



EUROPEAN  
FORUM  
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# Universities for Enlightenment: Can Science Secure Liberty?

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Alpbach, August 21, 2019.

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# Plan of presentation



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**1. Freedom And Democracy In The World/Europe**

**2. A Correlation Between Democracy/Liberty And Science: Liberty Secures Science!**

**3. Can Science Secure Liberty?**

- **How to Overcome The Culture of Ignorance?**
- **How To Overcome The Crisis of Enlightenment?**

**4. Universities For Enlightenment**



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# 1. Freedom and Democracy in the World/Europe

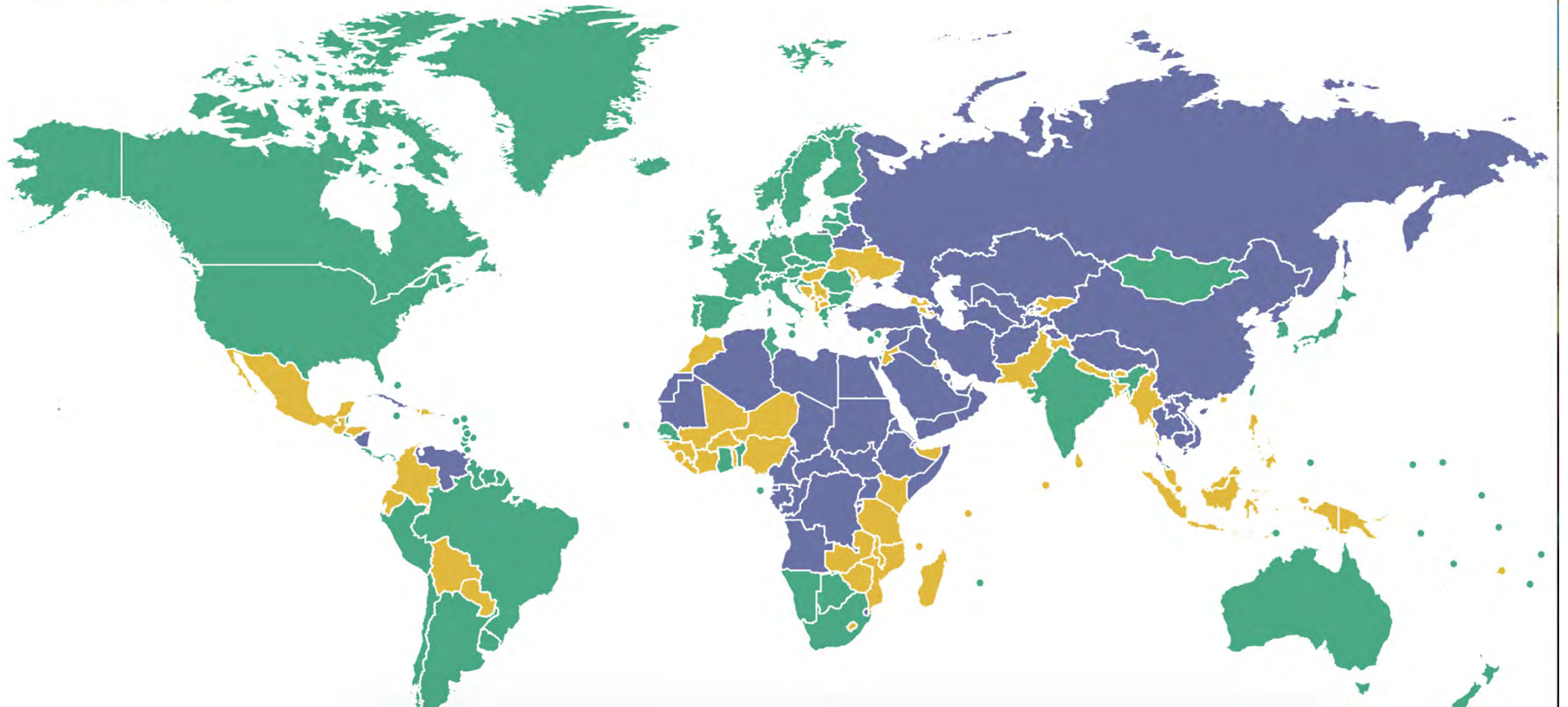


# Freedom in the World 2019 Map



**WORLD** AMERICAS ASIA-PACIFIC EURASIA EUROPE MENA SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Free Partly Free Not Free



# Democracy is in retreat

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- In 2018, *Freedom in the World* recorded the 13th consecutive year of decline in global freedom. The reversal has spanned a variety of countries in every region, from long-standing democracies like the United States to consolidated authoritarian regimes like China and Russia. The overall losses are still shallow compared with the gains of the late 20th century, but the pattern is consistent and ominous.



Regional trends

## **EUROPE: ANTIDEMOCRATIC LEADERS UNDERMINE CRITICAL INSTITUTIONS**

- „Antidemocratic leaders in Central Europe and the Balkans—including some who have brazenly consolidated power beyond constitutional limits—continued undermining institutions that protect freedoms of expression and association and the rule of law.”

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## Regional trends

# EUROPE: ANTIDEMOCRATIC LEADERS UNDERMINE CRITICAL INSTITUTIONS

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- „In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has presided over one of the most dramatic declines ever charted by Freedom House within the European Union. (...) Soon after, the government forced the closure of Central European University, evicting its vibrant academic community.”
- „In Poland, the conservative Law and Justice party led by Jarosław Kaczyński (...) laid waste to the country’s legal framework in its drive to assert political control over the entire judiciary.”
- „In the Balkans, President Aleksandar Vučić of Serbia and President Milo Đukanović of Montenegro continued to consolidate state power around themselves and their cliques, subverting basic standards of good governance and exceeding their assigned constitutional roles.”

## Regional trends

# EUROPE: ANTIDEMOCRATIC LEADERS UNDERMINE CRITICAL INSTITUTIONS

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- „Austria’s new right-wing government put pressure on the public broadcaster, while Czech prime minister Andrej Babiš drew on closely allied media outlets to combat unflattering scandals.”
- „In Slovakia, investigative reporter Ján Kuciak was shot to death in his home after uncovering corrupt links between government officials and organized crime.”
- „In Turkey, simultaneous parliamentary and presidential elections took place in June despite a two-year state of emergency that included the imprisonment of the leaders of a key opposition party and extreme curbs on freedoms of association, assembly, and expression.”



# Freedom in the World 2019

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# Human Rights Watch 2019

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- **World's Autocrats Face Rising Resistance**
- „In some ways this is a dark time for human rights. Yet while the autocrats and rights abusers may capture the headlines, the defenders of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law are also gaining strength. The same populists who are spreading hatred and intolerance are spawning a resistance that keeps winning its share of battles.”

