

Mission project: How to democratise the media

What is the problem?

Media freedom and pluralism are essential to protect democracy. An independent media reports on corruption and human rights violations and holds governments accountable. However, independent media are increasingly coming under pressure from funding cuts and the direct influence of illiberal governments or powerful private actors. This threatens their existence and their ability to maintain their functions as watchdogs of democracy.

What is the solution?

The democratisation of media companies. This includes:

- the appointment of journalists to the management board;
- the appointment of the managing director by the democratic board of directors;
- the need for democratic board approval in the event of a change of ownership;
- transparency as regards who owns what media outlets;
- promotion of minorities and enforcement of gender quotas in editorial offices.

Putting the Media Freedom Act into law

The EU's Media Freedom Act includes important recommendations on ensuring that state subsidies and public advertisements are not misused, endangering media independence and free competition. But while recommendations are welcome, they are not enough. The Media Freedom Act should be turned into a binding EU directive. On top of that, measures directly supporting local media should be considered.

Progressive MEPs should put media freedom and pluralism centre stage in the upcoming 2024 EP election. MEPs and their national parties should campaign on this issue in their national campaigns. The next EU Commission can then put forward a legislative proposal to make the Media Freedom Act legally binding.

How does it affect Europeans?

Media freedom and pluralism are the key to communicating progressive ideas. Progressive parties and MPs in Member States in which media pluralism is low are unable to campaign effectively on issues. They lose elections because the media landscape is dominated by illiberal state actors or private actors entangled with the government.

What does it cost?

None of the proposed measures would incur costs for the state budget. The costs of media companies would increase slightly. Broadening management boards could be offset by reducing manager salaries and bonuses. The Media Freedom Act does not involve significant costs for national budgets.

Would you like more detailed information about this policy?

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