

EUROPEAN THEATRE CONVENTION & MILO RAU - WIENER FESTWOCHE

RESISTANCE NOW: FREE CULTURE

Updates From the Major International Campaign Urging the
European Parliament to Protect Artistic Freedom & Create a
'European Culture Freedom Act'

50 COUNTRIES - 100 MILLION READERS - LARGEST CULTURAL
INSTITUTIONS IN EUROPE



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 **ETC** EUROPEAN
THEATRE
CONVENTION

RESISTANCE NOW: FREE CULTURE

A Campaign for Artistic Freedom and Cultural Autonomy in Europe



The **Resistance Now: Free Culture** campaign highlights the urgency of protecting artistic freedom and cultural autonomy in the face of growing political interference across Europe.

Building on the momentum of the **European Theatre Talks** in Liège and the **Resistance Now! Tour**, this campaign unites theatres, cultural organisations, and policymakers. Alarmed by the acute threat to cultural diversity in Europe, the leaders of almost 200 cultural organisations have joined forces to call on the European Parliament, with an Open Letter, to “finally take an explicit stand” on cultural autonomy and implement a ‘**European Culture Freedom Act**’.

As the largest network of public theatres in Europe, with 70 members from 33 countries, the **European Theatre Convention (ETC)** is at the forefront of this initiative, alongside **renowned theatre artist, director, and filmmaker Milo Rau**, the Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) / Free Republic of Vienna, the Prospero – Extended Theatre platform and the network Opera Europa.

Central to the campaign is a commitment to highlighting theatre’s role as both a space for open dialogue and a catalyst for meaningful societal transformation.

RESISTANCE NOW: FREE CULTURE

The 'Resistance Now: Free Culture' initiative has marked a turning point in our campaign for European culture, launching a new level of action to confront these growing threats and advocate for theatre as a cornerstone of democracy.

In November 2024, together with Milo Rau and Wiener Festwochen, as well as the Opera Europa and Prospero - Extended Theatre networks, the European Theatre Convention has launched an urgent initiative to stand against increasing threats to European cultural policy and artistic freedom, in the form of an open letter addressed to the European Parliament.

For the first time ever, over 200 leading artists and prominent personalities of major cultural public institutions from 50 countries representing 180 national theatres, operas, festivals, and performing arts venues, have come together to call for decisive actions now, including:

- Adopting a **European Culture Freedom Act** to safeguard artistic freedom.
- Establishing a **clear EU stance to protect the independence and autonomy of cultural institutions.**

► [Read the Open Letter](#)

► [Discover the list of first signatories](#)

Some notable signatories include:

- **Lukáš Trpišovský** and **Martin Kukučka** (Artistic Directors of National Theatre Prague, Czech Republic)
- **Krzysztof Warlikowski** (Artistic Director of Nowy Teatr in Poland),
- **Tiago Rodrigues** (Director of the Festival d'Avignon in France),
- **Iris Laufenberg** (Artistic Director of the Deutsches Theater in Germany),
- **Gianina Carunariu** (director and playwright Romania)
- **Mattias Anderson** (Artistic Director Royal Dramaten in Sweden)
- **Peter de Caluwe** (General & Artistic Director of La Monnaie / De Munt in Belgium)
- **Lars Ebert**, Secretary General Culture Action Europe
- **Karen Stone**, Director, Opera Europa
- **Ása Richardsdóttir**, Secretary General, IETM
- **Louise Costelloe** and **Laurent Mehuest**, Co-President European Dance Development Network

The petition was publicly launched at the 10th stop of the Wiener Festwochen's Resistance Now! Tour, spearheaded by Milo Rau, at Le Maillon Theatre in Strasbourg:



Wiener Festwochen's
Resistance Now! Tour
Stop at Le Maillon
Theatre in Strasbourg, 30
November 2024



The panel talk addressed resistance, nationalism, and the role of art in shaping democratic futures, with inputs from:

