to our recent survey confirmed this. Details of this will be available soon on our campaign page."

Any additional comments ?

BELGIUM - ASA

"Mostly we'd like to highlight our opening remark: far-right ideas have invaded center-right parties. The attacks on Culture will not come from those classified at the extreme of the spectrum, but from the 'legitimate' center-right parties. It has already started."

BELGIUM - DE SCENARISTENGILDE

"As long as Vlaams Belang does not come to power, we do not expect any major threat to freedom of expression in Flanders. Nevertheless, the N-VA poses a more hidden threat, because they also see the cultural sector as a thorn in their side."

BULGARIA - BAFTRS

"The spread of disinformation and propaganda narratives has increasingly influenced public perception of artistic works. The recent documentary *Architects of Chaos* highlights how coordinated misinformation can manipulate public opinion and amplify hostile rhetoric. Such false narratives, often circulated through social media, create a hostile environment and some of them aim to stigmatise cultural figures or projects."

CROATIA - SPID

"The normalisation of historical revisionism and the weakening of antifascist consensus pose a serious long-term risk to artistic freedom. Independent cultural funding, editorial autonomy of public broadcasters and continued European monitoring are essential safeguards against indirect political interference in the arts.

The international visibility of films such as *Fiume o morte!*, directed by Igor Bezinović, demonstrates both the relevance and the sensitivity of historically and politically charged themes. The film won the Tiger Award and the FIPRESCI critics' prize at the International Film Festival Rotterdam 2025, was awarded six Golden Arena awards at the Pula Film Festival, and received the European Film Award for Best Documentary at the

15. https://www.eldiario.es/vertele/noticias/queque-hector-de-miguel-anuncia-retirada-temporal-polemica-parodia-nacho-abad-no-apetece-martir_1_12935172.html

16. https://www.eldiario.es/politica/hector-miguel-elena-reines-violencia-explicita-ultraderechista-silencia-comunicadores-izquierda_1_12949068.html

2026 European Film Awards in Berlin. It was selected as Croatia's official submission for the 98th Academy Awards and the Goya Awards, screened at around 50 international festivals, and won additional prizes including a Best Documentary award at the Innsbruck International Film Festival and the Maslačak Award for best regional film. These achievements underline the impact of such works on the international stage, as well as the importance of protecting filmmakers' ability to engage with challenging historical and cultural subjects without political pressure or delegitimisation campaigns."

ICELAND - FLH

"The Center Party (right wing populists) has been going up in the polls lately, snatching voters from The Independence Party (conservatives) and there are indications that the IP may lean more to the right to get those voters back."

ITALY - WGI

"Just to give another example, in 2024, the film *The Boy in Pink Pants* was a box office hit, the story of a gay boy bullied at school who commits suicide. It really happened, and it deeply shocked public opinion, in Italy. The boy's mother wrote a book about it, and the film is based on that story. The Ministry funded the film and included it in the school screenings. Indeed, the high box office revenue was due to the numerous matinees organized for students to raise awareness of the issue."

LUXEMBOURG - LARS

"Luxembourg is really in a strange situation where our far right party has not gone through the 'development' of other far right parties in Europe. Most of them are old men yelling all the time and are not really taken for serious. But it could change quite quickly if they find their public figure who is less 'aggressive.'"

ROMANIA

"No."

SERBIA - USS

"In the past year, Screenwriters Guild of Serbia publicly protested police violence against film school students and demanded investigations into related incidents while also publicly condemning police brutality and procedural irregularities in the practices of Film Center of Serbia. The Guild called for the boycott of the National festival of film and television and joined other associations in protest against its disputed formation.

Guild members individually signed a petition to ban their work from exploitation by Serbian Public Broadcasting Company as it introduced biased and propagandistic depiction of the student protests. This call for exercise of moral rights was completely ignored by all public institutions and basically it opened a new issue to be resolved in the future.

Screenwriters Guild of Serbia is not affiliated in any way to any political force and has no ideological stance but it does respond to human rights violations and social issues that are recognised by a Guild-wide consensus."

UNITED-KINGDOM - WGGB

"We are mindful that attempts to restrict / limit freedom of expression is not solely the preserve of the far-right. Many companies and organisations are also doing this as part of their corporate risk-management policies, to avoid and prevent criticism of their ethical policies for example their contribution to climate change or to allow them to financially protect themselves from changes in public opinion etc."

The Federation of Screenwriters in Europe — FSE

The Federation of Screenwriters in Europe is a network of national associations, guilds and unions of writers for the screen in Europe, created in June 2001. It comprises 31 organisations from 27 countries, representing some 10,000 screenwriters in Europe.



EU Transparency Register ID : 642670217507-74

Web : federationscreenwriters.eu

Austria

Drehbuchverband Austria

Belgium

Association des scénaristes de l'audiovisuel (ASA)

Belgium

Scenaristengilde (SG)

Bulgaria

Bulgarian Association of the Film, Theater and Radio Scriptwriters (BAFTRS-BAΦTPC)

Croatia

Savez Scenarista I Pisaca Izvedbenih Djela (SPID)

Denmark

Danske Dramatikere

Estonia

Eesti Stsenaristide Gild (ESG)

Finland

Suomen Näytelmäkirjailijat ja Käsikirjoittajat ry (SUNKLO)

France

La Guilde Française des Scénaristes (La Guilde)

France

Syndicat des Scénaristes (SdS)

Germany

Deutscher Drehbuchverband (DDV)

Greece

Enosi Senariografon Ellados (ESE)

Iceland

Félag leikskálda og handritshöfunda (FLH:)

Ireland

Writers Guild of Ireland (WGI)

Italy

Writers Guild Italia (WGI)

Latvia

Screenwriters Guild of Latvia (SGL)

Luxembourg

Luxembourgish Association of Filmmakers and Scriptwriters (LARS)

Netherlands

Netwerk Scenarioschrijvers (NS)

Norway

Dramatikerforbundet (Writers Guild of Norway)

Poland

Gildia Scenarzystów Polskich

Poland

Koło scenarzystów SFP

Portugal

Associação Portuguesa de Argumentistas e Dramaturgos (APAD)

Slovakia

ASSA

Slovenia

DSR Scenaristi

Spain

ALMA - Sindicato de Guionistas

Spain

FAGA - Forum de Asociaciones de Guionistas del Audiovisual (Catalunya, València, Galicia, Euskadi, Andalucía y Canarias)

Sweden

Dramatikerförbundet (Writers Guild of Sweden)

Switzerland

Scenario - Swiss Filmmakers Association (ARF/FDS)

Ukraine

Guild of Screenwriters of Ukraine

United Kingdom

Writers' Guild of Great Britain (WGGB)

RIGHT TO WRITE

**Screenwriters
and the growing threats
to Freedom of Artistic
Expression in Europe**

