DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

on Strengthening Democracy and Media Freedom and Pluralism in the EU: the undue use of actions under civil and criminal law to silence journalists, NGOs and civil society (2021/2036(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion (*): Loucas Fourlas

(*) Associated committee – Rule 57 of the Rules of Procedure
SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, as the committees responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into their motion for a resolution:

1. Underlines that an independent, impartial, professional and responsible media is a key pillar of democracy; expresses serious concerns about the situation in some Member States whereby media laws allow for greater political interference;

2. Is concerned that the current COVID-19 pandemic not only continues to have a significant negative impact on public health, social welfare and the economy, but also entails a serious threat to media freedom; warns that governments across the world could use the coronavirus emergency as an excuse to implement draconian new restrictions on freedom of expression and tighten media censorship; calls on the Commission to mobilise funds to encourage anti-corruption investigative journalism;

3. Highlights that Reporters Without Borders\(^1\) argue that the next decade will be crucial for ensuring the preservation of media freedom, as it is often threatened by the rise of populist governments; calls on the Member States and the Commission to enforce a legal framework to protect journalists and their sources;

4. Calls on the Commission to propose a directive against strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) in order to protect independent media and journalists from vexatious lawsuits intended to silence or intimidate them;

5. Is concerned about the increase in online hate speech, notably against freedom of the press and freedom of expression; stresses the need for better cooperation between authorities and online platform service providers in order to combat hate speech, without destabilising the fundamental right to freedom of expression;

6. Calls on the Member States to guarantee that the public service media is free from censorship and political influence; invites the Member States, in this regard, to establish the necessary regulatory frameworks to monitor media ownership and ensure full transparency;

7. Encourages the Member States to introduce effective measures to ensure better protection for the personal safety of journalists, in particular investigative journalists.

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\(^1\) 2020 World Press Freedom Index.