
EU must help safeguard media independence

- More support for public service providers and investigative journalism
- Create independent regulatory body to monitor and report threats against journalists
- Invest in education to improve media and digital literacy

EU member states should “create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and secure environment for journalists”, Civil Liberties MEPs said on Tuesday.

The non-legislative resolution drafted by Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL, IT) was approved by 44 votes to 3, with 4 abstentions.

MEPs ask member states to ensure adequate public funding to safeguard and promote pluralist, independent and free media. They also ask them to strengthen financial support to public service providers and investigative journalism, while refraining from involvement in editorial decisions.

Regular scrutiny of freedom for expression

To protect journalists from violence and threats, an independent and impartial regulatory body should be set up, in cooperation with journalists’ organisations, to monitor and report on violence. Journalists whose freedom to work has been threatened need effective legal procedures to be able to avoid self-censorship, adds the text.

Cyberbullying, revenge porn and child sexual abuse

MEPs are concerned about the growth of cyberbullying, revenge porn and child sexual abuse and reiterate that mass media must fully respect the interests and rights of minors. They call for legislation, including provisions for detection, flagging and removal from social media of content which is harmful to human dignity.

Anonymity and encryption: essential tools for the exercise of democratic rights and freedoms

MEPs stressed that restrictions on encryption and anonymity must be legal, necessary and proportionate.

‘Fake’ news: verifying facts is easier in the digital age

The text notes that the use of the term “fake news” should “*never be aimed at undermining public trust in the media and at discrediting and criminalising critical voices*”.

To foster objective information and protect it, Civil Liberties Committee members encourage social media companies and online platforms to develop tools for users to report and flag potential fake news, facilitate rectification and allow for reviews by independent and impartial certified third party fact-checking organisations.

Finally, MEPs call on member states to integrate media and information literacy into national education systems.

Quote

Rapporteur Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL, IT): "The crucial point of reference of the report is article 19 [ICCPR](#) and the [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#). I tried to stress that concepts like "fake news" are vague, increasingly applied to the internet sphere alone. I tried to adhere as much as possible to the [Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and "Fake News", Disinformation and Propaganda](#) with which I share the view that the human right to impart information and ideas cannot be limited to "correct" statements, but also "protects information and ideas that may shock, offend and disturb". The report stresses the need to protect whistleblowers and encryption-related rights, calls for the chilling effects of defamation laws to be recognised, warns against arbitrary impositions of states of emergency and insists on the opportunity to invest in digital literacy to empower citizens and online users. All political groups agreed that any restriction has to be embedded in and respect the requirements of international law".

Procedure: Non-legislative resolution

Further information

[Civil liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee](#)

[Rapporteur Barbara Spinelli \(GUE, IT\)](#)

[Video recording of the debate \(19.02.2018\)](#)

[Multimedia package: press freedom in the EU](#)

[Video: extracts from the vote and statement by Rapporteur](#)

[Procedure file](#)

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