

## Indicator 1: Rights

### How far, how equally and how securely do citizens enjoy rights of free speech, association and assembly?

The European Union mainly depends on its member states to guarantee freedoms of speech, association and assembly. Thus in order to assess whether individuals enjoy those rights when acting as citizens of the Union – when, for example, participating in European elections or simply when expressing views on Union matters and contributing to the formation of public opinion on them – we need some measure of how well freedoms of speech, association and assembly are delivered in member states. We use Freedom House surveys as one such source, proposing the following measures: political rights and civil liberties (1.1); and freedom of the press (1.2).

#### 1.1. Political rights and civil liberties

Every year since 1972, Freedom House has scored political rights and civil liberties in all states in the world in the annual Freedom in the World survey. For both political rights and civil liberties the best possible rating any country can score is 1 and the lowest possible score is 7. Since Freedom House gives all EU member states a score of a 1 or a 2 for both **political rights** and **civil liberties**, we need only set out its criteria for awarding those two scores.

A country is given a **rating of 1 for political rights** if it ‘enjoys a wide range of political rights, including free and fair elections’. Candidates who are elected actually rule, political parties are competitive, the opposition plays an important role and enjoys real power, and minority groups have reasonable self-government or can participate in the government through informal consensus.

Countries with a **rating of 2 for political rights** ‘have slightly weaker political rights than those with a rating of 1 because of such factors as some political corruption, limits on the functioning of political parties and opposition groups, and foreign or military influence on politics’.

A country is given a **rating of 1 for civil liberties** if it enjoys a wide range of civil liberties, including freedom of expression, assembly, association, education and religion. They have an established and general rule of law, allow free economic activity, and tend to strive for equality of opportunity for everyone, including women and minority groups.

Countries with a **rating of 2 for civil liberties** have ‘slightly weaker civil liberties than those with a rating of 1 because of such factors as some limits on media independence, restrictions on trade union activities, and discrimination against minority groups and women’.

From these descriptions it is obvious that the Freedom House scores for civil liberties are more directly relevant to freedoms of speech, association and assembly than its scores for political liberties. Nonetheless, Table 1.1.a. identifies those member states that have received a less than perfect score than 1 in Freedom House surveys of political rights and civil liberties since 2004.

*Table 1.1.a. European Union member states with less than perfect ratings in Freedom House surveys of political rights (PR) and civil liberties (CL)*

	2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011	
	PR	CL	PR	CL	PR	CL	PR	CL	PR	CL	PR	CL	PR	CL	PR	CL
<b>BG</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>GR</b>	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	2
<b>IT</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	2
<b>LV</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	2	2	2	2
<b>LT</b>	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>RO</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

**Source**

Freedom House: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2012>

Before 2004, there was no European Union member state which had a less than perfect Freedom House evaluation of 1. In 2010, in contrast, five member states received less than perfect scores on the civil liberties index. A further three member states did so on the political rights index. Note that this was not just an effect of enlargement to include countries such as Bulgaria and Romania. Two well established member states – Greece and Italy – are also thought by Freedom House to be less than perfect in their civil liberties.

So, what should we make of this? Does it really matter that some member states only score 2/7 rather than 1/7? To answer this it helps identify the exact reasons why Freedom House has allocated less than perfect scores to some member states in its recent assessments. Table 1.1.b lists the reasons for imperfect scores for the relevant member states in the most recent survey.

*Table 1.1.b. Reasons for giving 'imperfect scores' for political or civil rights to five EU member states in country reports for 2010*

<b>BG</b>	Lack of enforcement of anti-corruption laws. Discrimination against ethnic and sexual minorities.
<b>GR</b>	Discrimination against minorities. Poor enforcement of anti-racism laws. Official corruption, especially in the police force.
<b>IT</b>	Corruption in politics. Interference with the media and concentration of media ownership and control in the hands of the Prime Minister himself. Weak judicial system.
<b>LV</b>	Weaknesses in judicial system including long pre-trial detentions.
<b>RO</b>	Political resistance to anti-corruption measures and long-standing concerns about political bias in state-owned media. Weaknesses in judicial system. Gender discrimination.

