

**Liberties**

**Media Freedom Report**

**2026**

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**#MediaFreedomReport2026**

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# Executive summary

## About this report

The *Media Freedom Report 2026* is the fifth annual report on media freedom in the European Union (EU) produced by the Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties). Based on reporting from civil society organisations in the Liberties network, the *Media Freedom Report* complements Liberties' annual *Rule of Law Report*.

The information in this report comes from our own research and from the media-related findings shared by our member and partner organisations through their in-depth rule of law country reports. These country reports follow a common approach and structure, developed with the priority areas and indicators identified by Liberties, and are published in Liberties' *Rule of Law Report*. Thanks to our members' contributions, the information provided herein is sufficiently representative to give an accurate indication of the current state and trajectory of media freedom and pluralism in the EU.

The *Media Freedom Report* discusses relevant legislative and regulatory action at EU and national level during 2025 and maps the main trends and developments in media freedom in 22 EU Member States: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. This report also sets out

recommendations for the EU institutions to improve the media landscape in Europe and better protect media freedom and pluralism across the Union. The report is divided into three primary areas: media freedom and pluralism, safety and protection of journalists, and freedom of expression and information.

This year's report features a chapter dedicated to Member States' progress towards implementing key EU media legislation, namely the European Media Freedom Act and the Anti-Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP) Directive. Our aim is to call the attention of the EU and national policymakers to the systemic challenges facing EU media markets. For the first time, this report also features an analysis of Member States' progress towards implementing the recommendations made by the European Commission in its annual rule of law reports.

A free and pluralistic media ecosystem is the precondition for a strong and stable democracy. Those governments that work to weaken the rule of law and democratic institutions almost always start by attempting to exert control over their country's media landscape. This report serves as a monitoring exercise to identify ongoing threats across the bloc and to help identify violations of media freedom and pluralism, as well as the rights to freedom of expression and access to information. The findings of this report should put EU officials on high alert: media freedom and pluralism are

under attack, and most of the Commission's recommendations to Member States have been repeated over the years with little impact.

## Context

Multiple developments in 2025 had the potential to strengthen media freedom and pluralism across Europe. At the EU level, two critical legislative initiatives came into force: the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) and the Anti-SLAPP Directive (Member States have until 7 May 2026 to transpose the Anti-SLAPP Directive into national law). The EMFA aims to improve and better protect media freedom and pluralism by addressing several long-standing threats, including protection of journalists, lack of transparency over media ownership and state advertising, and the crumbling independence of public service media and national media regulatory bodies, but implementation of the law is slow and inadequate in many Member States.

The EMFA established a new body, the European Board of Media Services (the Board), which aims to ensure consistent application of media laws and to provide stronger oversight of national enforcement, including the level of protection afforded to journalists and media workers. The Anti-SLAPP Directive addressed abusive lawsuits known as SLAPP (strategic lawsuits against public participation) cases – lawsuits that the wealthy and powerful use as weapons to silence journalists and media outlets. Negotiations about the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to decide the bloc's 2028-2034 budget were ongoing,

including financing the media sector and identifying priorities. Civil society organisations (CSOs) in several Member States reported threats and harassment.

## Key findings

Despite the entry into force of EU legislation to protect media freedom and pluralism, overall, trends observed in previous Liberties reports continued throughout 2025, and in many cases worsened. The European Union's media landscape is more concentrated, less transparent and less trusted than in previous years. Even in traditionally strong democracies, threats to media freedom that have been observed in previous reports remain; in some Member States, especially **Slovakia**, media freedom and pluralism were further eroded in 2025, not reinforced. European Commission recommendations in the field of media freedom are being systematically ignored.

Media ownership is heavily concentrated, and the situation worsened in some states last year, as big media conglomerates acquired additional formerly independent outlets or shares from other media companies. The result is a loss of diversity in reporting, opinions, and sources, making it harder for the public to access accurate information. Journalists face threats, violence, and harassment, with the number of serious incidents showing a year-on-year increase in 2025. Public service media (PSM) is under pressure from political interference and budget cuts, and public trust in the media continues to decline. Only three of 22 EU countries surveyed have 'relatively high' public

trust in national media. EU media markets continue to have high ownership concentration. Media owners are able to remain obscure thanks to inadequate ownership transparency obligations. There is a continued erosion of public service media's independence. Restrictions on freedom of expression and access to information continue to hamper journalists' work and handicap their ability to perform a watchdog role.

These findings are consistent with last year's report. While there are some new signs of progress towards implementing the EMFA and the Anti-SLAPP Directive, in most Member States, the process is well behind schedule. The EMFA was designed to address many of the critical threats to media freedom covered in this report, including the independence of public service media and oversight bodies, transparency of media ownership, media market competition, and state advertising allocation, but so far, we have identified little impact since August 2025.

The findings of this report clearly demonstrate that in countries where the rule of law is stronger, so too are media freedom and pluralism. Commonalities across these countries include a greater independence of public service media and the national media authorities, and a clear absence of politically captured media market segments. In countries where rule of law standards are flagging or non-existent, as

is the case in **Slovakia** and **Hungary**, respectively, the state of media freedom is significantly worse, if it can be said to exist at all.<sup>1</sup>

## **Media freedom and pluralism**

Media ownership concentration continued to increase across the European Union in 2025. The limited number of media owners reduced media pluralism and diversity of opinion, making it difficult to access balanced information.

