

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND

CORRUPTION IN EUROPE!

By Teodor Teofilov

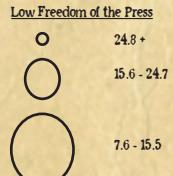
Reporters Without Borders (RSF) publish compile and publish an annual Press Freedom Index that intends to reflect the degree of freedom that journalists, news organisations, and netizens have in each country, and the efforts made by authorities to respect this freedom. The index only deals with press freedom and does not measure the quality of journalism nor does it look at human rights violations in general.

The report is partly based on a questionnaire, which asks questions about pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and infrastructure. The RSF staff also monitors the free flow of information of the internet, violence against journalists, netizens, and media assistants, including abuses attributable to the state, armed militias, clandestine organisations or pressure groups, during the year to come to the final score of press freedom per country.

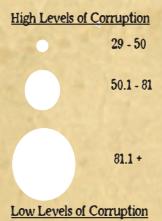
Based on the data, each country is assigned a score and a position, complementary indicators that together assess the state of media freedom in the final report. Some countries are excluded from the report because of a lack of reliable or confirmed information. The lower the number given to a country, the more freedom the press possesses. As the map shows, there is a discrepancy between Western and Eastern Europe, with the press in states within the former Soviet arc of influence having less freedom to operate.

Legend

Freedom of Press Index Score 2017



Corruption Perception Index CPI Score 2017



0 250 500 1,000 Kilometers

The other index shown on the map is the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) that Transparency International has been publishing annually since 1995. The CPI ranks countries by their perceived levels of corruption, as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys. Transparency International defines corruption as "the misuse of public power for private benefit."

The CPI currently ranks 176 countries on a scale from 100 (very clean) to 0 (highly corrupt). Denmark and New Zealand are perceived as the least corrupt countries in the world, ranking consistently high among international financial transparency, while the most perceived corrupt country in the world is Somalia, ranking at nine out of 100 since 2017.

Analysis of the CPI results indicates that countries with the least protection for press and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also tend to have the worst rates of corruption.

Every week at least one journalist is killed in a country that is highly corrupt.

All journalists who were killed in the last six years, more than 9 out of 10 were killed in countries that score 45 or less on the index.

Transparency International recommends that governments and businesses must do more to encourage free speech, independent media, political dissent and an open and engaged civil society. Again there is a discrepancy between Western and Eastern Europe, with the east being more corrupt.

The influence of the area of influence of the former Soviet Union can clearly be seen, with high corruption levels and a lack of a free press. The countries that changed to democracy in the 1990s are still struggling to create a good environment for businesses and growth.

There seems to be a link between a country having high levels of corruption and the freedom of the press being low. Bulgaria, for example, is the poorest member of the European Union that is constantly suffering from high corruption levels, which stifle the country's economic growth and damages the welfare of its population.

Some eastern European countries have actually had success in limiting corruption, such as Estonia. They can be a good example of what steps to take to successfully limit the impact it has - one important aspect is a free press.

The further west the less perceived corruption and a more free press. The champions in both are the Scandinavian countries that have a very free press and very low levels of corruption.

Teodor Teofilov
GEOG370: LAB303
Projection: Albers Equal Area Conic
Central Meridian: 10°0'0"***
Standard Parallel 1: 41°0'0"***
Standard Parallel 2: 60°0'0"***
Sources:
Reporters Without Borders,
Transparency International,
Natural Earth Data, naturalearthdata.com