**Source**

Freedom House: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2012>

## 1.2 Freedom of the press

Another obvious ingredient of freedom of speech is media freedom. Freedom House also rates freedom of the press. It gives each country a rating and a ranking out of the 196 states in the international system. The ratings are based on three components which Freedom House describes as follows:

**Legal Environment:** This includes 'legal and constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression; penalties for libel and defamation; freedom of information legislation; registration requirements for outlets and journalists; and the ability of journalist groups to operate freely'.

**Political Environment:** This includes 'the editorial independence of both state-owned and privately owned media; access to information and sources; official censorship and self-censorship; the vibrancy of the media and the diversity of news available within each country; the ability of both foreign and local reporters to cover the news freely and without harassment; and the intimidation of journalists by the state or other actors'.

**Economic environment:** This includes 'the structure of media ownership; transparency and concentration of ownership; the costs of establishing media as well as of production and distribution; the selective withholding of advertising or subsidies by the state or other actors; the impact of bribery or corruption on content'.

Table 1.2. sets out the ratings and rankings that Freedom House attributes to freedom of the media in the member states of the European Union between 2004 and 2011. 2010 is the most recent year for which data is complete. The table demonstrates that there is a great deal of diversity between member states in media freedom. As with the civil liberties rankings in Table 1.1.a., member states that receive notably poor rankings for media freedom include established member states such as Greece and Italy, and not just new member states which have only recently undergone post-communist transitions.

Table 1.2. Freedom of the press  
Freedom House rankings and rating of freedom the press in EU member states 2004-2010

	2011		2010		2009		2008		2007		2006		2005		2004	
	Rank	Rating	Rank	Rating	Rank	Rating	Rank	Rating	Rank	Rating	Rank	Rating	Rank	Rating	Rank	Rating
FIN		10	1=	10	2=	10	1	9	1	9	1	9	1=	9	4=	9
DEN		13	5	11	4=	11	3=	10	3=	11	3=	10	4=	10	1=	8
SWE		-	1=	10	4=	11	5=	11	3=	11	3=	10	1=	9	1=	8
BEL		12	6=	12	6=	12	5=	11	3=	11	6=	11	6=	11	4=	9
LUX		12	6=	12	6=	12	7	12	7=	12	6=	11	6=	11	11=	12
NL		-	11=	14	8=	13	8=	13	9=	13	6=	11	6=	11	11=	12
EST		18	19=	17	14=	15	16=	16	16=	16	17=	16	24=	17	28=	17
IRE		16	14=	15	14=	15	14=	15	16=	16	15=	15	18=	15	25=	16
GER		17	19=	17	18=	16	16=	16	16=	16	17=	16	20=	16	25=	16
POR		-	16=	16	18=	16	16=	16	12=	14	12=	14	13=	14	18=	14
CZ		19	24	18	24=	18	25=	18	29=	18	35=	20	48=	22	50=	23
LI		22	32=	21	24=	18	25=	18	29=	18	26=	18	30=	18	33=	18
UK		-	26=	19	27=	19	25=	18	31=	19	31=	19	30=	18	37=	19
AT		21	32=	21	33=	21	35=	21	39=	21	41=	21	44=	21	50=	23
HU		30	40=	23	33=	21	35=	21	39=	21	41=	21	44=	21	45=	20
CY		22	33=	22	38=	22	40=	22	46=	22	48	22	48=	22	33=	18
FR		23	40=	23	38=	22	40=	22	39=	21	41=	21	37=	20	37=	19
MT		22	33=	22	38=	22	32=	20	22=	17	26=	18	30=	18	23=	15
LV		26	55=	26	43=	23	40=	22	31=	19	31=	19	24=	17	28=	18
SK		-	43=	23	43=	23	40=	22	33=	20	35=	20	44=	21	44=	21
PL		-	47=	24	49=	24	51=	24	46=	22	41=	21	37=	20	37=	19
SI		-	52=	25	49=	24	46=	23	39=	21	35=	20	35=	19	37=	19
SP		-	47=	24	49=	24	46=	23	46=	22	41=	21	48=	22	37=	19
GR		30	63=	29	63=	29	56=	27	54	25	59=	28	61=	28	64=	28
IT		34	72=	33	73=	32	65=	29	61=	29	79=	35	77=	35	74=	33
BG		35	76=	34	76=	36	76=	33	76	34	77=	34	77=	35	78=	35
RO		-	88=	43	92=	44	94=	44	90=	42	96=	44	104	47	103	47

Source

Freedom House: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2012>