In **France**, media ownership is concentrated among a few billionaires. In the **Netherlands**, DPG Media acquired RTL Netherlands, creating a dominant market position despite serious concerns about press independence. In **Slovakia**, Penta Group controls the country's two largest tabloids after acquiring *Nový Čas*. **Germany's** media concentration was further strained in 2025 when the **Italian** MFE Group (Media for Europe), owned by the Berlusconi family, took a majority stake in Germany's ProSiebenSat.1.

Even in countries with higher levels of media diversity, problems persist. While urban areas in **Germany** have a diverse media landscape, local newspaper monopolies are on the rise in the countryside. In **Spain**, two companies control over 80% of the advertising market. In **Croatia**, three publishers control 84% of the print market.

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1 Shortly before this report was published, Hungarians elected a new government. The prime minister-elect, Péter Magyar, has stated his support for freedom of the press in many speeches, criticising the former government's hostility towards independent media and the way public service media was turned into a propaganda machine.

In **Hungary**, the most problematic country regarding market concentration and where KESMA (the Central European Press and Media Foundation, a foundation controlling many of the country's media companies) is still in operation, the pro-government Indamedia acquired the market-leading tabloid *Blikk*. The closure of Radio Free Europe in Hungary further diminished independent voices. In **Greece**, media ownership remains concentrated among politically connected oligarchic families (notably wealthy shipowners) dominating the major outlets, prompting calls for stricter merger oversight.

**Slovenia** underwent significant reform in 2025 with the adoption of the new Media Act, which strengthened rules on ownership transparency, concentration control, and public-interest safeguards. It also introduced a structured system for the ex-ante control of media concentration.

### **Media ownership transparency**

Transparency of media ownership is an important factor for public trust. Despite the minimum rules set out in the EMFA, transparency across the EU is still inconsistent and often opaque: we have fragmented databases that provide basic contact information but obscure ultimate beneficial owners.

In **Croatia** and **Hungary**, opacity of media ownership and hidden influence exist. In Hungary, the official databases exclude ownership structures, while in Croatia, the ultimate beneficial ownership is not defined, leaving room for hidden financial control.

**Romania** faces high opacity in online media. Access to beneficial ownership information is a continuing challenge in **Italy**, where it is available only upon request. In **Greece**, the new beneficiary register remains closed to the public and journalists. **Spain** reports widespread non-compliance with EMFA transparency obligations, though a new State Register is proposed under the Democratic Governance Bill. In **Bulgaria**, the laws are not properly enforced.

**Slovenia's** Mass Media Act requires disclosure, but it is not yet operational. **Malta** and **Denmark** rely on commercial registers, while in **Germany**, the challenge is that decision-makers are sometimes distinct from beneficial owners. **Ireland** has a searchable Media Ownership Monitor database, however, the corporate complexity creates challenges.

By now, it is clear that centralised, publicly accessible registers are the safeguards for informed understanding of the political and economic interests comprising the media sector.

### **State advertising and public funding**

State advertising is a vital yet frequently manipulated revenue stream for the media across the EU. While the EMFA requires transparent and objective criteria of allocation, in many Member States, state advertising is used for political influence. We see two groups here: the countries with proper transparency and dedicated enforcement efforts, and those where funding distorts the market and undermines editorial independence.

In **Hungary**, state advertising is used as a political weapon to benefit government-friendly entities. Similarly, in **Croatia**, local media is heavily funded by public funds with no legal consequences.

Budget cuts make the media more vulnerable to economic pressure. **Italy**'s funding model for its public broadcaster, Radiotelevisione italiana (RAI), violates EMFA's sustainability requirements. In **Germany**, public broadcasters are under economic pressure after federal states rejected a proposed increase in the license fee.

**Slovenia** again showed significant progress in this area. The new Media Act requires transparency and mandates public reporting of all state funds received by publishers. **Malta**'s enforcement with a dedicated oversight office is a good practice, whereas indirect subsidies remain opaque. In **Ireland**, the new legislative framework is still in the draft stage.

### **Public service media**

Public service media serve a crucial role in democratic societies, providing access to impartial and diverse public information. The year 2025 was marked by severe systemic political interference, budget cuts, and structural changes that jeopardised its core mission.

In several Member States, political capture is tangible. **Hungary** used public service media for propaganda, with pro-government airtime reaching 73%. **Slovakia**'s public service broadcaster STVR (Slovak Television and Radio) is, at this point, captured by the state and subject to direct political control. **Italy**'s RAI

leadership appointment paralysed public service media, while **Malta** and **Romania** suffer from politically appointed boards that interfere with editorial independence. In **Spain** and **Bulgaria**, alleged information manipulation and political bias are on the discussion agenda.

Financial instability is the other great threat. **France** proposed merging all public media organisations, threatening neutrality. **Germany** closed 16 radio stations, two news TV channels and one linear children's program, while **Belgium** faced significant budget cuts and lay-offs. **Romania**'s newly introduced budget allocation risks political influence.

