DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Foreign Affairs

on the protection of journalists around the world and the European Union’s policy on the matter (2022/2057(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Maria Walsh
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The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Recalls that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and includes the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers; deprecates, however, that some governments and individuals in positions of power around the globe are systematically threatening this right;

2. Notes with regret that there has been a rise in violence towards journalists and media professionals, which is increasingly happening in countries officially at peace and is creating a general sense of insecurity; deprecates that 57 journalists have been killed in 2022\(^1\), 78 journalists are being held hostage and 478 journalists are currently imprisoned\(^2\); demands that all detained journalists be released immediately;

3. Highlights that the freedom of media and media pluralism have increasingly come under threat in recent years with globalisation of media streams, and that disinformation and propaganda are growing trends in the media landscape worldwide; notes that this trend has been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war against Ukraine; believes that this situation should be considered a general threat to the values the European Union stands for as a global actor and to democracy as a whole;

4. Calls on the EU and the Member States to re-evaluate the profound links between media freedom and democracy and identify pathways to rebuild safe spaces for information and communication with a particular focus on education for information and media literacy;

5. Believes that in order to improve its external governance, the EU needs to lead by example and deliver on its domestic media policy ambitions; welcomes, in this context, the adoption of the Digital Services Act\(^3\), and the recently published proposals for a directive against ‘strategic lawsuits against public participation’ (the anti-SLAPP directive) (COM(2022)0177) and the European Media Freedom Act (COM(2022)0457), which are signs the EU is taking a more robust approach to media policies;

6. Calls on the Commission to include suspension mechanisms in the EU’s multilateral and bilateral partnership or trade agreements; invites the Commission to support and monitor media freedom and use targeted sanctions or suspend agreements in the event of persistent and systematic violation of media freedom;

\(^1\) [https://cpj.org/data/killed/2022/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&motiveUnconfirmed%5B%5D=Unconfirmed&type%5B%5D=Media%20Worker&start_year=2022&end_year=2022&group_by=location]

\(^2\) [https://rsf.org/en/number-journalists-arbitrary-detention-surges-20-488-including-60-women]

\(^3\) [OJ L 277, 27.10.2022, p. 1]
7. Recalls that the Russian disinformation campaign before and during the war on Ukraine has triggered urgent sanctions that are partially being evaded by state media; calls therefore for an appropriate and sustainable legal framework establishing a free information space protection mechanism based on the reciprocity of openness requirements; believes that this mechanism should be built on two pillars: 1) equal treatment – for all audio-visual outlets broadcasting on EU territory; 2) reciprocity – openness of public space for EU broadcasters in third countries and territories.