

R1 Media freedom and independence under attack

Proposer: Young Greens South Tyrol, Joves
Ecosocialistes, Swiss Young Greens
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Motion text

1 The Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG) recognises threats to media
2 freedom and independence.

3 Organisations such as "Reporters without borders" (RSF) have detected an
4 increased number of threats against journalists and pressure to interfere in
5 political reporting. Examples of this influence, especially from national
6 governments, can be found in the Italian broadcaster Rai and the Hungarian Duna
7 Média, who tend to provide biased coverage favouring the leading party.

8 As it is clear that European institutions cannot and should not interfere with
9 reporting in the single member states, the EU should guarantee the independence
10 of public broadcasters, which should be reporting neutrally and not for the
11 single governments.

12 The EU should impose on public broadcasters of all member states to fulfill
13 certain criteria to guarantee independent and balanced reporting. Governments
14 should guarantee editorial independence from the Supervisory board and establish
15 transparent and objective access mechanisms for journalists who work in public
16 broadcasters.

17 Quality journalism is often buried behind advertisements and bot-driven trends
18 in search engines. Public service media must have the right to findability to be
19 shown under the top search results. In addition, search engines and social media
20 platforms should be obligated to ensure algorithmic neutrality towards
21 democratic content to prevent preferential treatment towards certain media.

22 Furthermore, the EU should work to build and maintain independent European
23 digital infrastructures to reduce reliance on US companies. TV-networks like
24 "arte" should be expanded to other European countries and be supported to reach
25 a bigger audience and contribute to European integration through common media
26 platforms.

27 It is important to not just look at the public media but also to media plurality
28 in the private sector. In some territories, the media landscape is dominated
29 almost exclusively by large media groups. In South Tyrol, for instance, Athesia
30 covers more than 80% of the media landscape and is the media outlet receiving
31 most public funds in Italy. These conditions make it very hard for independent
32 media to work properly and reach an audience. In addition, public discussions
33 are primarily conducted by these large media groups, influencing the political
34 climate in the region.

35 In the last few years, the quantity of misinformation and fake news has seen a
36 considerable increase. A major deterioration happened during the COVID-19
37 pandemic, fuelled by the spreading of conspiracy "theories". Russia's war of
38 aggression against Ukraine is another area that has given rise to disinformation
39 in Europe. Also concerning is that the Kremlin has used bot-farms and corruption
40 to influence European elections, such as in Moldova or Hungary. FYEG
41 acknowledges the European Digital Media Observatory's critical work, as it shows
42 that the EU has started to fight misinformation. Nevertheless, disinformation
43 campaigns continue to evade accountability, particularly on social media
44 platforms that fail to act on EDMO's findings.

45 Another problem is that many media outlets have lost trust as they are accused
46 of pro-government reporting, especially those receiving public financing. These
47 critics can be justified, as public financing guided by the government may
48 impair independent journalism. It is fundamental that everyone has accessible
49 information about public financing to media outlets.

50 In countries like Italy, so-called SLAPP suits are used to censor, intimidate
51 and silence critics. Even if the plaintiff does not expect to win the lawsuit,
52 this burdens journalists with time and costs for a legal defence. This is a
53 serious limitation of press freedom, as these lawsuits lead to intimidation,
54 exhaustion and often to self-censorship.

55 Journalists working in war zones and conflict areas face unprecedented risks,
56 including targeted killings, arbitrary detention, digital surveillance, and
57 psychological warfare. The Russian invasion of Ukraine, conflicts in Southwest
58 Asia, and authoritarian crackdowns in regions like Belarus and Turkey have made
59 journalism one of the most dangerous professions in the world. Beyond physical
60 threats, journalists are increasingly targeted by spyware (e.g., Pegasus), legal
61 persecution, and economic precarity, and the prohibition of access to war zones,
62 forcing many into self-censorship or exile. The impunity for crimes against
63 journalists - around 85% of murders remaining unpunished according to UNESCO -
64 further emboldens perpetrators. While many examples arise, Israel is one of the
65 worst, having killed 86 journalists in 2025 from a total of 129 globally
66 according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Without robust
67 protections, independent reporting from conflict zones will disappear, leaving
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war crimes and human rights abuses uncovered and unchallenged.