# Human Rights Watch 2019: Europe

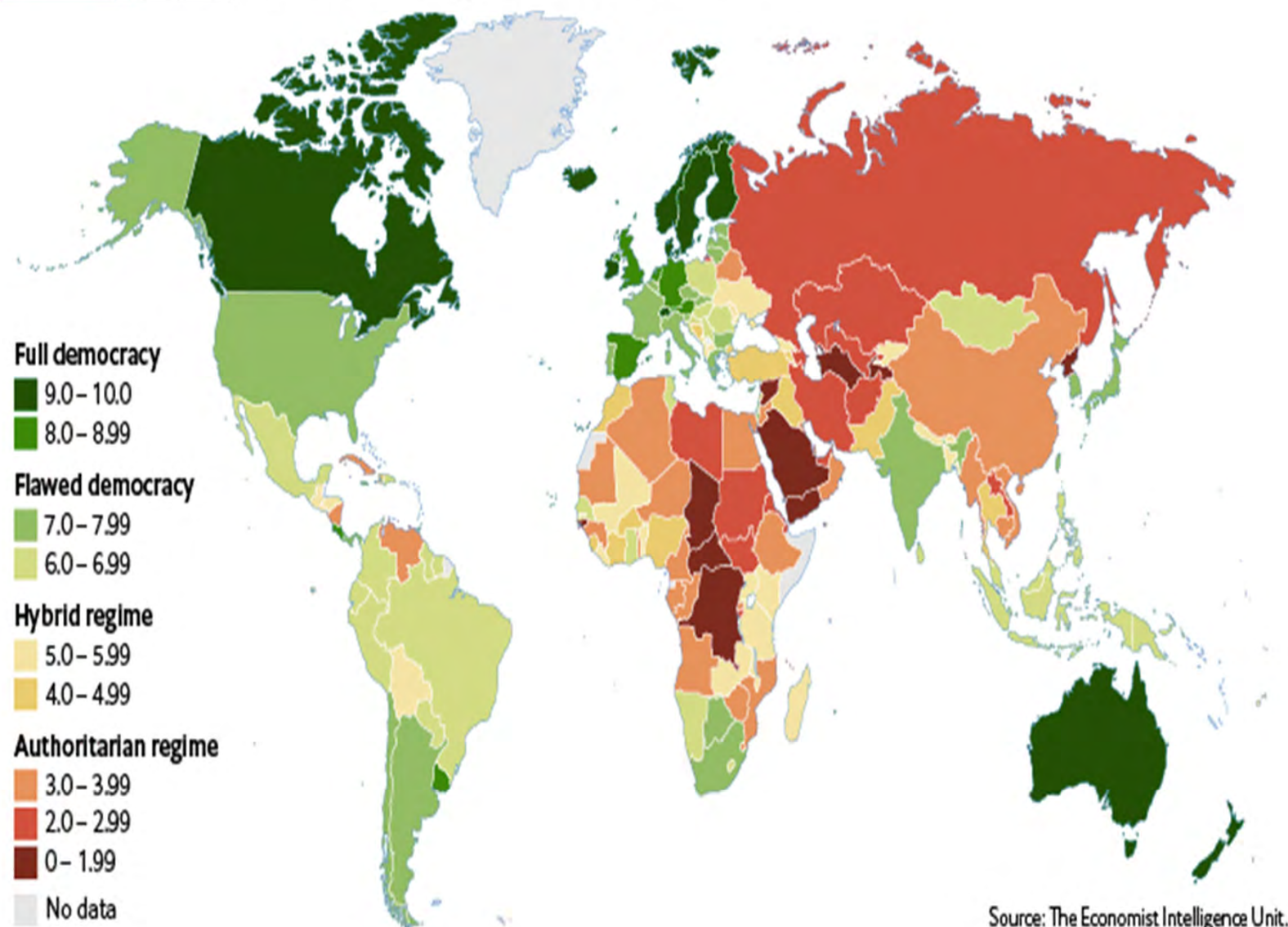


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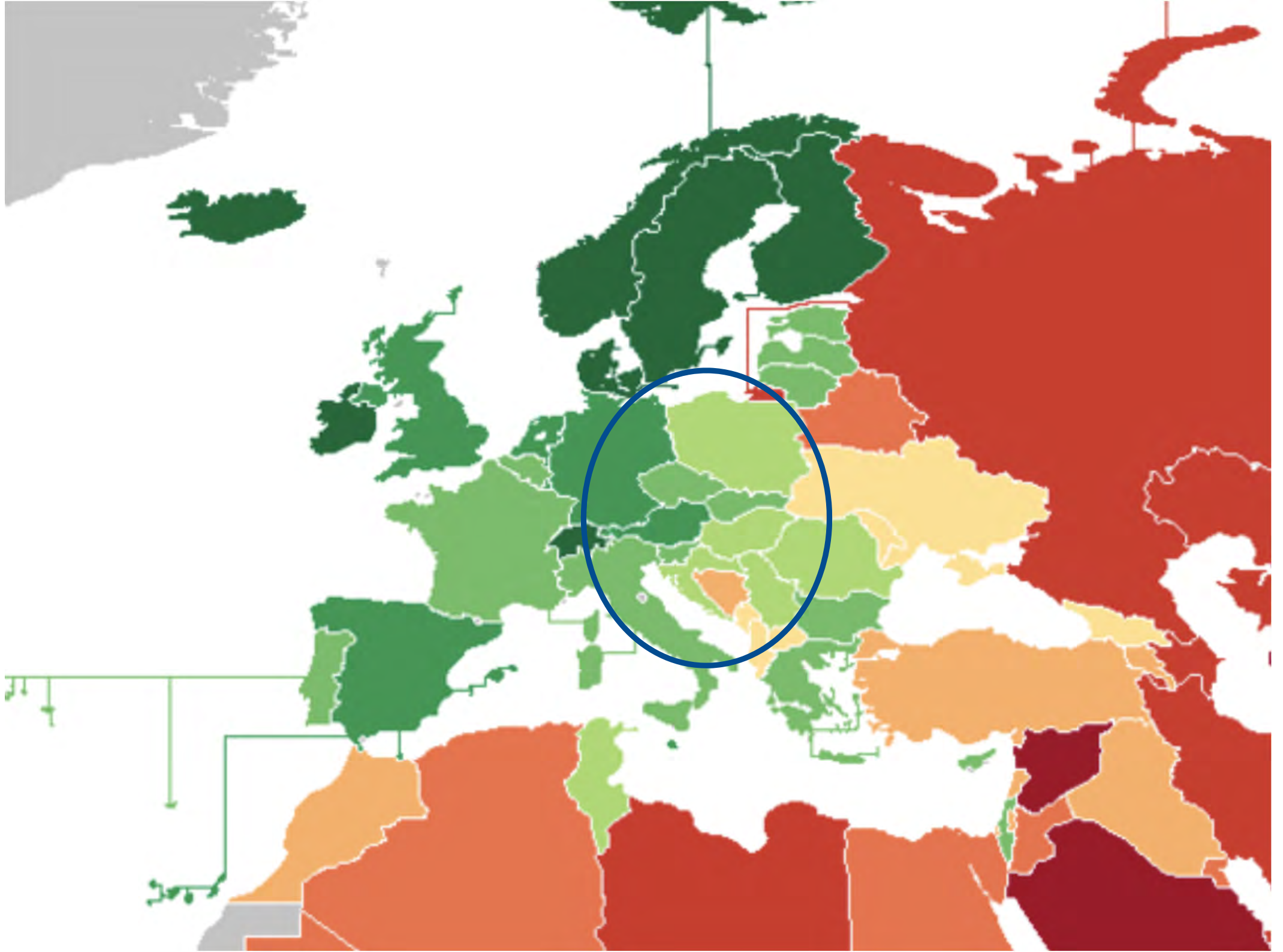
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- „In the European Union, in response to the ***Polish government’s efforts to undermine the independence of the judiciary and Orbán’s implementation of his “illiberal democracy” in Hungary***, the EU launched a process that could end with the imposition of political sanctions under article 7 of the EU Treaty.”
- „Poland is the largest recipient of EU funds, and Hungary is among the largest per capita recipients. Both the Polish and Hungarian governments have used these funds to their political advantage, so it is reasonable to ask whether the EU should continue to generously fund their attacks on the EU’s core democratic values.”

