

**Question for written answer E-000474/2023/rev.1
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Kosma Złotowski (ECR)

Subject: Publication of newspapers and media by local authorities and EU law

Bydgoszcz city council publishes a free newspaper and has a website, 'Bydgoszcz Informuje'. These are not just newsletters, but actual press titles that compete with local media. As Poland's Local Newspapers Association points out, such practices by local governments could lead to the collapse of independent titles.

In the context of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights¹ and Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights², as well as ECHR rulings emphasising everyone's right to receive information without interference from public authorities, the publishing of newspapers and media by local authorities raises a number of concerns.

In the case of the magazine and website published by the Bydgoszcz authorities, both the editor-in-chief and the content editors are city council employees. The authors report to the mayor and are bound by the Code of ethics of local government employees³, Chapter 2 of which stipulates that their loyalties must lie with their office and their superiors. At the same time, they are the first to have access to a wide range of information related to the activities of the city authorities – information to which other local commercial media organisations do not have access. What is more, their budget is not dependent on market factors.

What is the Commission's position on this?

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¹ https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>

³ https://archiwumbip.um.bydgoszcz.pl/kodeks_etyki/index.htm