



European  
Commission

# PROTECTING MEDIA FREEDOM IN THE EU

#DigitalEU  
#MediaFreedom

Independent media and journalists are essential for our democracies, to inform citizens and keep power in check. This is why, over the past years, the Commission has taken unprecedented action by putting forward new tools to protect journalists, including with the first-ever European Media Freedom Act.



## 1. Monitoring the situation and providing country-specific recommendations

Since 2020, the Commission has been monitoring the situation of media freedom in each Member State, building on inputs by stakeholders. And it has engaged in dialogues with Member States, individually and in the Council, on the annual rule of law country reports.



## 2. New EU laws and recommendations

- ▶ The **European Media Freedom Act** is the first-ever EU law that seeks to ensure the proper functioning of the internal market for media services, thereby also protecting media pluralism and editorial independence. It also safeguards the independence of the media, shielding them against undue state interference so that they can inform citizens freely, without fear or favour. The new set of rules will apply fully as of 8 August 2025.
- ▶ The **Anti-SLAPP Directive** provides for cross-border civil procedural safeguards against strategic litigation against public participation so that journalists and others involved in public debate are not pressured or censored because of unfounded lawsuits aiming at intimidating them. The Directive will enter into force in May 2024. Member States will have 2 years to transpose its provisions into national law. The Directive is a minimum harmonisation instrument and Member States will be free to provide wider protection at the national level, including application to domestic cases.

▶ The **Recommendation on protecting journalists and human rights defenders from SLAPPs** complements the Directive with provisions applying also to criminal and administrative proceedings, as well as domestic cases. It also recommends the creation of anti-SLAPP “focal points”.

▶ The **Recommendation to improve the safety of journalists**, calling on Member States to adopt measures to protect journalists both offline and online, with a focus on female journalists who are particularly at risk.



At the same time, the Commission has **embedded the protection of the media and their rights in a series of other key new EU laws**, such as the Digital Services Act and the AI Act, **covering the information space more broadly**.

The Commission is also monitoring closely the implementation of key rules to protect **copyright** and the rules for **audiovisual media** services.



### 3. **Increased funding**

Under this mandate, in a context of ever-growing needs, the European Commission has allocated around

**€50**

**million per year**

to the news media sector, including support to:

- ▶ Journalists threatened in the context of their work and in need of legal assistance or shelters
- ▶ Local, regional or community media, in particular those located in news deserts
- ▶ Journalists carrying out sensitive investigations
- ▶ Independent journalists from Russia and Belarus in exile
- ▶ Media producing independent news on European affairs, in particular in countries where pluralism is at risk
- ▶ Consortia of media looking to develop business solutions together, and grow more resilient

There are also new funding opportunities for projects supporting the fight against SLAPP cases which will be available through the Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme starting from 23 April 2024, with a deadline of 18 September 2024 (see, for example: [CERV-2024-CHAR-LITI-LITIGATION \(Topic 3\): Strategic litigation](#)).