# Democracy Index 2018



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.



# Democracy index by region

Rank	Region	Countries	2006 <sup>[4]</sup>	2008 <sup>[13]</sup>	2010 <sup>[3]</sup>	2011 <sup>[14]</sup>	2012 <sup>[2]</sup>	2013 <sup>[15]</sup>	2014 <sup>[16]</sup>	2015 <sup>[6]</sup>	2016 <sup>[17]</sup>	2017 <sup>[18]</sup>	2018 <sup>[1]</sup>
1	Northern America	2	8.64	8.64	8.63	8.59	8.59	8.59	8.59	8.56	8.56	8.56	8.56
2	Western Europe	21	8.60	8.61	8.45	8.40	8.44	8.41	8.41	8.42	8.40	8.38	8.35
3	Latin America and the Caribbean	24	6.37	6.43	6.37	6.35	6.36	6.38	6.36	6.37	6.33	6.26	6.24
4	Asia and Australasia	28	5.44	5.58	5.53	5.51	5.56	5.61	5.70	5.74	5.74	5.63	5.67
5	Central and Eastern Europe	28	5.76	5.67	5.55	5.50	5.51	5.53	5.58	5.55	5.43	5.40	5.42
6	Sub-Saharan Africa	44	4.24	4.28	4.23	4.32	4.33	4.36	4.34	4.38	4.37	4.35	4.36
7	Middle East and North Africa	20	3.54	3.48	3.52	3.62	3.73	3.68	3.65	3.58	3.56	3.54	3.54
	<b>World</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>5.52</b>	<b>5.55</b>	<b>5.46</b>	<b>5.49</b>	<b>5.52</b>	<b>5.53</b>	<b>5.55</b>	<b>5.55</b>	<b>5.52</b>	<b>5.48</b>	<b>5.48</b>

# Freedom and the Media: A Downward Spiral

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## Key Findings

- Freedom of the media has been ***deteriorating around the world over the past decade.***
- While the threats to global media freedom are real and concerning in their own right, ***their impact on the state of democracy is what makes them truly dangerous***

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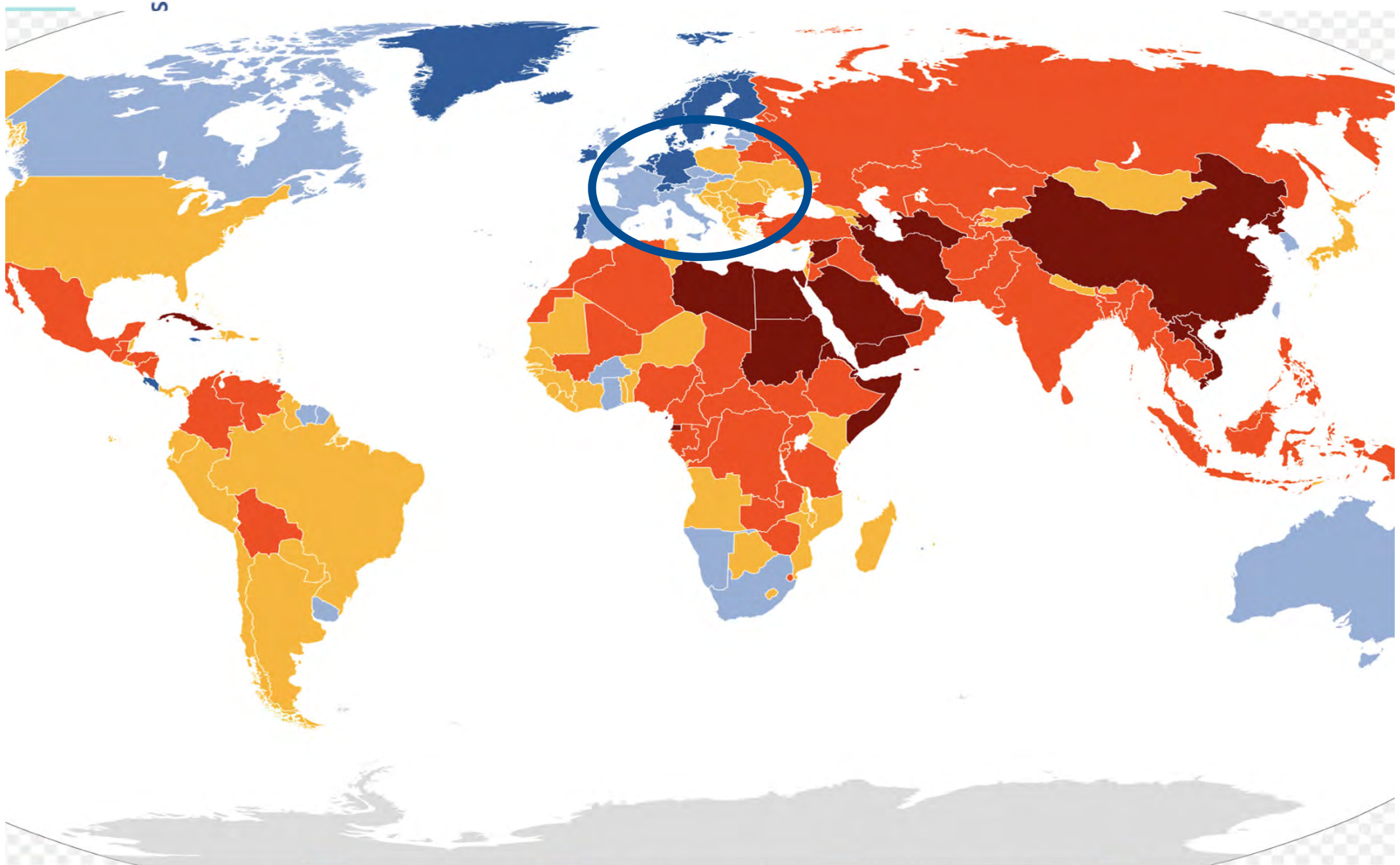
June 2019



FREEDOM AND THE MEDIA 2019:  
A Downward Spiral



# Freedom and the Media (Freedom House)



Very serious situation    Difficult situation    Noticeable problems    Satisfactory situation    Good situation



## Conclusion 1

Freedom and democracy indexes indicate strong trends of diminished freedom and democracy, of a dark time for human rights, of the tendency to undermine the institutions that protect freedom and democracy, including universities, and of declining media freedom....