- **Milo Rau**, Director, Director of the Wiener Festwochen, Vienna
- **Matej Drlička**, Musician, Former director of the Slovak National Theatre, Bratislava
- **Emmanuel Droit**, University Professor, Deputy Director of Sciences Po Strasbourg
- **Joris Mathieu**, Director, Director of the Théâtre Nouvelle Génération, CDN of Lyon
- **Heidi Wiley**, Executive Director of the European Theatre Convention
- **Catherine Trautmann**, Former French Minister of Culture

On the same day, standing in front of the European Parliament, Milo Rau, Matej Drlička, Barbara Engelhardt (director of Le Maillon Theatre) and Heidi Wiley, Executive Director of the European Theatre Convention, held a copy of the Open Letter and sent a **powerful message of solidarity from the cultural sector, calling on MEPs to take immediate action to provide the necessary European legal framework to protect these core European values: freedom of expression, artistic expression, and the independence of cultural institutions.**



Since its official launch, and as of 04 December 2024, the petition has garnered nearly 1'900 signatures, most of them representing major cultural organisations in over 50 countries, and was extensively covered by press and shared on social media, reflecting broad support from across Europe and beyond.

In the following section, you will find an overview of the press and social media coverage of the campaign, a testament to what can happen when we stand together. **Our strength as sector comes in uniting our voices and our networks in view of the ongoing crises and shifting political paradigms, highlighting the essential role of culture in shaping an open, democratic society where individuals are free to choose how to live.**

PRESS OVERVIEW



88

STORIES

25

COUNTRIES

100.000.000

READERS

SNAPSHOTS FROM INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE:

- ARTE (Germany/France): ARTE Europe Weekly: Is Culture Under Attack in Europe?
- Die Presse (Austria): Offener Brief: „Die Existenz der europäischen Kultur in ihrer Vielfalt ist gefährdet“
- Le Soir (Belgium) : Nous appelons le Parlement européen à renforcer la protection de la liberté culturelle
- Al Jazeera (Bosnia) Apel evropskih pozorišta: Protiv napada na umjetničke slobode
- Nova.bg (Bulgaria) „Съпротива сега: Свободна култура“: Близо 200 национални театъра с кампания след протестите в София
- Jutarnji List (Croatia) ‘Širi se strah’. Nakon što je bijesna rulja napala predstavu Johna Malkovicha, pobunili su se kulturnjaci, neki su iz Hrvatske
- Postimees (Estonia) Eesti teatrid liitusid pöördumisega: loomevabaduse kriis ohustab Euroopa põhiväärtusi!
- Le Figaro (France) Près de 200 théâtres européens lancent un appel contre les « atteintes à la liberté artistique »
- Deutschlandfunk Kultur (Germany) Veranstalter fürchten um Kunstfreiheit
- Nachtkritik (Germany): Brandbrief: Europas Theatermacher*innen fordern von der EU Maßnahmen zum Schutz der Kunstfreiheit
- Népszava (Hungary) Elege van a politikai támadásokból, megoldást sürget a színházi világ
- Theaterkrant (The Netherlands) Open brief aan Europees Parlement: ‘Aanvallen op artistieke vrijheid hebben een absurd niveau bereikt’
- Público (Portugal) “A liberdade cultural está em perigo”, alerta manifesto europeu face ao avanço da extrema-direita
- N1 Info (Serbia) Pozorišta uputila apel EP protiv „napada na umetničke slobode“
- Radio Nacional de España (Spain): Las mañanas de RNE
- The Stage (UK) ‘Artistic freedom under attack’: EU parliament urged to act

Countries reached:

Argentina, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Belgium, Bulgaria, Columbia, Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Montenegro, The Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, United Kingdom, United States of America

SOCIAL MEDIA COVERAGE

63 31 3

The Resistance Now: Free Culture campaign has demonstrated the power of collective action in safeguarding artistic freedom and cultural autonomy across Europe. **Social media has been an instrumental platform for amplifying this initiative**, fostering a global conversation about the growing threats to cultural independence and the role of art in defending democracy. **From widespread solidarity statements to extensive engagement with campaign messages**, the digital presence of Resistance Now has underscored the unity of the cultural sector.