69 FYEG also acknowledges the importance of media literacy for a functioning
70 democratic society. Education is the best way to help young people grow into
71 well-informed citizens that can distinguish fake news from good information and
72 populism from well-researched social-media content. Digital and media literacy
73 also includes the identification of bots, the verification of sources and the
74 understanding of algorithmic bias.

75 With all this in mind, we, the Federation of Young European Greens demand that:

- 76 • The EU should obligate member states to guarantee an independent financing
77 of public broadcasters through licence fees.

- 78 • Public broadcasters are owned by an independent foundation, which is
79 overseen by a supervisory board. The number of politically nominated
80 representatives should not exceed a third and should represent both the
81 voted-in majority and the opposition as equally as possible. To fully
82 represent the diversity of the country, the rest should be filled with
83 representatives of civil society, such as trade unions, religious
84 communities, universities, young people, minorities such as migrants and
85 representatives of economic and cultural groups. The foundation's
86 supervisory board should not interfere in editorial decisions.

- 87 • The Supervisory boards of the public broadcasters themselves should not
88 have any politically nominated members but should be elected among the
89 broadcasters' staff and civil society representatives.

- 90 • Public service media create independent ombudspeople with binding powers
91 to investigate censorship, block political interference, and enforce
92 editorial independence.

- 93 • Public broadcasters should build and maintain independent European digital
94 infrastructures such as a European streaming platform to reduce dependence
95 from US tech-companies.

- 96 • A 'Right to Findability' for Public Service Media is established on all
97 digital interfaces and that Algorithmic Neutrality is ensured for
98 democratic content.

- 99 • Social media companies must be legally required to label AI-generated
100 content and prioritize verified public service media in algorithms during
101 elections and crises.

- 102 • Social media platforms should be obligated to rigorously delete messages
103 spreading hate and racism through content moderators.

- 104 • The EU and member states establish mandatory transparency rules for online
105 platforms to expose and dismantle bot farms and disinformation networks,
106 particularly those linked to foreign interference in elections.

- 107 • The EU should empower the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) with
108 enforcement tools, including mandatory platform cooperation and fines for
109 non-compliance. Funding for EDMO's local hubs must be increased and social
110 media companies must be legally required to act on its findings.

- 111 • European funding that supports independent journalism should be allocated.
112 The size of the funding should be in proportion to media quality ranking
113 assessments, guaranteeing a stronger support for media in countries with a
114 more critical situation.

- 115 • Journalists should be protected from SLAPP suits through the full
116 implementation of the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive by 2027. The EU should put
117 pressure on countries like Italy and Hungary, which are delaying
118 transposition into national law.

- 119 • The protection for journalists who work in warzones or critical situations
120 should be strengthened. The EU Magnitsky Act should be used to sanction
121 states and actors that target journalists. Governments should push for ICC
122 investigations into attacks on media workers as war crimes.

- 123 • Governments should allow digital and media literacy to become a core
124 component of public education from primary school level through
125 university.

- 126 • The European Commission should launch a sector inquiry into regional media

127 markets, similar to the EU Digital Markets Act inquiry into tech
128 monopolies.

- 129 • The EU and national governments should develop criteria for “media
130 diversity”. Companies holding more than a certain percentage of regional
131 media control in terms of audience and advertising revenue should be
132 required to sell off parts of its business.

133 Media freedom is under pressure. Journalists face bullets in Gaza, censorship in
134 Russia, SLAPP suits in Italy. FYEG refuses to accept this as the new normal. We
135 demand a Europe where public broadcasters serve the public, where truth
136 outweighs propaganda, and where no journalist risks their life for doing their
137 job. Our fight for media freedom is a fight for democracy.

Supporters

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