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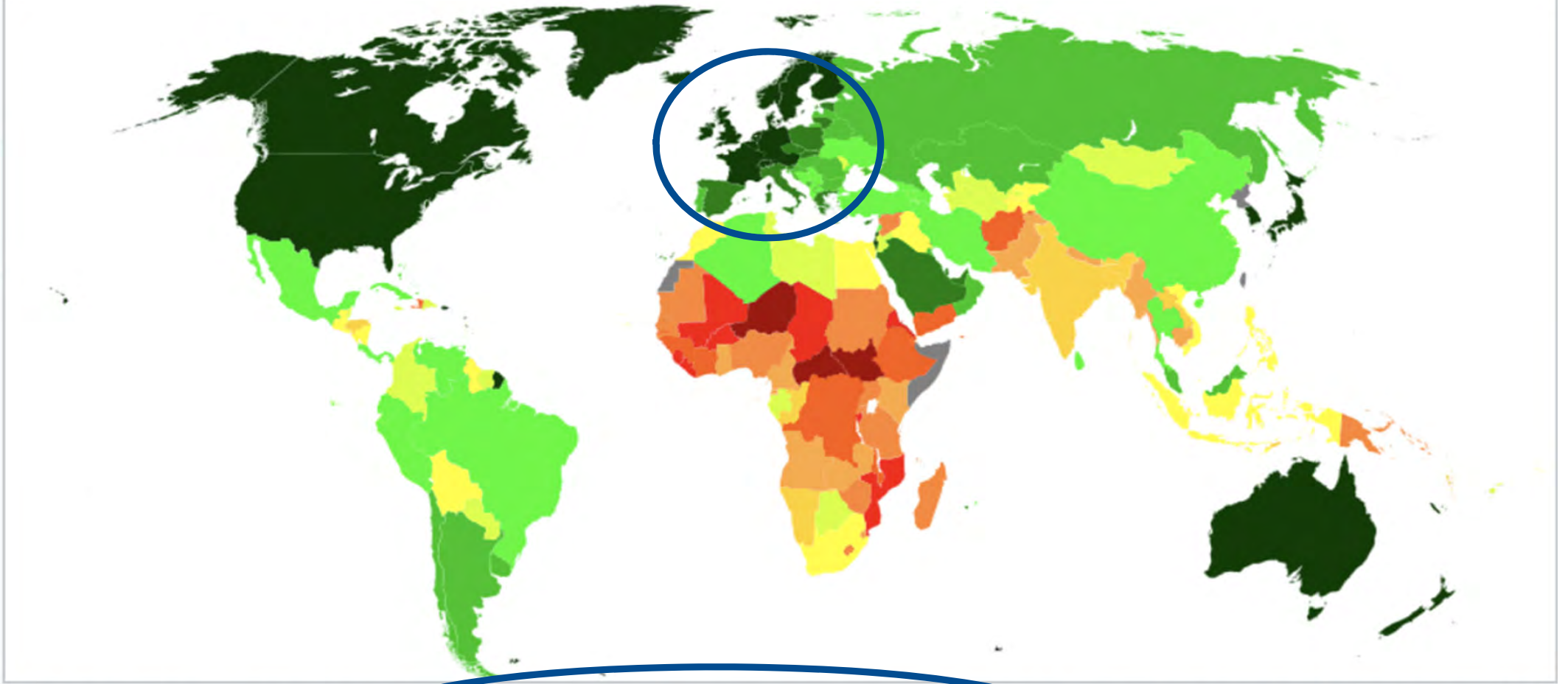


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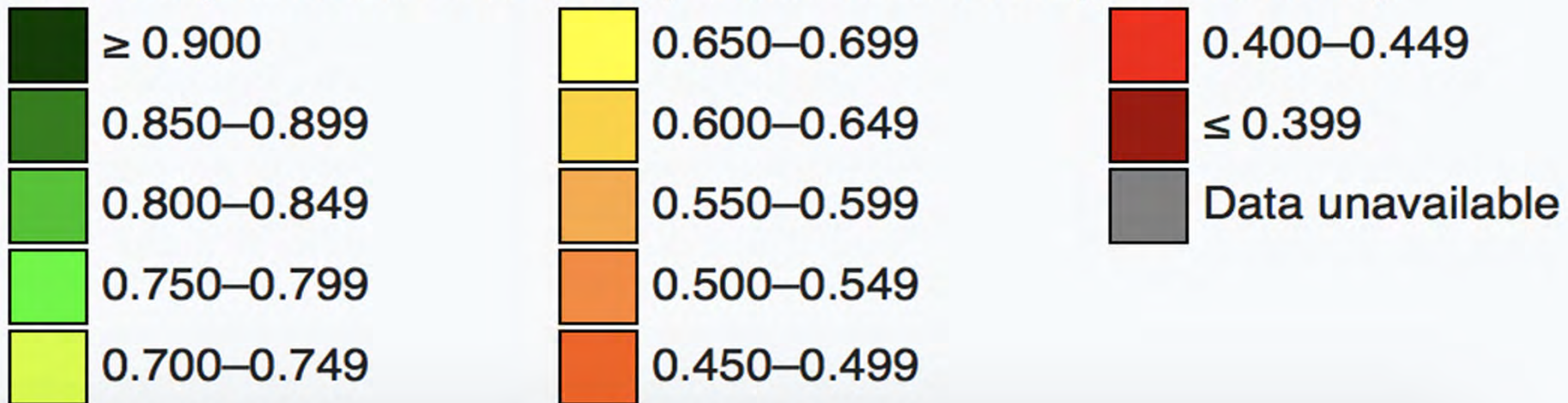


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## **2. A Correlation Between Democracy/Freedom And Scientific Results: Liberty Secures Science!**



World map of countries by Human Development Index categories in increments of 0.050 (based on 2017 data, published on 14 September 2018).



