Media freedom and pluralism

The European Union upholds media freedom and pluralism as pillars of modern democracy and enablers of free and open debate.

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Media freedom and pluralism ensure the flow of information and play a key role in holding power to account. The Commission has stepped up its work in this area, placing media freedom at the heart of its rule of law reporting and continuing to fund a variety of projects bringing tangible results. The Commission has also planned key initiatives to enhance the work and safety of journalists and adopted an action plan geared at fostering a viable media ecosystem.

The European Union's commitments to respect media freedom and pluralism and to uphold freedom of expression — which includes the right to receive and impart information without interference by public authority — are enshrined in Article 11 of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ%3AC%3A2010%3A083%3A0389%3A0403%3Aen%3APDF). which mirrors Article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=005&CL=ENG).
Legislation and the rule of law


The EMFA will:

- Protect editorial independence by requiring Member States to respect the effective editorial freedom of media service providers, while improving the protection of journalistic sources, including against the use of spyware.
- Ensure the independent functioning of public service media, including by guaranteeing adequate, sustainable and predictable financial resources and fostering transparency in appointing the Head or members of public service media management boards;
- Guarantee the transparency of media ownership through the disclosure of targeted information requirements (e.g. legal names, contact details, ownership);
- Provide safeguards against the unwarranted removal by Very Large Online Platforms (designated under the Digital Services Act) of media content produced according to professional standards but deemed incompatible with terms and conditions;
- Introduce a right of customisation of the media offer on devices and interfaces, such as connected TVs, enabling users to change the default settings to reflect their own preferences;
- Ensure Member States provide an assessment of the impact of key media market concentrations on media pluralism and editorial independence through media pluralism tests;
- Ensure more transparent audience measurement methodology for media service providers and advertisers, to limit the risk of inflated or biased audience data;
- Establish requirements for the allocation of state advertising to media service providers and online platforms, to ensure transparency and non-discrimination.


- In April 2022, the Commission published a Proposal for a Directive on strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP) (https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/proposal-directive-strategic-lawsuits-against-public-participation-slapp_en). Strategic lawsuits against public participation, commonly known as ‘SLAPPs’, are a particular form of harassment used primarily against journalists and human rights defenders to prevent or penalise speaking up on issues of public interest. The proposed Directive provides courts and targets of SLAPPs with the tools to fight back against manifestly unfounded or
abusive court proceedings. The proposed safeguards will apply in civil matters with cross-border implications.


- The Rule of Law Mechanism (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ganda_20_1757) dedicates a key section to media freedom and pluralism, which examines media regulatory authorities and bodies, the transparency of media ownership and government interference and the framework for the protection of journalists. The first Rule of Law report (https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-rule-law-report-communication-and-country-chapters_en), covering all 27 Member States, was published on 30 September 2020. It presents a synthesis of both the rule of law situation in the EU and an assessment of the situation in each Member State, focusing on four main pillars: the justice system, the anti-corruption framework, media pluralism, and other institutional checks and balances.

- The great power held by the largest online platforms justifies considering specific ex-ante rules to safeguard competition and consumer choice online. The Digital Services Act (https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package) significantly improves the mechanisms for the removal of illegal content and the effective protection of users’ fundamental rights online, including freedom of speech.


- The EU legislature adopted rules for a fairer marketplace with Article 17 of the new Copyright Directive (https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/copyright-legislation). These rules aim at helping right holders to be better placed regarding certain online sharing platforms. They ensure right holders receive a fairer remuneration for the use of their content. As to the new right for press publishers (Article 15 of the new Copyright Directive), this will foster plural, independent and quality journalism through a better bargaining position of press publishers towards online market players.

**Direct funding**

The EU funds numerous projects:

- Several ongoing or under preparation projects and calls
Projects run by the [European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)](https://www.ecpmf.eu/) and its partners geared at addressing violations of media freedom and pluralism in the EU Member States and candidate countries.

  1. basic protection
  2. market plurality
  3. political independence
  4. social inclusiveness


- The [Creative Europe programme](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/node_en) for 2021-2027, the planned budget of which will be approximately €2.5 billion, an 80% increase compared to the previous period (2014-2020) on an EU 27 basis. It will promote European cooperation on cultural diversity and industrial competitiveness for the cultural and creative sectors. A [call for journalism partnerships](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/crea-cross-2022-jourpart;callCode=null;freeTextSearchKeyword=journalism%20partnerships;matchWholeText=true;typeCodes=0,1,2,8;statusCodes=31094501,31094502;programmePeriod=null;programCcm2Id=null;programDivisionCode=null;focusAreaCode=null;destination=null;mission=null;geographicalZonesCode=null;programmeDivisionProspect=null;startDateLte=null;startDateGte=null;crossCuttingPriorityCode=null;cpvCode=null;performanceOfDelivery=null;sortQuery=sortStatus;orderBy=asc;onlyTenders=false;topicListKey=topicSearchTablePageState) aimed to promoting sector-wide, cross-border collaboration among news media professionals in Europe has been published. To increase funding and ensure long-term support for media freedom, pluralism and literacy projects, a dedicated envelope of at least €75 million has been secured from this programme.

