

PRESS RELEASE

European press publishers call on the European Commission not to adopt “Media Unfreedom Act”

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With the publication of an undated draft proposal of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), EMMA and ENPA find themselves in the surprising and worrisome position to see that the European Commission plans to undermine the core of press freedom. We deeply regret this threat for press and media freedom and call on the Commission not to adopt the proposal in its upcoming meeting, as in its current version the draft is a “Media Unfreedom Act”, an affront to the core values of the European Union and democracy.

We see no reason to further harmonise media law at EU level in favour of closer control by media authorities or, indirectly, by the Commission, which most definitely raises concerns of political media capture through the newly established European Board for Media Services. Furthermore, we are surprised that the European Commission did not follow the democratic best practice in media law of consulting affected stakeholders on the text of the proposal before its publication and we are left to learn of the imminent threats to press freedom from a leaked draft.

It is not acceptable and highly problematic that in a proposal intended to protect media freedom the European Commission reveals plans to de facto override the principle of publishers’ editorial freedom, an essential element of press freedom anchored in Europe for centuries, as well as the freedom to invest and conduct a business. This is hardly comprehensible, not least because of questions of liability of the publisher, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the content.

If the Commission wants to protect press freedom, it must both delete Article 6 as well as Recitals 20 and 21 in the draft proposal, and not intervene in the editorial freedom of a publisher in the soft law instruments complementing the EMFA.

If the EMFA is adopted in its revealed form in the upcoming College meeting, the European Commission will not protect media freedom, but rather foster media regulation to the detriment of the free and independent press and European democracy. We must ask with utmost urgency to either fundamentally revise it or abandon the project altogether.

For further information, please contact:

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EMMA, the European Magazine Media Association, is the unique and complete representation of Europe's magazine media, which is today enjoyed by millions of consumers on various platforms, encompassing both paper and digital formats. EMMA represents 15,000 publishing houses, publishing 50,000 magazine titles across Europe in print and digital.

See: www.magazinemedia.eu/

ENPA, the European Newspaper Publishers' Association (ENPA) is the largest representative body of newspaper publishers across Europe. ENPA advocates for 16 national associations across 13 European countries, and is a principal interlocutor to the EU institutions and a key driver of media policy debates in the European Union. See: www.enpa.eu/