Budget cuts also negatively impact content diversity. **Latvia**'s decision to end Russian-language broadcasting heightened discussion of Russian disinformation among the Russian-speaking population. In **Denmark**, ideas for budget cuts were sparked by right-wing parties.

**Slovenia**, here again, offers a positive example of modernising laws, along with **Greece**. But in the majority of the EU Member States, the transposition of the safeguards set out in the EMFA and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive is lagging behind.

### **Independent regulators**

Independence of media and telecom regulators is key to enforcement. These authorities are increasingly vulnerable to direct political pressure or indirect pressure through funding cuts.

The appointment processes for board members in **Greece**, **Croatia**, and **Bulgaria** remain overpoliticised and dependent on parliamentary majorities. In **Slovakia**, the National Media Office threatens to centralise oversight.

**France's** ARCOM is an independent regulator. In Sept 2025, the Conseil d'Etat clarified that it should not intervene in journalistic ethics cases, leaving such disputes to the press council. In **Denmark**, the Press Council hears complaints under the Media Liability Act. The government announced plans for a new state-funded media Ombudsperson with powers to handle defamation and ethics cases.

The implementation of the **Digital Services Act (DSA)** and the appointment of Digital Services Coordinators were full of administrative failures and created resource gaps. **Germany's** digital services coordinator lacks 70% of the necessary staff. The European Commission has sued **Spain** and issued warnings to **Bulgaria** for failing to establish a coordinator's office and its sanctioning powers.

Positive developments include **Belgium's** approach to protecting self-regulatory ethics councils from pressure from audiovisual regulators. Conversely, **Slovenia** has expanded regulation to 'influencers' with over 10,000 followers, mandating new transparency requirements.

According to Liberties' findings, there is a gap between legislative intent and enforcement. Without financial autonomy and independent leadership, authorities in states like **Romania** and **Hungary** struggle to apply effective

sanctions. The regulatory weakness, combined with new legal precedents like **Estonia's** ruling that social media is not 'public space', creates a fragmented landscape.

## **Safety and protection of journalists**

The safety of journalists reached a crisis point in 2025, when journalists and media workers faced extreme physical violence and systemic legal harassment. Explosive attacks in **Italy** and **Greece** targeted investigative reporters. 20 Italian journalists require 24/7 police protection due to threats from organised crime.

Smear campaigns orchestrated by government officials are growing. In **Malta**, **Hungary**, and **Romania**, politicians have labelled independent media "forces of darkness" or "foreign propaganda machines" to discredit their work. Violence from both protesters and law enforcement during protests is common in **Belgium**, **France**, **Germany** and **Greece**.

Surveillance remains a threat in the bloc. Investigative journalists in **Italy** and **Romania** were targeted with spyware. **Slovenia's** new Media Act explicitly outlawed surveillance in the newsroom, and **Latvia's** Safety Plan 2025-2027 shows progress, aligning with the EMFA rules. However, most Member States ignored recommendations to dedicate law enforcement units to investigate crimes against journalists and media workers.

## Public trust in the media

Public trust in EU media remains fragmented, with significant differences among Member States. Where trust is stable, it is often tied to public service broadcasters or local news outlets, whereas declines are fueled by opaque financing, impartiality, and political interference.

While **Germany** (83%) and **Ireland** (72%) maintain high levels of confidence, trust is critically low in **Greece** (22%), **Romania** (26.9%), and **Bulgaria** (26%).

Trust often mirrors political or ethnic polarisation. **Estonia** sees high trust among native speakers (80%) but a decline among ethnic groups. **Belgium** suffers from a linguistic divide (Flemish 51% vs. French 35%), while in **Malta**, trust is heavily influenced by party affiliation.

In **Italy**, **Latvia**, and **Germany**, public broadcasters remain more credible than social media. Conversely, **Hungarians** view online platforms as less biased, reflecting distrust in mainstream media.

## Online media and disinformation

Freedom of expression continues to be undermined by online hate speech and disinformation. In 2025, there was a record number of serious incidents (377) against journalists, including death threats. While **France** revoked broadcasting licenses for hate speech, in **Croatia**, political actors openly target oversight bodies. **Germany's** NetzDG law reduced

online hate, but under-enforcement is a systemic issue in **Slovenia** and the **Netherlands**.

AI-generated content, often in tandem with political smear campaigns, has intensified the disinformation crisis. Captured public service media in **Hungary** and **Slovakia** disseminated government propaganda. **Ireland** reported a rise in disinformation targeting migrants and other vulnerable minority communities. In **Romania**, the lack of a formal law led police to pressure citizens to delete critical social media posts. In France, ARCOM supervises platforms, but hate speech moderation is still patchy.

The right to freedom of information supports journalists. Despite regular EU recommendations, **Germany**, **Belgium**, and **Estonia** failed to improve access frameworks. In **Denmark** and **Hungary**, they are usually slow to disclose information, and journalists are often forced into costly litigation. **Romania** restricted transparency by banning photojournalists from government meetings.