**Support measures**

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission has put forward a [series of measures](https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/overview-commissions-responses-eu-en) to support the economy and has called on Member States to make the most of them to support the media sector.

- A [temporary state aid framework](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1872) was rapidly put in place and extended. A dedicated [state aid guiding template](https://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/what_is_new/template_RFF_digitisation_of_news_media.pdf) for the digitalisation of news media was also published to assist Member States in
the design of their national recovery and resilience plans.

- **REACT-EU** (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_20_948) financial support focuses additional cohesion funds on small and medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs) vital priorities, or creative SMEs in the cultural sector recognised as a priority. These funds include employment subsidies, short-term work schemes, and liquidity and solvency for SMEs.


- Existing tools have been adapted, including more flexibility in implementing the supported projects. For example, the existing [guarantee facility for SMEs in the cultural and creative sectors](https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/european-commission-and-european-investment-fund-announce-new-coronavirus-measures-businesses-under), including media, allows for more flexibility in repayments of loans and facilitates lending by giving more security to the financial institutions.

- The Commission adopted an [action plan to support the recovery and transformation](https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/europes-media-digital-decade-action-plan-support-recovery-and-transformation) of the media and audio-visual sector. These sectors, particularly hit by the coronavirus crisis, are essential for democracy, and Europe's cultural diversity and digital autonomy. The action plan focuses on 3 areas of activity and 10 concrete actions. These will help the media sector recover from the crisis by facilitating and broadening access to finance. They will also help the media sector transform by stimulating investments to embrace the twin digital and green transitions while ensuring the sector's future resilience. Finally, they will empower European citizens and companies.

### Council conclusions on media freedom and pluralism

On 7 December 2020, the Council of the European Union adopted [Conclusions on safeguarding a free and pluralistic media system](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020XG1207%2801%29).


### Colloquium on fundamental rights dedicated to media pluralism and democracy

In November 2016, the European Commission organised a [Colloquium on Fundamental Rights](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016XG1215%2801%29)
dedicated to Media Pluralism and Democracy. The debate was informed by discussion notes, a special Eurobarometer, as well as the results of a public consultation. The outcomes of the Colloquium were published in December 2016.

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News media industry, journalists and Member States take stock of progress in improving safety of journalists
On Monday 4 December 2023, Vice-President Jourová will open the fourth edition of the European News Media Forum in Brussels.

PRESS RELEASE | 25 October 2023
€11 million to support cross-border media collaborations and independent media

The Commission has launched a new call for proposals under Creative Europe for Journalism Partnerships, allocating a total of €11 million for two separate topics: cross-border media collaborations and funding schemes for independent media.

PRESS RELEASE | 27 September 2023
First report on the State of the Digital Decade calls for collective action to shape the digital transition

The first report on the State of the Digital Decade, published earlier this week, provides a comprehensive look at progress towards achieving the digital transformation to empower a more digitally sovereign, resilient, and competitive EU.

Info
Browse Media freedom and pluralism
The Commission is defending European media and digital culture with policies that empower citizens and encourage media pluralism.

Dig deeper

Monitoring media pluralism in the digital era
The Media Pluralism Monitor is a scientific tool designed to identify potential risks to media pluralism. Multimedia actions

The EU's multimedia actions aim to strengthen news reporting on EU affairs from European perspectives.

Media literacy

Media literacy has never been as important as it is today. It enables citizens of all ages to navigate the modern news environment and take informed decisions.

Tackling online disinformation

The Commission is tackling the spread of online disinformation and misinformation to ensure the protection of European values and democratic systems.

See Also

Virtual Worlds fit for people

Virtual worlds, also referred to as metaverses, will provide opportunities as well as challenges. The Commission will ensure they reflect EU values and fundamental rights and foster innovation for businesses.

Audiovisual and Media Services

These days we can watch our favourite programmes not just on TV, but also online. These shows are subject to the rules of the single market.

Supporting media and digital culture

The Commission is promoting a coherent approach on media policies, covering legislation on media services and the preservation of European cultural heritage.

Digital cultural heritage
Cultural heritage is evolving rapidly thanks to digital technologies. The momentum is now to preserve our cultural heritage and bring it to this digital decade.


The European Commission is adapting EU copyright rules to new consumer behaviours in a Europe which values its cultural diversity.

Source URL: https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/policies/media-freedom