Here are some snapshots:

RESISTANCE NOW: FREE CULTURE

ETC european_theatre_convention and 2 others

ETC european_theatre_convention 3d
Artistic freedom and the autonomy of cultural organisations are under attack in Europe. From bans to layoffs, violent disruptions to performances like at Sofia's Ivan Vazov National Theatre, we're witnessing red lines being crossed.

Join the unprecedented campaign already uniting over 200 leading voices from 39 countries, representing 180 major national theatres, operas, festivals, and performing arts venues.

It's time to act: sign the petition "RESISTANCE NOW: FREE CULTURE"

View insights Currently boosted

126 likes 3 days ago

ETC Add a comment...

FREE CULTURE

La situation politique et culturelle en Europe n'est plus seulement préoccupante, elle nous dépassera très vite si nous ne réagissons pas immédiatement. Découvrir que des directeurs de théâtre sont limogés sans raison en Slovaquie... ça fait froid dans le dos, et ça rappelle les plus sombres heures de notre histoire européenne.

Milo Rau et d'autres sont sur les rangs et agissent. Soutenons-les!

delphineedy invited you to be a collaborator on their post. Review

delphineedy and milorau4 Mailion Théâtre de Strasbourg

delphineedy 2d
Que diriez-vous d'un calendrier de l'Avent politique cette année? De faire de ce mois de décembre un mois de réflexion agissante et de luttes pour la culture mise à mal dans de nombreux pays européens, pour les artistes et directeurs de théâtre limogés et maltraités?

Ce qui s'est dit au @mailionth hier soir est extrêmement préoccupant. J'ai réalisé que même en s'informant régulièrement, des infos ne passent pas. L'exemple de @matejdrlicka qui a perdu son poste de directeur du Théâtre national slovaque est un symbole qui devrait toutes et tous nous faire réagir et nous mobiliser. En France aussi, certaines régions coupent les financements et violentent les artistes... Et tout ce qui se passe dans le monde ne va vraiment pas dans le bon

66 likes 2 days ago

ETC Add a comment...



Gemeinsam mit der [European Theatre Convention](#) stellen wir uns gegen die Einschränkung kultureller und künstlerischer Freiheit in Europa! 🇪🇺

Wir möchten euch in diesem Zusammenhang auf die Initiative von Milo Rau/ [Wiener Festwochen](#), Prospero, der ETC und dem Netzwerk [Opera Europa](#) aufmerksam machen, um gemeinsam für die Freiheit der Kunst einzustehen. 🇪🇺

➡ Zur Petition: <https://www.europeantheatre.eu/.../sign-the-open-letter...>

#ResistanceNow #FreeCulture #ArtisticFreedom #StandForCulture
Theater Dortmund

Voir la traduction



dakhtheatre 3d
Мистецька свобода та автономія культурних організацій перебувають під загрозою в Європі. Від заборон до звільнень, насильницьких зривів вистав, як у [@national_theatre_bg](#), ми є свідками перетину червоних ліній.

ЦСМ «Дах», учасник найбільшої мережі Європейських театрів [@european_theatre_convention](#), закликає приєднатися до кампанії, яка вже об'єднала понад 200 митців з 39 країн, що представляють 180 найбільших національних театрів, фестивалів та майданчиків виконавського мистецтва.

➡ Настав час діяти: підпишіть петицію «RESISTANCE NOW: FREE



RESISTANCE NOW TOUR à STRASBOURG

Lancement au Maillon de la pétition « RESISTANCE NOW: FREE CULTURE » et discussion en présence du metteur en scène et directeur des [Wiener Festwochen](#) Milo Rau, Matej Drlička, Emmanuel Droit, Joris Mathieu, Heidi Wiley ([European Theatre Convention](#)) et Catherine Trautmann.

« Nous, institutions culturelles et artistes venus de toute l'Europe, sommes profondément préoccupés par l'évolution des politiques culturelles dans plusieurs États membres de l'UE.... »

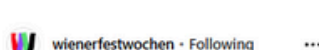
Protect Artistic Freedom !

Lire, signer et partager la pétition <https://www.change.org/.../join-the-first-europe-wide...> !