## The European Media Freedom Act and Anti-SLAPP Directive

Except for Article 20, the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) has been in effect since August 2025. It established standards for public service media independence, transparency in ownership, and journalist protection, along with rules on state advertising and competition. Despite the EMFA's high standards, implementation across the EU is stalled in most Member States. As of late 2025, Liberties'

findings assessed that transposition of the law is slow or is being resisted.

Most EMFA provisions are not yet incorporated into national law. For example, **France** had done nothing by December 2025; a draft bill was only introduced in late 2025 and awaits a vote in 2026. **Bulgaria** and **Romania** have missed deadlines to transpose EMFA. **Greece** and **Italy** also showed minimal compliance, focusing mainly on adding a few oversight clauses. In **Italy**, RAI remains under political influence with no substantive legislative progress.

**Hungary** not only ignored the EMFA, but actively sued the EU to annul it. **Slovenia**'s new Media Act, adopted in September 2025, introduced into law the standards and safeguards required under the EMFA, in particular the enhanced protection of journalistic sources and stricter conditions for the use of surveillance measures against journalists and newsroom devices.

**Malta** has established a new Office for Advertising and the Media, but there are concerns about political influence. **Ireland** and **Poland** have introduced draft legislation, though Polish CSOs warn that proposed reforms fail to depoliticise leadership appointments.

Regarding the Anti-SLAPP Directive, the frameworks are emerging and are still insufficient in most EU countries to offer proper protection, especially against purely domestic cases, which significantly threaten the Directive's efficacy in protecting journalists against unfounded lawsuits.

**Bulgaria**'s implementation is currently stalled. Despite the Ministry of Justice expressing readiness in September 2025, the government's collapse in December has thrown the transposition timeline into uncertainty. **Croatia**'s progress remains in the preparatory phase. While 'soft measures'—such as training sessions and government working groups—have begun, significant hurdles remain regarding the legal definition of 'public participation' and the mechanics for the early dismissal of meritless cases. In **Germany**, the government weakened the legislation via political compromise in December. The current version limits protection to cross-border cases, thereby excluding the 96% of documented cases that are purely domestic. In **Malta**, the implementation was limited to bare minimum standards. It excludes domestic cases and caps plaintiff penalties at €10,000.

Regarding the Anti-SLAPP Directive, **Germany** and **Malta** have implemented it but have been criticised for limiting it to cross-border cases, leaving journalists unprotected against domestic lawsuits, which make up the vast majority of cases.

## Recommendations to the institutions of the European Union

- Align the enforcement efforts of the Digital Services Act to ensure that access to information and media freedom are upheld on very large online platforms and search engines.

- Monitor the progress of Member States' transposition of the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive into national law, ensure its full enforcement, ensure adequate training and support for judges and prosecutors to address SLAPPs, and bring infringement proceedings against Member States, if needed.
- Monitor the transposition and enforcement of EMFA, bringing infringement proceedings where inaction warrants them.
- Continue the media pluralism and media freedom monitoring project, as well as the EU-level databases with regard to beneficial ownership of media companies across the EU.
- Monitor the implementation of the EU Recommendation on the Safety of Journalists and other related legislation, such as the Whistleblowing Directive, in consultation with civil society and media representatives.
- Expand the funding within the AgoraEU programme for media pluralism, journalist safety, media literacy, and fact-checking.
- Shape the European Competitiveness Fund to catalyse investment in the media ecosystem while safeguarding editorial independence.

# Media freedom and pluralism

## Key findings:

- Media ownership continues to be heavily concentrated in many EU Member States. In comparison to the last few years, the situation has worsened in multiple countries due to the acquisitions of publications by big media companies.
- Transparency of media ownership remains limited. If regulations are in place, information is often fragmented across databases, inadequate or does not reveal beneficial ownership. However, due to implementation of the EMFA, positive progress can be observed in a number of countries.
- Public Service Media continues to be under pressure. While there were reforms, these often led to budget cuts and the merger of outlets. Many broadcasters struggle with political interference.

- Public trust in the media remains low and continues to decline in many countries

## Media ownership concentration

Media ownership continues to be heavily concentrated in many European Union Member States, a trend that has already been observed in previous editions of this report. The situation even worsened in certain states where big media conglomerates acquired formerly independent outlets or shares from other media companies. The result is a loss of diversity in reporting, opinions and sources, making it harder for the public to get the full picture on current affairs.

The media market in **Bulgaria** shows high levels of market concentration, with two media companies, BTV (owned by the Czech investment fund PPF) and Nova (acquired by Dutch United Group in 2021), controlling 92% of the market share. Both PPF<sup>2</sup> and United<sup>3</sup> were involved in international controversies and

2 Aneta Zachová and Natália Silenská, Czech investment PPF group urged to defend media freedom in Slovakia, 31 May 2025, <https://www.euractiv.com/news/czech-investment-ppf-group-urged-to-defend-media-freedom-in-slovakia/>

3 Dutch Court Halts United Group Founder's Board Challenge, Raising Press Freedom Concerns in Serbia, 17 October 2025, <https://www.occrp.org/en/news/dutch-court-halts-united-group-founders-board-challenge-raising-press-freedom-concerns-in-serbia>

accused of not stepping in when their outlets faced political pressure.

The Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom classifies media plurality in **Croatia** as a high-risk area.<sup>4</sup> Media ownership concentration is significant. In 2023, three publishers controlled 84% of the print market, and four television broadcasters accounted for over 91% of audience share. Ownership concentration is monitored by the Croatian Chamber of Economy and the Council for Electronic Media. If there is cross-media concentration, companies must also report to the Agency for Market Competition Protection. These three institutions are the main pillars for monitoring media ownership and concentration. In reality, their work is often fragmented.

Since 1 October 2025, foreign newspapers and magazines are not available for purchase in Croatia anymore. This is due to high distribution costs, as foreign outlets cannot register at the National Register of Publishers and are not eligible for subsidised rates.<sup>5</sup>

Print media in **Denmark** cover a broad political spectrum, with some claiming complete neutrality while others are open about political bias. In November 2025, the Danish government announced plans to chart possible editorial or political bias. An academic study intends to look into the political affiliations of the public service media as well as private news outlets. Morgens Jensen, spokesperson for the ruling Socialdemokraterne, said that it was no problem if outlets have a political profile, but it would be good to know what this looks like so Danes know what they are exposed to.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the media market in Denmark is quite concentrated. A small number of major groups and their news outlets, for example, Berlingske Media and JP/Politikens, control a large share of print and online news.<sup>7</sup> News media are part of big foundations, and many people receive their radio and TV content mainly from the two state-owned broadcasters, TV2 and DR.

In **France**, media ownership is concentrated among a small number of billionaires. In July 2025, the Fund for a Free Press reported on several acquisitions by billionaires or oligarchs

4 Bilić Paško, Monitoring media pluralism in the European Union, results of the MPM2025. Country report: Croatia (Praćenje medijskog pluralizma u Europskoj uniji: MPM2025 rezultati. Izvješće za Hrvatsku), EUI, RSC, Research Project Report, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF), 2025, Country Reports, <https://hdl.handle.net/1814/92886>

5 Kristina Gačarić, Croatia without international newspapers for the first time in 50 years, Croatiaweek, 10 November 2025, <https://www.croatiaweek.com/croatia-without-international-newspapers-for-first-time-in-50-years/>

6 The political bias of all media outlets must be investigated (Alle mediers politiske bias skal undersøges) 27 November 2025, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/s-alle-mediers-politiske-bias-skal-undersoeges>

7 Kim Christian Schrøder, Mark Blach-Ørsten, Mads Kæmgaard Eberhøls, Denmark, Reuters Institute, 17 June 2025, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/denmark>

and denounced the “political silence” in the face of increased concentration of media ownership in France.<sup>8</sup> On 23 September, Claude Pedriel, the majority shareholder of the magazine *Challenges*, announced that he would sell the publication to LVMH, which is headed by billionaire Bernard Arnault. The sale also included two additional outlets: *Sciences et Avenir* and *La Recherche*. LVMH, already a big player in the French media market, also acquired *L’Opinion* and *L’Agefi* in 2025.<sup>9</sup>

While **Germany** has a comparatively high level of media diversity, a different picture exists when looking beyond urban areas. Local newspapers continue to face major challenges due to digitalisation and the changing habits of readers. As a result, many local editorial

offices are being closed or merged. According to a study by the Hamburg Media School, the number of districts or independent cities with only one local newspaper has risen from 33.5% to 46.75% since 1992.<sup>10</sup> Media groups such as Süddeutsche Medienholding and the Madsack Group effectively have a newspaper monopoly in some regions.<sup>11</sup>

In August 2025, the Italian MFE Group (MediaForEurope), owned by the children of former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, secured a majority of shares of the German ProSiebenSat.1, parent company of several TV channels.<sup>12</sup> Mika Beuster, chair of the DJV (*Deutscher Journalisten Verband*), one of the largest journalists’ associations in Europe, voiced concerns that the TV channels could