# European Quality of Life Index, 2019

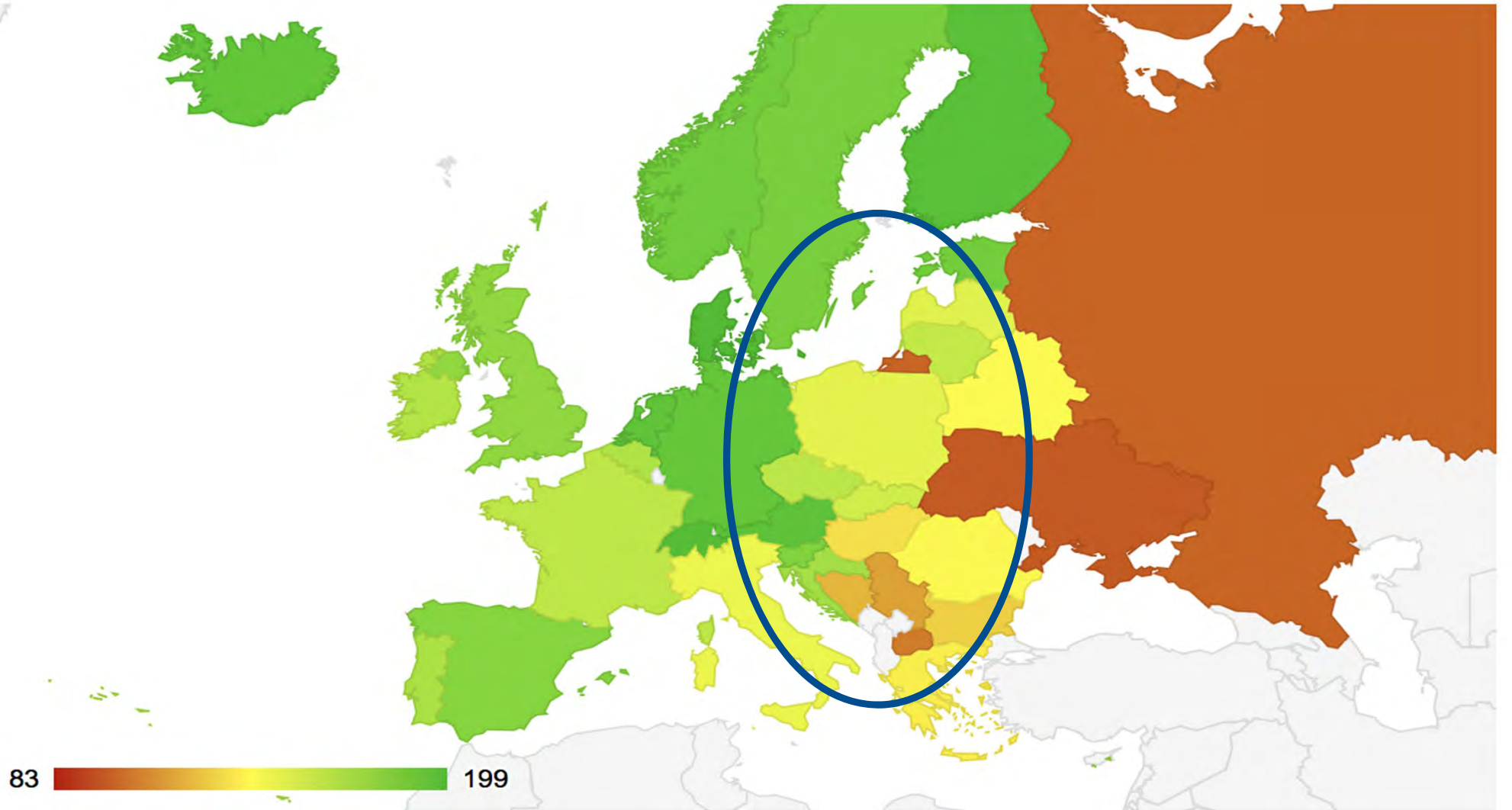
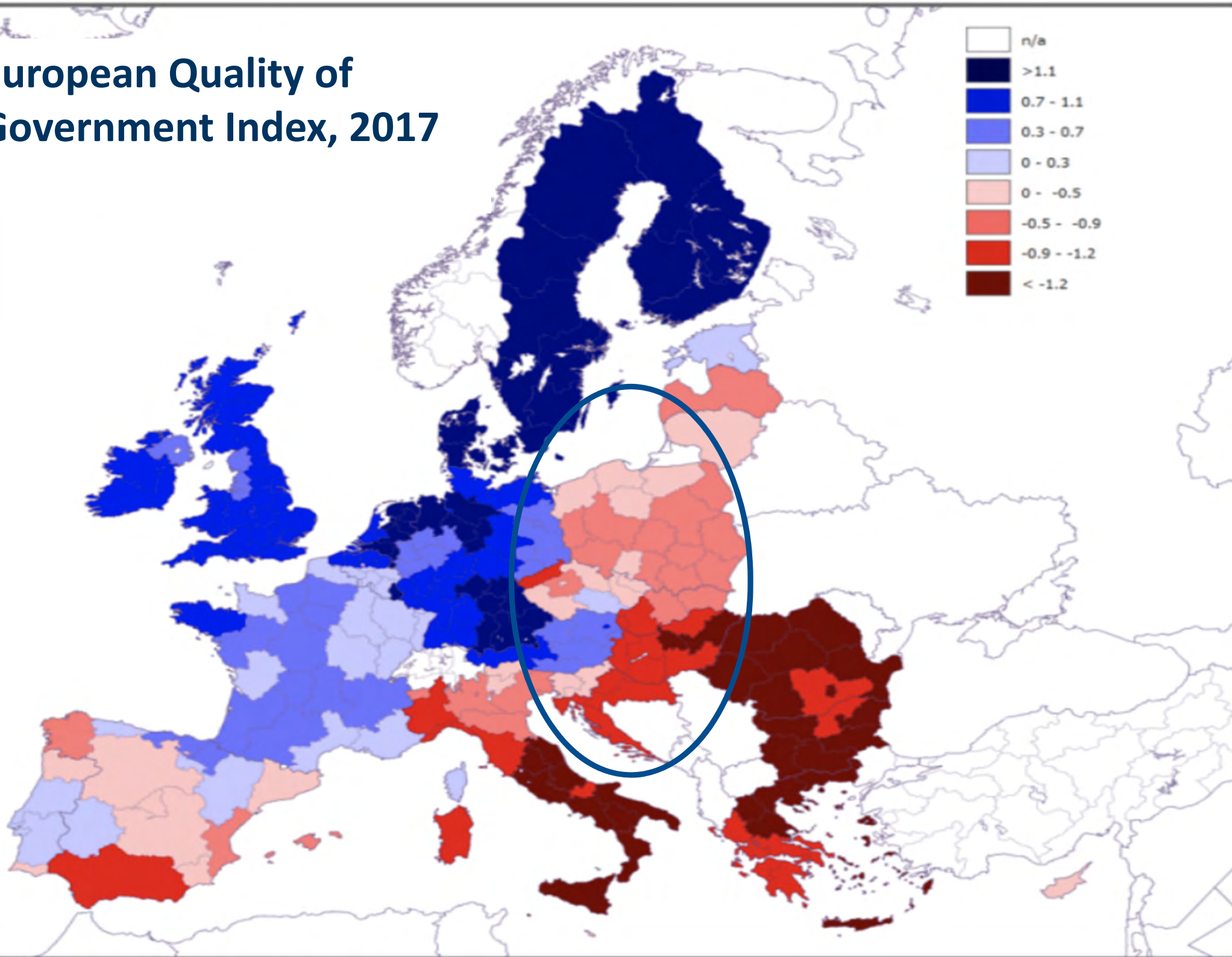
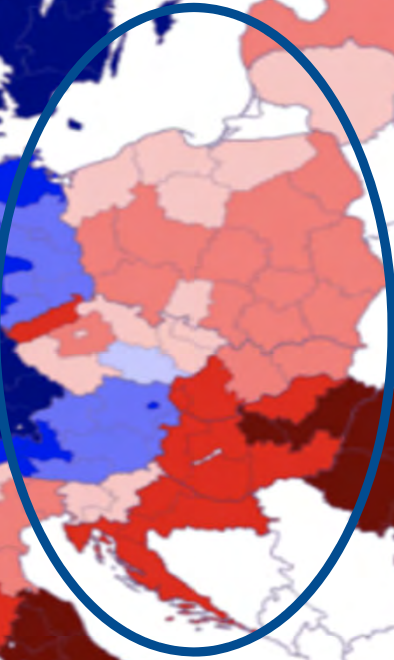
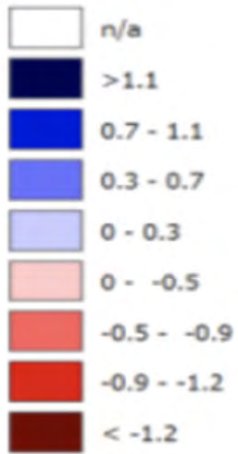


