

Europe needs journalism

This manifesto by the European Federation of Journalists provides recommendations to MEP candidates to help promote media freedom, media pluralism and 'quality' journalism within all EU member states, candidate countries and beyond.

At the European level, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights promotes freedom of expression, media freedom and media pluralism. However, journalism and journalists are increasingly under pressure.

Four journalists were killed within the European Union in the last two years, this by itself is an unprecedented attack on our values.

The financial sustainability of independent media is at stake, media concentration is on the rise and the increasing power of the internet platforms caused an unprecedented threat to our news and information ecosystem lacking accountability, transparency and regulation.

The European Commission's High-Level Group (HLEG) on disinformation has reiterated the need to invest in quality journalism, the need for media literacy, pluralism and sustainability and innovation in media.

The European Parliament has been the champion in advocating for media freedom, social justice, equality, human rights and authors' rights. The 2019 EP elections come at a turning point for the European Union which urgently needs to reconnect with its citizens and represent their interests. We wish a forward-looking EU where not only the economy and growth matter but where concrete action is taken to ensure that everyone's right to know is guaranteed.

Unfortunately, the solemnly proclaimed European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and the European Semester

together with other EU strategies, such as the Digital Single Market (DSM) do not sufficiently provide an adequate framework for Member States to take action to protect (freelance) media workers and journalists, who often live in extreme precarious conditions and thus leave the profession. The future EU budget should help to deliver on EU post-2020 social and non-discrimination objectives, equal treatment for all workers independent of their employment contract, while a renewed political impulse is needed to support journalism as a public vital good.

We, therefore, call on all policymakers to support our proposals for the revival of a free, trusted and pluralistic media in Europe, where possible in cooperation with the Council of Europe, the OSCE representative on Freedom of the Media and other relevant stakeholders dealing with media.

Europe needs:

1. **Media pluralism**
2. **Financial sustainability & the future of journalism**
3. **Investigative journalism**
4. **Collective bargaining & social protection for all workers**
5. **Trust & accountability through ethical journalism**
6. **Authors' rights - Fair contracts for all**
7. **Strong independent public service media**
8. **Safety at work: no to impunity**

1. Europe needs media pluralism

Legislations that thrive to encourage the setting-up of independent media as well as thwart the concentration of media ownership should be favoured.

Recommended policy:

- Legislation must be enforced against media monopolies and dominant market positions to guarantee transparency of media ownership and management;
- Member States should be called to ensure independent oversight and effective compliance mechanisms in order to prevent conflicts of interests, ensure editorial independence and safeguard the media's role as public watchdog;
- EU initiatives on monitoring media independence and ownership in Europe, such as the Media Pluralism Monitor, as well as checks to ensure that new EU legislation is consistent with the principles of media freedom and pluralism should be further supported. These initiatives are complementary to national rules aiming to preserve or strengthen these principles;
- Support initiatives that enhance gender equality and diversity in the newsroom, both when entering the profession, in career developments, reconciliation of work and private life, wages, access to leading roles, fair gender portrayal and as sources of information. Media pluralism and democracy require that all voices are heard in the media.

2. Financial sustainability and the future of journalism

Quality and diversity in journalism can only be sustained by long-term independent funding, by investing in both content and the training of journalists. We believe the next Creative Europe budget for 2021–2027 should reflect the EU commitment towards the development of a sustainable ecosystem for the media. The recently revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) rightly strengthens the role of media literacy. It requires Member States to promote and take measures for the development of media literacy skills (Article 33a).

Recommended policy:

- Support initiatives to explore new ways of funding journalistic work, including non-profit financial models and develop new socially sustainable economic models aimed at financing and supporting professional independent and investigative (cross-border) journalism. The EU and employers' organisations should invest in skills and jobs. Journalists, including freelancers, should be entitled to training schemes throughout their careers; journalists and media managers' education and vocational training on gender equality and diversity should be developed;
- Media literacy for all generations to sustain the future of journalism should be encouraged by the EU. Trainings by and for journalists should be promoted at the national level.

3. Investigative journalism

Journalistic investigations hold institutions and individuals accountable to the public. Journalists should be able to carry out their investigations without fear of being under surveillance or prosecuted.

Recommended policy:

- Strengthen open access to EU documents and public data for citizens and journalists;
- Support proposals for the protection of journalists in the EU who are regularly subjected to lawsuits intended to censor their work or intimidate them and abolish criminal defamation laws;
- Push for the right to protecting sources for journalists in every EU Member States;
- Fight increased (digital) surveillance.

4. Collective bargaining and social protection for all workers

Rights of journalists, particularly freelancers, to join a union and be represented in collective bargaining and agreement, should be reinforced as guaranteed by the EU charter (Art.12). The recent decision by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to put an end to restrictions on collective bargaining for self-employed persons should be taken as a basis for future EU policies on the matter.

Recommended policy:

- Encourage initiatives establishing and reinforcing social dialogue in the media sector both at national and European levels; especially in Member States where social dialogue in the media sector hardly exists;
- Ensure equal rights and equal treatments for all forms of employment including freelancers and journalists working in digital media/start-ups etc. through fair working contracts with sufficient social protection;
- Ensure competition law does not undermine the right to collective bargaining. The application of competition law should take into account the imbalance of negotiating power facing the weaker party who are often freelancers;
- Improve gender equality in journalism, particularly the gender pay gap. Provide a proper analysis of the gender pay gap in the news sector and set legislation that addresses the media sector.

5. Building trust and accountability through ethical journalism

There has been a decline in trust towards media and in particular towards social media in recent years. The public is best served by accountable and transparent media that provide accurate and unbiased information to Europe's citizens, the best weapon against disinformation.

Recommended policy:

- Promote self-regulatory measures or bodies such as ethical codes and press councils to reinforce high standards in journalism also in digital and social media;
- Support initiatives that enforce diversity in media content through the inclusion of voices from all sections of the community;
- A clear policy and legal framework are needed to ensure the transparency and accountability of dominant platforms with regards to content shared on their networks; such as source transparency indicators, efficient self-regulation and investment.

6. Authors' rights: fair contracts for all

Journalists' authors' rights (including freelancers and photojournalists) should be reinforced to guarantee fair remuneration and fair contracts negotiated at an equal footing between journalists and employers.

Recommended policy:

- Create a real neighbouring right for press publications;
- Ensure full recognition of journalists as authors and fair and proportionate distribution of their revenues generated in the digital world deriving from this right;
- Adopt clear transparency measures providing a basis for authors and performers to receive the fair payment they need.

7. Strong and independent public service media (PSM)

Public service media is increasingly under attack in Europe. It is an essential pillar of media pluralism that must be actively promoted and protected.

Recommended policy:

- Support a sustainable funding model for an independent PSM that serves the public interest;
- Stand up for the protection of public service media against political interference in their daily management and editorial work;
- Support the need for PSM to be able to adapt, innovate and develop, with emphasis on the online remit and the need to reach all (and in particular young) audiences.
- Support reforms of PSM in candidate countries.

8. Safety at work: no to impunity

Journalists have the right to work freely without the fear of physical violence or imprisonment. The protection of journalists must be raised throughout Europe.

Recommended policy:

- Implement Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 on Protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors at the national level;
- Monitor the ongoing investigations about murders and physical attacks against journalists in the European Union;
- Engage against the increasing (online) threats and harassment against journalists and in particular female journalists.

JOURNALISM IS A PUBLIC GOOD

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) is the largest organisation of journalists in Europe, representing over 320,000 journalists in 70 journalists' trade unions and professional associations across 45 countries.
<http://europeanjournalists.org/>