Lancierung der Petition „RESISTANCE NOW: FREE CULTURE“ im Maillon und Diskussion in Anwesenheit des Schweizer Regisseurs Milo Rau, Matej Drlička, Emmanuel Droit, Joris Mathieu, Heidi Wiley und Catherine Trautmann.

„wir, Kultureinrichtungen und Künstler aus ganz Europa, sind alarmiert über die aktuellen kulturpolitischen Entwicklungen in verschiedenen EU-Mitgliedstaaten.“

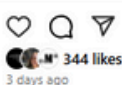
Lesen, unterschreiben und teilen Sie die Petition <https://www.change.org/.../join-the-first-europe-wide...>



wienerfestwochen 3d
Jetzt unterzeichnen auf festwochen.at und diesen Aufruf teilen ➡
RESISTANCE NOW: FREE CULTURE zum Schutz der künstlerischen Freiheit in Europa 🇪🇺

➡ Wir fordern das Europäische Parlament auf, konkrete Maßnahmen für den Erhalt der kulturellen Vielfalt Europas zu setzen. Unterstütze auch Du mit Deiner Stimme die Petition, hinter der europäische Netzwerke wie die [@european_theatre_convention](#) (ETC), Prospero und Opera Europa sowie 200 Kulturinstitutionen stehen.

➡ Schließ dich der Bewegung an und setz ein Zeichen für ein freies, vielfältiges Europa!



ETC Add a comment...



g.n.theatre 3d
Artistic freedom and the autonomy of cultural organisations are under attack in Europe. From bans to layoffs, violent disruptions to performances like at Sofia's Ivan Vazov National Theatre, we're witnessing red lines being crossed.
Join the unprecedented campaign already uniting over 200 leading voices from 39 countries, representing 180 major national theatres, operas, festivals, and performing arts venues.

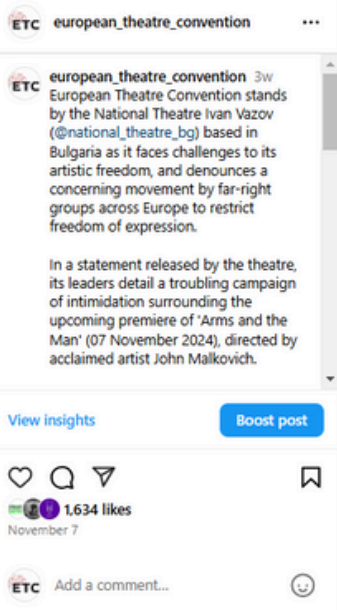
➡ It's time to act: sign the petition "RESISTANCE NOW: FREE CULTURE" addressed to the European Parliament calling for concrete actions such as the establishment of a 'European Culture Freedom Act,' asking for a clear



Statement: Bulgarian National Theatre Calls for Solidarity Amid Attack on Artistic Freedom



ETC member National Theatre Ivan Vazov denounces threats to artistic freedom around the performance 'Arms and the Man' premiering on 07 November 2024.



Views

89,689



Národní divadlo

1j · 🌐

📢 Umělecká svoboda a autonomie kulturních organizací jsou v Evropě ohroženy. Jsme svědky překračování červených linií – od zákazů přes propouštění, násilné narušování představení, jako například v Národním divadle Ivana Vazova v Sofii.

👉 <https://www.europeantheatre.eu/.../sign-the-open-letter...>

📢 Národní divadlo se připojilo ke stovkám evropských kulturních institucí z 39 zemí, které společně pozvedly hlas proti bezprostřednímu ohrožení umělecké sv... En voir plus



European Theatre Convention and milorau4
Original audio

European Theatre Convention 🔥 Renowned director Milo Rau has a message!

Standing in front of the European Parliament in Strasbourg alongside Matej Drlička, the dismissed director of the Slovak National Theatre, Milo Rau invites us all to stand for artistic freedom.

Join one of the largest campaigns for the autonomy of European Culture to date and sign the 'Resistance Now: Free Culture' open letter NOW!

🔗 Link in bio!

#ResistanceNow #FreeCulture #ArtisticFreedom #StandForCulture

18h

wienerfestwochen 🇺🇦
1m Reply

carolinepetersofficial done 🍷🍷🍷
12h 1 like Reply

View insights Boost reel

Like Comment Share

Liked by deustcheaterberlin and 184 others
18 hours ago

Add a comment...



