
Tackle online and offline threats to media pluralism and freedom, urge MEPs

- Lend more support to public service providers and investigative journalists
- Create independent regulatory body to monitor and report threats against journalists
- Propose EU rules to prevent gagging lawsuits

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

The non-legislative resolution, drafted by Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL, IT), was approved by 488 votes to 43, with 114 abstentions.

MEPs call on the EU Commission to allocate permanent and adequate EU budget funding to support the [Media Pluralism Monitor at the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom](#) and create an independent monitoring mechanism to assess risks to media pluralism and freedom in the EU.

They also ask EU member states to step up financial support to public service providers and investigative journalists, while refraining from involvement in editorial decisions. All public funding provided to media owners should be regularly monitored, adds the text. MEPs reiterate their call for neutral VAT treatment of all media (e.g. not discriminating between paper and online news), as recommended in their [resolution of 2011](#).

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, notes 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 rules on the detection, flagging and removal from social media of content that is harmful to human dignity.

"Fakenews": facilitate fact checking

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 and protect objective information, MEPs 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 the EU Commission to propose an Anti-SLAPP (strategic lawsuit against public participation) Directive that would protect the independent media against lawsuits intended merely to silence or intimidate them in the EU.

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 misleading, and are 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 and receive information and ideas cannot be limited to supposedly “correct” statements, but must also “protect information and ideas that may shock, offend and disturb”.

The report stresses the need to protect whistle-blowers and encryption-related rights, calls for the chilling effects of defamation laws to be recognised, warns against the arbitrary imposition of states of emergency and insists on the desirability of investing in digital literacy to empower citizens and online users.

Any restrictions on freedom of expression or the pluralism of the media and internet content must respect the requirements of international law and the three principles of necessity, proportionality and legitimacy.”

Further information

[Adopted text will be available here \(03.05.2018.\)](#)

[Video recording of the debate \(02.05.2018\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[EP research service: Media pluralism and media freedom in the EU](#)

[EP research service briefing: Press freedom in the EU: Legal framework and challenges](#)

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