

Press release

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“The scissors in the head” – for the freedom of the arts in Hungary European Alliance of Academies and MEP Sabine Verheyen seek to pool their efforts

The freedom of the arts is established in Article 13 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights – and yet the Hungarian government is able to gradually and lawfully erode the autonomy of cultural institutions and art academies. An infringement case is difficult to mount. The European Alliance of Academies drew attention to this miscondition in May of this year and, in cooperation with the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), submitted a petition with specific demands to the European Parliament. [See press release of 9 May 2021.](#)

In order to explore further possibilities for cooperation for the freedom of the arts in Europe, representatives of the European Alliance of Academies initiated a hearing with Sabine Verheyen, Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education in the European Parliament, on 7 September 2021.

Professor Győző Ferencz from the Széchenyi Academy of Letters and Arts and Ferenc Czinki, President of the Society of Hungarian Authors, explained the mechanisms of state control in cultural institutions and the personal effects of self-censorship on artistic creativity. The writer Robert Menasse, member of the Akademie der Künste, stressed the issue’s pan-European dimension: “It must be European policy to strengthen the pan-European framework for the free development of art and science and to enforce effective sanctions against member states that threaten art, science and education with national identity policies.”

Art – like roads, airports and wind farms – is part of European infrastructure. To make this possible, a long-term partnership with policy-makers is needed, argued Marion Döring (Wim Wenders Foundation).

Sabine Verheyen expressed her alarm at the manifold restrictions on artistic freedom – and especially “the scissors in the head” (self-censorship) – in other European member states as well. At the same time, she pointed out that the abuse of law would have to be legally proven in concrete cases in order to facilitate action against the restrictions in the form of fines or proceedings before the courts on the European level. This is where the European Alliance of Academies can provide support, she added. At the end of the hearing, Jeanine Meerapfel, President of the Akademie der Künste, announced that the exchange would be continued.

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