Teatr Kochanowskiego w Opolu

19 h · 🌐

Teatr Kochanowskiego wspiera list otwarty RESISTANCE NOW: WOLNA KULTURA skierowany do Parlamentu Europejskiego, którego celem jest ochrona kultury przed atakami, zwolnieniami, od gwałtownych zakłóceń po spektakle, takie jak w Teatrze Narodowym w Sofii.

🔴 Wolność artystyczna i autonomia organizacji kulturalnych w Europie są atakowane: zwolnienia, od gwałtownych zakłóceń po spektakle, takie jak w Teatrze Narodowym w Sofii.

Teatr Kochanowskiego dołączył do bezprecedensowej kampanii, która zjednoczyła głosy z 39 krajów, reprezentujących 180 głównych teatrów narodowych i miejsc sztuki widowiskowej.

Dowiedz się więcej i podpisz petycję ➡ <http://www.europeantheatre.eu/.../sign-the-open-letter...>

📷 Photo: Franz Kreis

#ResistanceNow #FreeCulture #ArtisticFreedom #StandForCulture

Inicjatywa ta została podjęta we współpracy z Milo Rau i Festiwalem Wiedeńskim (Wiener Festwochen) / Wolną Republiką Wiednia, siecią teatrów finansowanych ze środków publicznych European Theatre Convention (ETC), Prospero - Extended Theatre Platform oraz siecią Opera Europa.

ENG 🇬🇧

JK Opolo Theatre supports the open letter RESISTANCE NOW: FREE CULTURE addressed to the European Parliament, which aims to protect culture from against attacks, layoffs, censorship and funding cuts.

🔴 Artistic freedom and the autonomy of cultural organisations are under attack in Europe. From bans to layoffs, violent disruptions to performances like at Sofia's Ivan Vazov National Theatre, we're witnessing red lines being crossed.

JK Opolo Theatre has joined an unprecedented campaign that has already united over 200 leading voices from 39 countries, representing 180 major national theaters, operas, festivals and performing arts venues.

Find out more and sign the petition ➡ <http://www.europeantheatre.eu/.../sign-the-open-letter...>

Voir la traduction



Teatro do Noroeste - CDV

3 j · 🌐

🔴 A liberdade artística e a autonomia das organizações culturais estão sob ataque na Europa. Desde proibições a despedimentos, passando por perturbações violentas em espetáculos, como no Teatro Nacional Ivan Vazov, em Sófia, estamos a assistir a linhas vermelhas a serem ultrapassadas.

📢 É hora de agir: assine a petição "RESISTANCE NOW: FREE CULTURE" já subscrita por mais de 200 instituições culturais de 39 países, incluindo o Teatro do Noroeste – Centro Dramático de Viana. E... En voir plus

BACKGROUND

We believe it is essential for theatres and the performing arts to play a key role in building an open, democratic society where people are free to choose their way of life. To achieve this, we must take a stand—and do so together. Our strength, as a cultural sector, lies in uniting our voices and networks to address current crises and political paradigm shifts.

Ahead of the European Parliament elections, ETC published in May 2024 a statement addressing Europe's increasing polarisation titled: **"Theatres are ideal spaces for dialogue. Europe needs them now more than ever,"** calling on Europe to protect theatres and public spaces that keep freedom of expression alive.

► **Read the ETC Statement: 'Theatres Are Ideal Spaces for Dialogue. Europe Needs Them Now More Than Ever'**

In June 2024, ETC began receiving weekly calls from Member Theatres in Slovakia (Slovak National Drama Theatre) and Bulgaria (National Theatre Ivan Vazov, seeking guidance on navigating increasing political interference. Recognising the urgency of the situation, the ETC Board resolved to make this a central focus of the European Theatre Talks in Liège that November, ensuring the issue received the attention and dialogue it demanded.