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- 8 François Bonnet, Media consolidation is intensifying amid widespread indifference (La concentration des médias se renforce dans l’indifférence générale) (in French), Fonds Pour Une Presse Libre, 8 July 2025, <https://fondspres-selibre.org/la-concentration-des-medias-se-renforce-dans-lindifference-generale>
- 9 Le Monde avec AFP, Sale of “Challenges”: Claude Pedriel announces that he has “reached an agreement” with LVMH to sell the weekly magazine “in early 2026” (Vente de « Challenges » : Claude Pedriel annonce être « tombé d’accord » avec LVMH pour une vente d...) with “Sale of “Challenges”: Claude Pedriel announces that he has “reached an agreement”, Le Monde, 23 September 2025, [https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2025/09/23/vente-de-challenges-claude-perdriel-annonce-etre-tombe-d-accord-avec-lvmh-pour-une-vente-de-l-hebdomadaire-debut-2026\\_6642677\\_3234.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2025/09/23/vente-de-challenges-claude-perdriel-annonce-etre-tombe-d-accord-avec-lvmh-pour-une-vente-de-l-hebdomadaire-debut-2026_6642677_3234.html)
- 10 Christian-Mathias Wellbrock/Sabrina Maß, Desert Radar, Regarding the Distribution of Local Journalism and its Effects on the Functionality of Democracy (Wüstenradar, Zur Verbreitung des Lokaljournalismus in Deutschland und dessen Effekt auf die Funktionfähigkeit der Demokratie), November 2024, <https://www.wuestenradar.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2024/11/Wuestenradar-2024-web.pdf>
- 11 Reporters Without Borders, Close-up 2025 (Nahaufnahme 2025), 1 April 2025, p. 32, <https://media.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de/production/4975/01K6YYC0R12MRPJEDK1BY7Q66X.pdf>; European Centre for Press & Media Freedom, Bogeyman Journalist (Feindbild Journalist:in), 14 April 2025, p. 94 <https://www.ecpmf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Feindbild-Journalist-2024.pdf>
- 12 Lukas Graw, Berlusconi Takes Over ProSiebenSat1: Fears of Influence, Bayerischer Rundfunk, BR24, (Berlusconi übernimmt ProSiebenSat1: Angst vor Einflussnahme, Bayerischer Rundfunk, BR24,) 28 August 2025, <https://www.br.de/nachrichten/wirtschaft/berlusconi-uebernimmt-prosiebensat1-angst-vor-einflussnahme,Uv9cymv>

over time become more populist.<sup>13</sup> Just a few weeks after the takeover, MFE started replacing members of the Board.<sup>14</sup>

**Greece** does have a large number of media outlets and a diverse landscape. However, ownership of major media groups is concentrated among a small number of wealthy and politically connected families. The dominant force of media ownership is composed of shipping tycoons and major investors in the industry.<sup>15</sup> Stakeholders continue to call for stronger competition and merger oversight that takes media pluralism under consideration. In 2025, Dimitris Melissanidis, owner of the economic paper *Naftemporiki* and a shipping tycoon, pursued a 51% stake in EfSyn, the former employee-owned cooperative that started following

the closure of daily newspaper *Eleftherotypia*. This exemplified the narrowing of independent voices amid ownership influx.<sup>16</sup>

A recent major media acquisition in **Hungary** has worsened the level of media concentration in the country. In October 2025, pro-Orbán Indamedia acquired Ringier Hungary, a transaction that included prominent brands, among them the market-leading tabloid *Blikk*.<sup>17</sup> While *Blikk* was mostly a tabloid, it was also a prominent player in public interest media and published more than 1,000 articles on corruption cases.<sup>18</sup> The closure of Radio Free Europe (*Szabad Európa Rádió*) in November 2025 further reduced the number of independent newsrooms.<sup>19</sup>

13 Alina Leimbach: ProSieben.Sat1 is now part of the Berlusconi Group, (Jetzt gehört ProSieben.Sat1 zum Berlusconi-Konzern), ARD, Tagesschau, 4 September 2025, <https://www.tagesschau.de/wirtschaft/unternehmen/prosieben-uebernahme-medienpluralismus-100.html>

14 Felix Stippler and Anna Westkämper, Berlusconi's holding company replaces ProSieben's board of directors (Berlusconi-Holding tauscht Pro-Sieben-Vorstand aus) Handelsblatt, 21 October 2025, <https://www.handelsblatt.com/unternehmen/it-medien/medienunternehmen-berlusconi-holding-tauscht-pro-sieben-vorstand-aus/100166359.html>

15 Solomon (2025), Who Owns the Media in Greece (Ποιοι ελέγχουν τα ΜΜΕ και την ενημέρωση στην Ελλάδα), <https://whoownsthemedia.gr/>

16 Rosa.gr (2025), The Journalists' Newspaper Now in the Hands of Dimitris Melissanidis (Στα χέρια του Δημήτρη Μελισσανίδη η Εφημερίδα των Συντακτών - Υπεγράφη το προσύμφωνο) (in Greek), 22 September 2025, <https://www.rosa.gr/koinonia/sta-cheria-tou-dimitri-melissanidi-i-efimerida-ton-syntakton-ypegrafi-to-prosymfono/>

17 A real-life test – Assessing the Ringier-Indamedia merger under the European Media Freedom Act, 7 November 2025, <https://mertek.atlatszo.hu/a-real-life-test-assessing-the-ringier-indamedia-merger-under-the-european-media-freedom-act/>

18 Mérték Médiaelemző Műhely, Last Glance (Utolsó Blikkre), 3 November 2025, <https://mertek.eu/2025/11/03/utolso-blikkre/>

19 The Hungarian news site of Radio Free Europe is being shut down (Megszűnik a Szabad Európa magyar híroldala), HVG, 20 November 2025, [https://hvg.hu/itthon/20251120\\_szabad-europa-megszunes](https://hvg.hu/itthon/20251120_szabad-europa-megszunes)

While in theory the Media Law introduced legal safeguards for maintaining a pluralistic market, reality shows that regulatory interventions have disproportionately advantaged pro-government media conglomerates. This contributes to unprecedented levels of media ownership concentration.<sup>20</sup>

The government in **Ireland** published in July 2025 the General Scheme of the Media Regulation Bill, which will implement the European Media Freedom Act.<sup>21</sup> But to date, the implementation has not fundamentally altered media market concentration or ownership controls. The new Bill promises updated merger rules and oversight and state advertising transparency, but legislation has not yet progressed.<sup>22</sup>

A high level of market concentration is a long-standing challenge in **Italy**. AGCOM,

the country's independent regulatory authority for telecommunications, broadcasting, postal services, and online platforms, is in charge of monitoring media pluralism, but the authority does not promptly deliver its reports (for example, the 2022 report was published in 2024), bringing into question the real value of its monitoring work.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, it does not address editorial independence as a concept distinct from media pluralism.