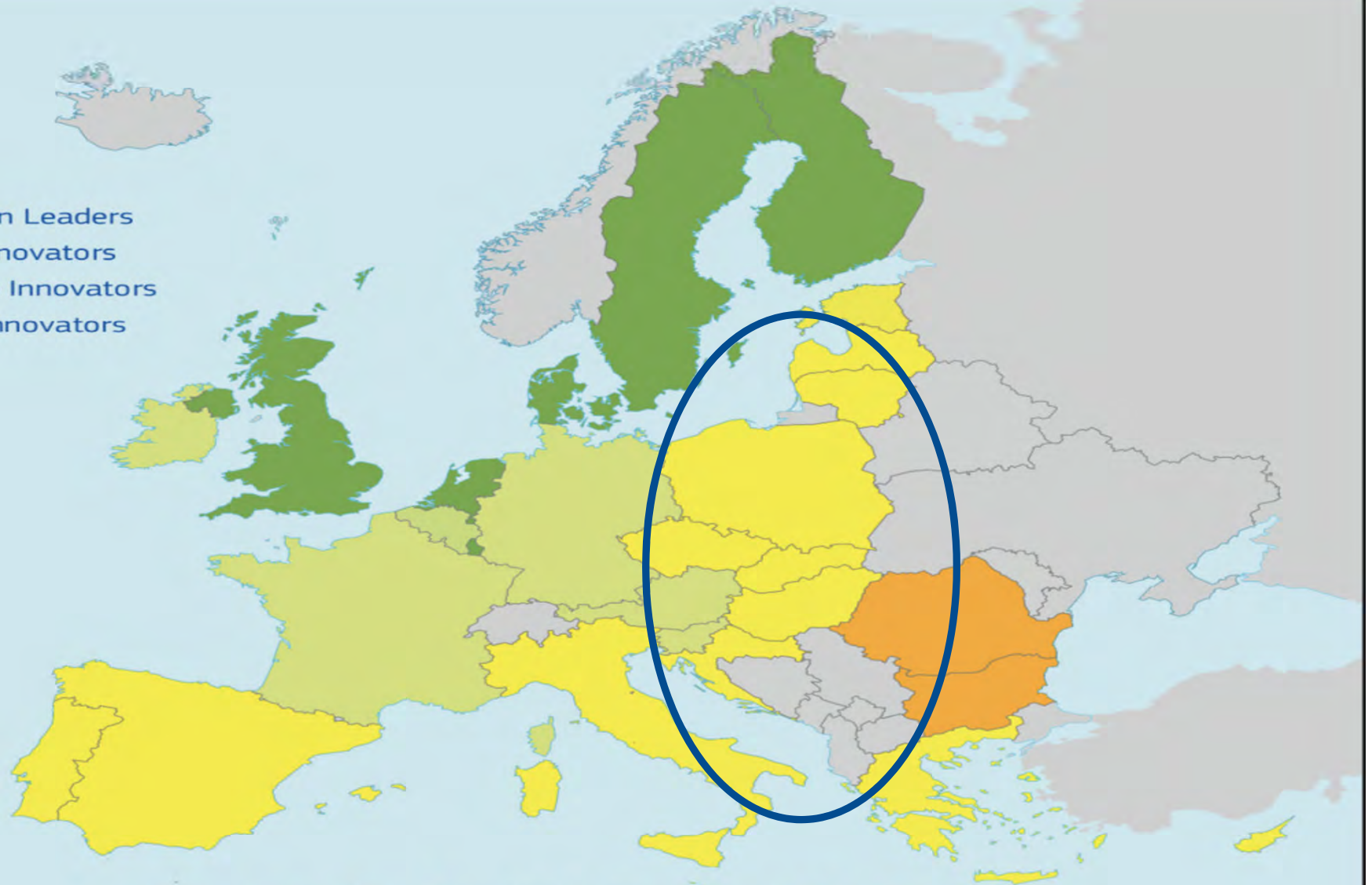
Chart: Quality of Life Index

# European Quality of Government Index, 2017



# 2018 European Innovation Scoreboard

- Innovation Leaders
- Strong Innovators
- Moderate Innovators
- Modest Innovators



