Basic information

2017/2209(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union **Subject** 3.30.08 Press, media freedom and pluralism	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
LIBE Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	SPINELLI Barbara (GUE/NGL)	11/10/2017
	Shadow rapporteur MELO Nuno (PPE) CHINNICI Caterina (S&D) JUREK Marek (ECR) PAGAZAURTUNDÚA Maite (ALDE) TERRICABRAS Josep-Maria (Verts/ALE) MEUTHEN Jörg (EFDD) ZIJLSTRA Auke (ENF)	

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
CULT Culture and Education (Associated committee)	MALTESE Curzio (GUE/NGL)	29/09/2017
JURI Legal Affairs	HAUTALA Heidi (Verts/ALE)	09/10/2017

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Communication	NAVRACSICS Tibor

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary

05/10/2017	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
05/10/2017	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
27/03/2018	Vote in committee		
12/04/2018	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0144/2018	Summary
02/05/2018	Debate in Parliament		
03/05/2018	Decision by Parliament	T8-0204/2018	Summary
03/05/2018	Results of vote in Parliament		
03/05/2018	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2017/2209(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	LIBE/8/11139

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE613.557	08/12/2017	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE616.869	30/01/2018	
Committee opinion	JURI	PE615.361	01/03/2018	
Committee opinion	CULT	PE612.242	05/03/2018	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0144/2018	12/04/2018	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0204/2018	03/05/2018	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2018)482	21/09/2018	

Media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union

2017/2209(INI) - 12/04/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Barbara SPINELLI (GUE/NGL, IT) on media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union.

The Committee on Culture and Education, exercising its prerogative as an associated committee in accordance with Article 54 of the Rules of Procedure, also gave its opinion on the report.

The report noted that media freedom, pluralism and independence are crucial components of the right to freedom of expression. The media play an essential role in democratic society. The scope of such a role should be enlarged to encompass online and citizen journalism, as well as the work of bloggers, internet users, social media activists and human rights defenders, in order to reflect today's profoundly changed media reality while respecting the right to privacy.

Moreover, fake news, cyberbullying and revenge porn represent growing concerns for our societies, especially among young people.

Recent political developments in various Member States, where nationalism and populism are on the rise, have led to increased pressures on and threats against journalists, which show that the European Union must ensure, promote and defend media freedom and pluralism.

Increased funding: Members called on the Member States to take appropriate measures, including ensuring **adequate public funding**, to safeguard and promote a pluralist, independent and free media landscape.

Violence and threats against journalists: expressing deep concern at the abuses, crimes and deadly attacks still being committed against journalists and media workers in the Member States because of their activities, Members called on the Member States to do their utmost to prevent such violence, to ensure accountability and avoid impunity and to guarantee that victims and their families have access to the appropriate legal remedies. They also called on Member States to set up an independent and impartial **regulatory body**, in cooperation with journalists' organisations, for monitoring, documenting and reporting on violence and threats against journalists and to deal with the protection and safety of journalists at national level.

Members also expressed concern over the deteriorating working conditions for journalists and the amount of psychological violence that journalists witness and called on the Member States to set up **national action plans**, in close cooperation with journalist organisations, to improve the working conditions of journalists and to ensure that journalists will not be victims of psychological violence.

In particular, the report highlighted the state of media freedom in Malta following the assassination of anti-corruption journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia in October 2017, who was also subjected to harassment, including precautionary warrants freezing her bank accounts, and threats made by multinational companies. Members welcomed the decision to name the European Parliament's press room and an annual prize for investigative journalism after her.

The report also underlined the importance of ensuring adequate working conditions for journalists and media workers.

Digitalisation and cyberbullying: Members recognise that the new digital environment has exacerbated the problem of the spread of disinformation, or so-called 'fake' or 'false' news. In this regard, they encouraged social media companies and online platforms to develop tools to enable users to report and flag potential fake news in order to facilitate prompt rectification and to allow for review by independent and impartial certified third party fact checking organisations.

Reiterating that **cyberbullying**, revenge porn and child sexual abuse material are a growing concern in our societies and can have extremely serious impacts, especially on young people and children, Members encouraged all Member States to draw up forward-looking legislation to address these phenomena, including provisions for detection, flagging and removal from social media of content which is manifestly harmful to human dignity.