In August 2025, **Malta's** Office for Advertising and the Media was established as a part of the country's implementation of the EMFA.<sup>24</sup> It acts as a watchdog overseeing state advertising and media transparency and can compel media operators to hand over ownership details, contracts, financial records and other documents needed to ensure compliance with the EMFA. All companies in Malta are obliged to submit a Memorandum of Association with the

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20 International Press Institute, Hungary, Media Capture and EMFA Monitoring Report 2025, November 2025, <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/HUNGARY-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-Overview-1.pdf>

21 Department of Culture, Communications and Sport Minister O'Donovan secures government approval of the General Scheme of the Media Regulation Bill, 3 July 2025, <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-culture-communications-and-sport/press-releases/minister-odonovan-secures-government-approval-of-the-general-scheme-of-the-media-regulation-bill/>

22 Tara Kelly, Michael Madden, The Future of Media Mergers in Ireland Key changes proposed under the General Scheme of the Media Regulation Bill, Mayson Hayes and Curran, 24 July 2025, <https://www.mhc.ie/latest/insights/the-future-of-media-mergers-in-ireland>

23 Vigevani, Nicola Canzian, Marco Cecili, Monitoring media pluralism in the European Union, results of the MPM2025. Country report : Italy; Monitoraggio del pluralismo dell'informazione nell'Unione Europea : risultati del MPM2025. Rapporto : Italia, EUI, RSC, Research Project Report, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF), 2025, Country Reports, p. 22, <https://hdl.handle.net/1814/92896>

24 Times of Malta, New watchdog to oversee state advertising under EU media freedom rules, 7 August 2025, <https://timesofmalta.com/article/new-watchdog-oversee-state-advertising-eu-media-freedom-rules.1114345>

Registrar of Companies, which will display the details on the Malta Business Registry website. However, no specific legal obligations are in place for media companies to publish their media ownership structure on their own websites. The largest cable TV providers in Malta are owned and controlled by non-Maltese interests.

In 2025, the media group DPG acquired RTL Nederlands, increasing market concentration in **the Netherlands**. The Dutch competition authority, the Authority for Consumers and Markets (ACM), gave the go-ahead for the deal after reviewing it for 16 months and deciding that any competition concerns could be resolved through separate agreements.<sup>25</sup> Last year, ACM voiced concerns that the €1.1 billion deal could give DPG too dominant a position in the media market. The *Commissariaat voor de Media* (Commissariat for the Media) stressed that DPG's internal safeguards to protect editorial independence cannot fully eliminate risks, as structural factors might still influence editorial decisions.<sup>26</sup>

In 2025, both the TV distribution market and the broadcast audience market remained highly concentrated in **Romania**. National TV distribution and pay TV platforms are dominated

by a small number of operators. Analyses and national reports consistently highlight very high concentration indicators in distribution, which determines which channels gain wide reach and give bargaining power vis-à-vis advertisers.

While a legal base for assessing pluralism is in place in Romania, it is not properly enforced. This would require up-to-date market data, systematic scrutiny of beneficial ownership and sustained cross-institutional coordination between the CNA, the Competition Council and public finance authorities. Transparency needs to be strengthened, and ex-ante checks for media transparency with potential impact on media pluralism need to be introduced.<sup>27</sup>

Currently, there are no legal provisions to take into account the impacts on media market concentration and pluralism when it comes to media mergers and acquisitions in **Slovakia**. In all cases observed over the last few years, the Slovakian anti-trust authority limited its analysis to economic impacts and did not take into account pluralism or editorial independence when deciding about such deals. In theory, the Supreme Administrative Court of Slovakia should oversee merger and acquisition proceedings as well, but due to it being a

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25 DutchNews, Media group DPG's takeover of RTL Nederland set to go ahead, 16 May 2025 <https://www.dutch-news.nl/2025/05/media-group-dpgs-takeover-of-rtl-nederland-set-to-go-ahead/>

26 Commissariaat voor de media, Mediamonitor 2025, <https://www.cvdM.nl/documents/3394/84454-CvdM-Mediamonitor-2025-TG-PDFA.pdf>

27 The International Press Institute (IPI) and the Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC), "Media capture monitoring report: Romania", November 2025, <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/ROMANIA-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-Overview-5.pdf>

relatively new court, there are no cases yet in which it has overturned decisions.<sup>28</sup>

**Slovenia** has a ‘high-risk’ score in terms of market plurality according to the latest Media Pluralism Monitor, mostly due to levels of ownership concentration.<sup>29</sup> But the legal framework governing media ownership and the protection of media pluralism in Slovenia underwent significant reform in 2025 with the adoption of the new Media Act. The Act introduced strengthened rules on ownership transparency, concentration control and public interest safeguards. It also introduces a structured system for the ex-ante control of media concentration.