Since 2010, the innovation performance improved in 18 EU countries

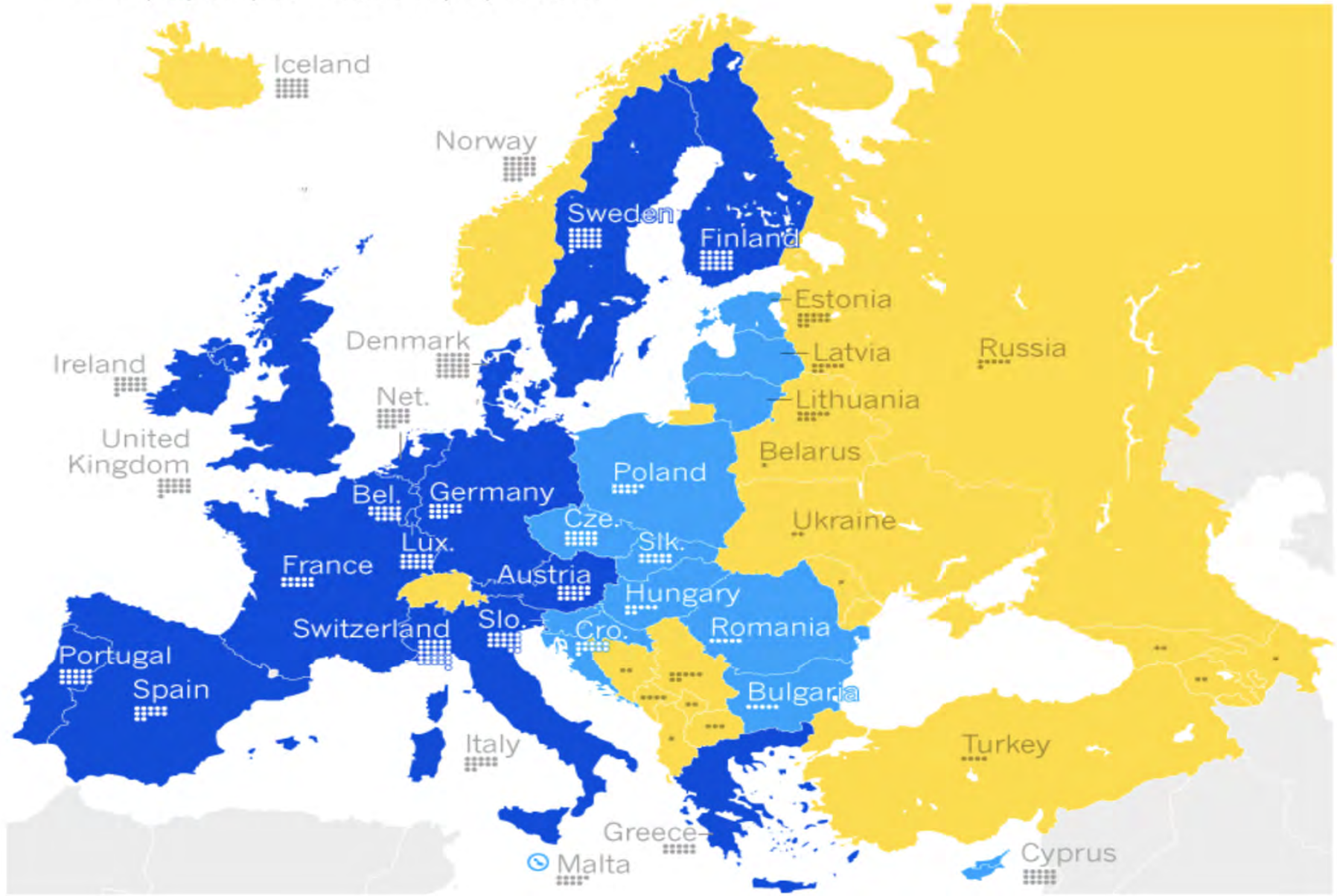
Armenia, Turkey and Russia bridge both Europe and Asia.)

EU member states:

■ **EU15**: before 2004    ■ **EU13**: joined since 2004

■ Other European countries

● = 1 paper per 10,000 population



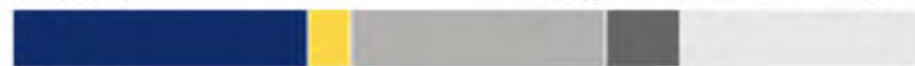
# ARTICLE OUTPUT

In 2003, the EU produced one-third of the world's papers\*, but by 2018 — because of faster growth in other countries — that proportion had shrunk to one-quarter.