Whistleblowers: Members reiterated their call on the Commission and the Member States to set up and implement an adequate, advanced and **comprehensive framework for common European legislation to protect whistleblowers.** They also called for journalists to be given proper tools to inquire and receive information from EU and Member States' public administration authorities, according to Regulation 1049/2001 on public access to documents, without facing arbitrary decisions denying such right of access.

Member States are called on to adopt and implement a **media ownership regulation** in order to avoid horizontal concentration of ownership in the media sector and indirect and cross-media ownership, and to guarantee transparency, disclosure, and easy accessibility for citizens to information on media ownership, funding sources and management.

The Commission is called on to:

- allocate permanent and adequate funding in the EU budget to support the Media Pluralism Monitor at the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, and to create an annual mechanism for the assessment of the risks to media pluralism in the Member States;
- monitor and collect information and statistics on media freedom and pluralism within all Member States and to closely analyse cases of the infringement of the fundamental rights of journalists.

Lastly, Members stressed the need to **abolish geoblocking of information media content**, thereby allowing EU citizens to access online, on-demand and replay streaming of other Member States' television channels.

Media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union

2017/2209(INI) - 03/05/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 488 votes to 43, with 114 abstentions, a resolution on media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union.

Members recalled that media freedom, pluralism and independence are crucial components of the right to freedom of expression. However, recent political developments in various Member States, where nationalism and populism are on the rise, have led to increased pressures on and threats against journalists.

Parliament called on the EU institutions to guarantee full implementation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in all their decisions, actions and policies, as a means to thoroughly uphold media pluralism and media freedom from undue influence from national public authorities.

Increased funding: Parliament called on the Member States to take appropriate measures, including ensuring **adequate public funding**, to safeguard and promote a pluralist, independent and free media landscape. It asked the Commission and the Member States to promote and elaborate new socially sustainable economic models aimed at financing and supporting quality and **independent journalism** and to strengthen financial support to public service providers and **investigative journalism** while refraining from involvement in editorial decisions.

Violence and threats against journalists: in order to prevent crimes and deadly attacks against journalists and media professionals in the Member States because of their activities, Members urged Member States to set up **an independent and impartial regulatory body** to report violence and threats against journalists and to ensure the protection and safety of journalists at national level. They stressed the importance of ensuring efficient legal recourse procedures for journalists whose freedom to work has been threatened, so as to avoid self-censorship.

The Commission is invited to propose an **anti-SLAPP Directive** (strategic lawsuit against public participation) that would protect independent media from vexatious lawsuits aimed at silencing or intimidating them in the EU.

Fake news and cyberbullying: Members recognised that the new digital environment has exacerbated the problem of the spread of disinformation, or so-called 'fake' or 'false' news. In this regard, they encouraged social media companies and online platforms to **develop tools to enable users to report and flag potential fake news** in order to facilitate prompt rectification and to allow for review by independent and impartial certified third party fact checking organisations.

Parliament reiterated that **cyberbullying, revenge porn and child sexual abuse material** are a growing concern in our societies and can have extremely serious impacts, especially on young people and children. The resolution encouraged all Member States to draw up forward-looking legislation to address these phenomena, including provisions for detection, flagging and removal from social media of content which is manifestly harmful to human dignity.

Whistleblowers: Members reiterated their call on the Commission and the Member States to set up and implement an adequate, advanced and comprehensive framework for common European legislation to protect whistleblowers. They also called for journalists to be given proper tools to inquire and receive information from EU and Member States' public administration authorities, according to Regulation 1049/2001 on public access to documents, without facing arbitrary decisions denying such right of access.

Media ownership: Member States are called on to adopt and implement a media ownership regulation in order to avoid horizontal concentration of ownership in the media sector and indirect and cross-media ownership, and to guarantee transparency, disclosure, and easy accessibility for citizens to information on media ownership, funding sources and management. Members stressed the need to have in place independent monitoring mechanisms to assess the situation of media freedom and media pluralism in the EU.

The Commission is called on to:

- allocate permanent and adequate funding in the EU budget to support the Media Pluralism Monitor at the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, and to create an annual mechanism for the assessment of the risks to media pluralism in the Member States;
- monitor and collect information and statistics on media freedom and pluralism within all Member States and to closely analyse cases of the infringement of the fundamental rights of journalists.

Lastly, Members stressed the need to **abolish geoblocking** of information media content, thereby allowing EU citizens to access online, on-demand and replay streaming of other Member States' television channels.