
Council of Europe: “Free to Create” Report, freedom of artistic expression threatened. Need for rules, protection, resources

The challenges that European artists and cultural workers face in the practice of their right to freedom of artistic expression - this is the focus of the report “Free to Create: Artistic Freedom in Europe”, published by the Council of Europe. The Report shows that there are “laws that curtail creative freedom, attacks from non-governmental groups and online threats”, as well as pressures that contribute to self-censorship. According to the Council of Europe, artistic freedom, “a core human right”, “has worsened recently”. The causes include: political extremism, economic collapse, a global pandemic, threats from digitisation, an emerging environmental catastrophe, and the return of war within Europe. So what should be done? The Report makes a number of practical recommendations. For instance, States should not only pass legislation in compliance with international standards, but also monitor and investigate violations; civil society should engage in awareness-raising and advocacy initiatives, besides sharing experiences and expertise; and academic institutions are invited to train students on issues related to artistic freedom. There are recommendations for funding bodies, as well as for artists, and for the Council of Europe itself, including an invitation to create a platform for artistic freedom. “With democracy under great pressure, the key role of arts and culture as powerful means for maintaining constructive dialogue in democratic, diverse and open societies becomes ever more evident. The right to freedom of artistic expression is a key to this and ensures the pluralism and vitality of the democratic process”, said the Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić.

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