■ EU28 ■ Rest of Europe ■ United States ■ China ■ Other

2003

Total: **1.2** million



2018

**2.6** million



EU15

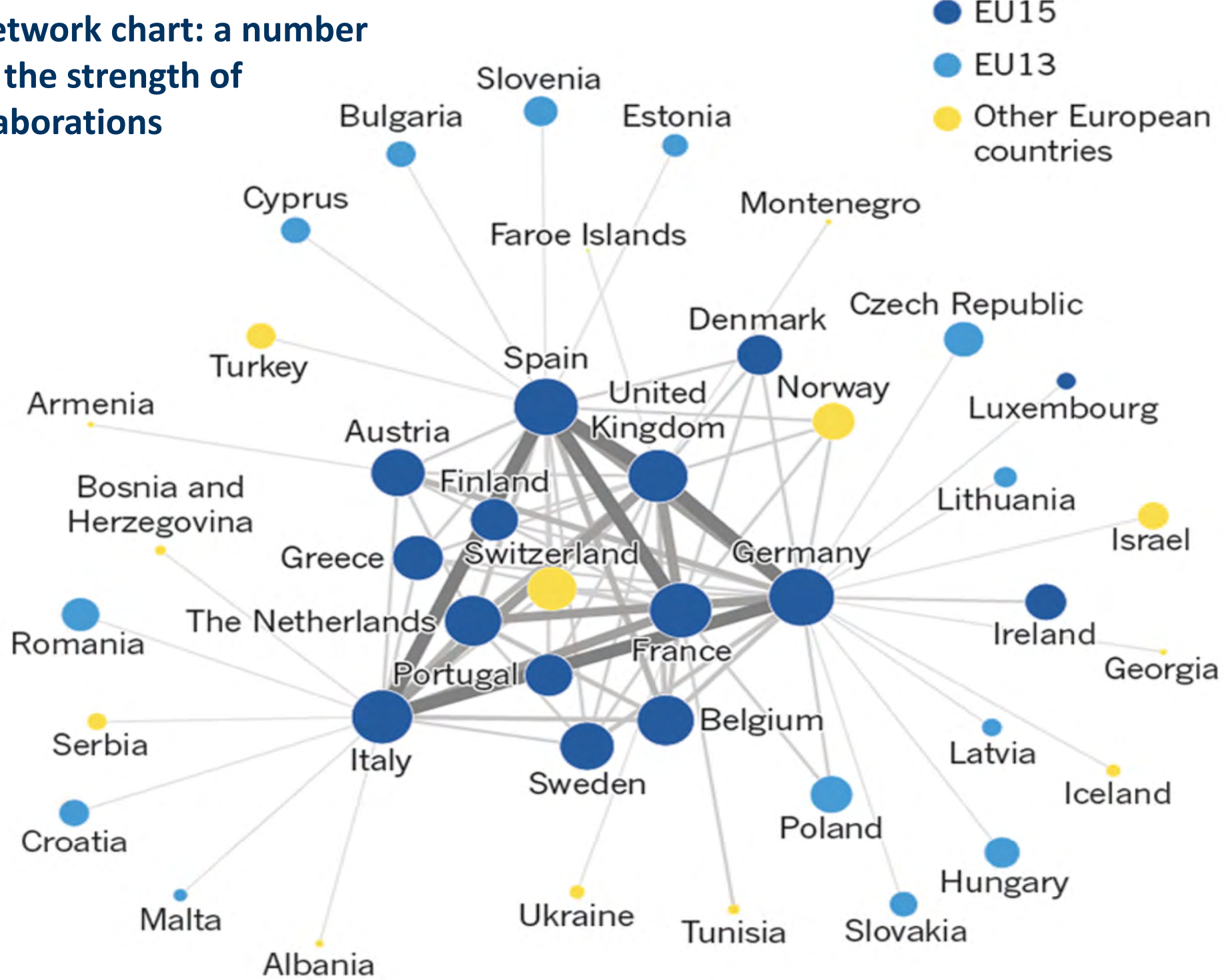


\*Papers assigned to countries fractionally by authors

@nature



# A network chart: a number and the strength of collaborations



## Conclusion 2: Correlations

1. Correlation between democracy and freedom on the one side and human development/quality of life/ quality of government on the other:  
***Democracy/liberty secures human development/ quality of life***
2. Correlation between the democracy/freedom index and the science innovation index: ***Democracy/liberty secures science***
3. ***Gap*** in both liberty/democratic practices and in research/innovation ***between Northern-Western and Central-Eastern Europe***



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**3. Can Science Secure Liberty?  
How To Overcome The Culture of Ignorance?  
How To Overcome The Crisis of Enlightenment?**

# The Culture of Ignorance



- **pseudo-scientific movements** - anti-vaxxers, creationism, conspiracy theories, climate changes deniers, etc.
- **scepticism about science**, which is often corelated with political ideology, religion, moral statements and possession of information about science (S. Lewandowsky, 2014)
- **anti-intellectualism** - the disparagement of ‘book-learning’, the abandonment of institutions and hard-won standards of knowledge that have served us since the Enlightenment, and that have brought us the living conditions we enjoy today; trust in shared opinion (‘common knowledge’) over expertise, and a rural suspicion towards urban life and values—these have long characterized a populist strain in public life (D. R. DeNicola, 2017)

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# The Culture of Ignorance Discounts the Value of Science



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- ***Ignorance*** is, in common usage, a lack of knowledge, by which we means *widespread, reprehensible ignorance of matters that are significant for our lives together.*
- ***Ignorance*** is reliance on stereotypes and prejudice, an evident disregard for rational and responsible decision-making, lack of awareness about cognitive and evidential limitations, radical intellectual egoism, etc.
- “(...) *the culture of ignorance reflects an elevation of will over reason, the loss of a credible concept of objectivity, and a radical change in democratic epistemology.*” (Daniel R. DeNicola, 2017)



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## Ignorance Becomes an Ideology: 'Ignorance's Truth'



- The culture of ignorance is being celebrated as an ideological stance:
- Instead of the values of intellectual responsibility and epistemic conscientiousness in searching for objective justification or for intellectual quality, there is now the idea of 'my own equally valuable truth'
- A strong claim for the legitimacy of private, special insights into "the real truth"—insider knowledge of conspiracies, information available only to the initiated, or truths "revealed" to individuals...



## What are the Causes behind the Culture of Ignorance?



- partisan political ideologies and practices/paritocracy
- the thrall of fundamentalist religion
- postmodern deconstructions of institutions and ideals, including truth and reason
- the conflation of news and entertainment, and misdirected attempts to offer “balanced” coverage by the media;
- the explosive mixture of cognitive biases and social media (echo chambers, Dunning-Kruger effect, common knowledge effect, selective exposure, etc.)
- the corruption of pure science by “sponsored” research and profit motives;
- “the silence of the rational center”;
- etc.

# The Culture of ignorance is symptom of a new crisis of Enlightenment



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- “There is nothing more frightening than ignorance in action.” (**J.W. Goethe**)
- „ And what is the most harmful influence upon man? Surely it is ignorance.” (**Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam**)
- “The most violent element in society is ignorance.” (**Emma Goldman**)



## Crisis of Enlightenment or Ignorance in Action



- **The contemporary crisis of democracy and liberty, marked by a renewal of authoritarianism and a decline from the civilizational values of universal human rights, inherited from the 20<sup>th</sup> century – rests upon a new crisis of Enlightenment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**
- The intellectual crisis of enlightenment at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was caused by resistance to science/reason, because it was a threat to traditional political authorities and to entrenched prejudice
- Against Pinker's optimism in *Enlightenment Now* (2018), I plead here for more Enlightenment

## What we need to do?



- **Immanuel Kant: „What is Enlightenment?”**
- “This Enlightenment requires nothing but *freedom*—(...): freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters.”
- **„But which restriction is harmful to Enlightenment? Which restriction is innocent, and which advances Enlightenment? I reply: the public use of one's reason must be free at all times, and this alone can bring Enlightenment to mankind.”**

## Conclusion 3: Science's Fight Against Ignorance Secures Liberty

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- **The predominant culture of ignorance speaks against the Enlightenment's 'Faith' in Science, Reason and Humanity**
- **Only Science and Education can ensure the New Enlightenment**
- **Science can secure Democracy/Liberty!**



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## 4. Universities for Enlightenment

# Universities for Enlightenment (Vienna Statement, 2018)



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- **“We have to express our concern at movements on the rise in Europe and beyond that threaten the democratic character of our institutions and societies. (...)**
  - Social disintegration and conflict are continuously challenging democratic principles. Our concerns are heightened against the background of increasing inequalities, nationalism, populism, racism, anti-Semitism, intolerance, polarization, and radicalization as well as pseudo-science and pseudo-facts and other threats to democratic and scientific culture.
- We, as higher education institutions and as pillars of society and democracy, strive to prevent and work against these developments with a strong commitment to Europe based on protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”



## Vienna Statement

Vienna, 13th of December 2018

# The Faith in Enlightenment is the Faith in Modern Universities



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- Different social contexts determine different roles and tasks for universities
- In democratic contexts, education and research have a ***preventative role (North Western Europe)***
- In situations where democracies undergo noticeable difficulties, universities are the most important means of ***social transformation (Central and South Europe)***
- In situations of real danger for democracy, universities have a ***protective role (East and South East Europe)***

## Conclusion 4: New Agenda for Enlightenment for European university networks

European university networks have to strengthen the agenda of Enlightenment through...

...transnational cooperation in education and research

- than can reduce or remove the dangerous gap between N/W and C/S and E/SE Europe

....widening participation to universities that are suffering from a noticeable lack of liberty and democracy

...the promotion of the universities' third mission of social responsibility and regional impact

...openness: open science, open education, open society (internationalization, accessibility, accountability....)

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## ...and through thinking beyond dichotomies...



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- STEM **and** SSH
- Big (capital, rich) **and** small (regional, poor) universities
- Excellence **and** diversity
- Research efficiency **and** social engagement
- Competition **and** Fundamental **and** applied research
- Academic success **and** academic values
- Social cohesion (openness and trust)
- Quantitative research metrics **and** responsible qualitative research metrics
- ...

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**Alpbach, August 21, 2019.**