In August 2024, ETC issued a new statement expressing deep concern about the Slovak Ministry of Culture's decision to dismiss the General Manager of ETC Member Slovak National Theatre, Matej Drlička, in what appeared to be part of a worrying trend by far-right parties across Europe to limit freedom of expression.

► **Read the ETC Statement: 'ETC Calls on European Policy Makers to Protect Independence of Democratic, Cultural Institutions in Slovakia'**

In September 2024, ETC signed and supported the publication of a joint call from the European Cultural Sector to call for artistic freedom and the autonomy of the arts, addressed to the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

The declaration, released in the name of the cultural network Culture Action Europe (CAE), was jointly prepared by the European Theatre Convention alongside CAE, Pearle Live Performance Europe, and Opera Europa, and urged European politicians to adequately protect freedom of expression for artists, highlighting the sector's united stance.

► **Read the Joint Statement: 'Call for Artistic Freedom and Autonomy of the Arts'**



From left to right: Cláudia Belchior (ETC), Audrey Jungers (Opera Europa), Heidi Wily (ETC), Anita Debaere (Pearle* Live Performance Europe) in Brussels, 24 September 2024.

In November 2024, ETC held the third edition of the **European Theatre Talks**, a high-profile theatre and policy event that emerged following the European Theatre Forum event in 2023, which collected the shared needs and desires of the European Theatre sector in a resulting policy document, called the Opole Recommendations. The goal of these talks is to implement the recommendations in this document through consistent dialogue with policymakers.

This edition, titled '**Free Culture: Resisting Political Interference**' served as a strong reminder of the relevance of theatre to society, through inputs from **Georg Häusler, Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport in the European Commission (DG EAC)**; investigative journalism outlet Correctiv; Austrian playwright Elfriede Jelinek; European cultural networks Pearle* and Opera Europa; and a condensed insight into the sobering State of Culture Report by Culture Action Europe.

- ▶ [Watch the European Theatre Talks #3 trailer](#)
- ▶ [Watch the full recording of the session](#)

A marking intervention from Mladen Aleksiev, Head of International Relations at Bulgaria's National Theatre Ivan Vazov, shed light on the intimidation surrounding their production of *Arms and the Man*, directed by John Malkovich. The European Theatre Convention (ETC) called on citizens and policymakers to stand in solidarity with the theatre and defend freedom of expression, in a statement that was **extensively shared and viewed by 90.000 people**.

- ▶ [Read the statement: *Bulgarian National Theatre Calls for Solidarity Amid Attack on Artistic Freedom*](#)

The European Theatre Talks in Liège was a stop of director Milo Rau's **Resistance Now! Tour** with the Wiener Festwochen/Free Republic of Vienna, which travels through European cities (*Stockholm, Amsterdam, Antwerp, New York, Belgrade, Taipei, Liège, Vienna, Prague, Strasbourg*) to discuss the burning question of how resistance can succeed in the face of new nationalism.

European Theatre Talks
in Liège (Belgium), 04
November 2024



ABOUT ETC

Founded in 1988, the European Theatre Convention (ETC) is the largest network of public theatres in Europe. It is an arts organisation that promotes European theatre as a vital platform for dialogue, democracy and interaction that responds to, reflects and engages with today's diverse audiences and changing societies. ETC's programme of grants and events support networking, professional development and artistic collaborations for theatre staff across Europe – championing theatre as a key European art form for the 21st century.

ETC has 70 members in 33 countries and is supported by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union. We estimate the theatres perform 60.000 shows per year, reaching 25 million audience members, and have a crucial role to play in supporting democracy.

ETC Team

Heidi Wiley, Executive Director

Laura Gardes, Project & Network Manager

Teresa Pfaud, Project Manager

Annabell Blank, Project Manager

Christy Romer, Communication Manager

Özgül Demiralp, Digital Communication Officer

Žad Novak, Project Management and Administrative Assistant



European Theatre Convention

Head office: c/o Deutsches Theater, Schumannstr. 13a, 10117 Berlin

EU office: c/o European House for Culture, Sainctelettesquare 17, 1000 Brussels

convention@europeantheatre.eu

+49 (0)30 / 284 41 402

Dossier made by: Özgül Demiralp, ETC Digital Communication Officer



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