

**Question for written answer P-000403/2016  
to the Commission**  
Rule 130  
**Zoltán Balczó (NI)**

Subject: Press freedom in Germany

The Commission has launched a preliminary investigation under the rule-of-law mechanism to find out whether the laws drawn up in Warsaw comply with the fundamental values of the EU. This is the first time the Commission has applied this mechanism, which may result in the country concerned having its voting rights suspended. One contentious area is the statutory amendment of media relations and the supposed restriction of press freedom.

Serious concerns have also recently come to light with regard to the independence of the media in Germany. As Udo Ulfkotte, former leading writer in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, reported in his revealing (and self-revealing) documentary book entitled 'Journalists Bought Off', the German media operate under the direct and indirect influence of the secret services, which leads to public opinion being misled. A flagrant case of the violation of objective reporting was the suppression and manipulation by the media – with the help of the police – of the basic facts and circumstances of the events in Cologne on New Year's Eve. This constitutes a violation of the fundamental values of the EU in its most highly-populated country, known for its decisiveness.

On the basis of the above, I would like to ask the following:

1. In your opinion, did the German media violate the fundamental values of the EU with its delayed, manipulated reporting of the events in Cologne?
2. On the basis of the concerns referred to above, does the Commission intend to launch a preliminary investigation into the situation of press freedom in Germany?