State financial support aimed at protecting media and pluralism continued in 2025. Slovenia’s Ministry of Culture distributed funds, providing co-financing of programme content production that is important for the pursuit of public interest in the media field.<sup>30</sup>

In **Spain**, in September 2025, the media company Atresmedia acquired Clear Channel Spain for approximately €115 million.<sup>31</sup> Atresmedia and Mediaset España control more than 80% of the advertising market share.<sup>32</sup>

## Media ownership transparency

Transparency of media ownership is an important tool which allows the public to be informed about who is behind the opinion-forming news they consume and which forms their opinion. Information on beneficial ownership can also help with preventing political or economic interference in the editorial rooms, as it can be used to hold outlets accountable. Although under the new European Media Freedom Act Member States are required to set up national databases, implementation is lagging behind. In many countries, information is still fragmented or limited, e.g. basic information, like

28 The International Press Institute, Media Capture monitoring report: Slovakia- measuring EMFA compliance, November 2025, <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/SLOVAKIA-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-2025-Final.pdf>

29 Media Pluralism Monitor 2025 results for Slovenia, <https://cmpf.eui.eu/country/slovenia/>

30 Slovenia, Ministry of Culture (Ministrstvo za kulturo) (2024), ‘Redni letni javni projektne razpis za sofinanciranje programskih vsebin medijev v letu 2025 (JPR-MV-2025)’, public call, 9 December 2024, [www.gov.si/zbirke/javne-objave/redni-letni-javni-projektne-razpis-za-sofinanciranje-programskih-vsebin-medijev-v-letu-2025](http://www.gov.si/zbirke/javne-objave/redni-letni-javni-projektne-razpis-za-sofinanciranje-programskih-vsebin-medijev-v-letu-2025)

31 ReasonWhy, Atresmedia acquires the Spanish subsidiary of outdoor advertising company Clear Channel for 115 million euros ( Atresmedia compra la filial española de la compañía de publicidad exterior Clear Channel por 115 millones de euros), Reason Why, September 2025, <https://www.reasonwhy.es/actualidad/atresmedia-compra-clear-channel-espana-2025>

32 InfoAdex, Annual Advertising Investment Study (Estudio de la Inversión Publicitaria en España) (2025), <https://www.gesmedia.es/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Estudio-InfoAdex-de-la-Inversion-Publicitaria-en-Espana-2025.pdf>

corporate addresses, is available, but ownership structures remain hidden.

In **Croatia**, media ownership transparency is limited. While shareholding disclosure is required, the law does not define ultimate beneficial ownership. This leaves room for hidden financial influence. In April 2025, a new media ownership and financing platform was introduced. It is available through the Agency for Electronic Media's website and provides general information on media outlets and their concessions and licenses, as well as information on the owners registered in official registers. In addition, the platform contains data for the past 10 years on the revenue of each individual media service provider.<sup>33</sup> And while this does improve transparency and access to information, ownership data remains fragmented across multiple registers, and enforcement is uneven.

Online and print media in **Romania** present a landscape marked by opaque ownership. Online news media in particular show weaknesses in ownership transparency, with beneficial owners often difficult to trace. Certain

portals and local media outlets are strongly influenced by a small group of financial backers and local actors.<sup>34</sup>

In **Malta**, no specific legal obligations exist for media companies to publish their ownership structures on their website or in other ways that are easily accessible to the public. All companies, however, are under an obligation to submit a Memorandum of Association with the Registrar of Companies, which will make available information such as shareholder details on the Malta Business Registry website. Due to a change of rules to access such information, these details will be made available to journalists.

The situation for media ownership transparency has not changed in **Germany**. Two legal instruments are in place: the Commission for the Investigation of Concentration in the Media and the commercial register, which is free of charge. Journalists can also consult the economic transparency register, which lists shareholders as well as beneficial owners.<sup>35</sup> Because databases and registers do not always reveal the actual decision-makers, the Media

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33 Agency for Electronic Media (AEM), Presentation of the Public Disclosure Platform for Media Ownership and Financing Data (Predstavljena platforma za javnu objavu podataka o vlasništvu i izvorima financiranja medija), <https://aem.hr/en/blog/2025/04/28/predstavljena-platforma-za-javnu-objavu-podatak-o-vlasnistvu-i-izvorima-financiranja-medija/>

34 The International Press Institute (IPI) and the Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC), "Media capture monitoring report: Romania", November 2025, <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/ROMANIA-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-Overview-5.pdf>

35 Transparenzregister, <https://www.transparenzregister.de/>

Ownership Monitor published its own transparency reports.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, in **Denmark**, media ownership transparency is supposed to be achieved via the Central Business Register, a practice media stakeholders find to be satisfactory.

The **Hungarian** Media Law makes it necessary for a media service or press product to be registered in the database of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH).<sup>37</sup> The register contains basic information such as legal or corporate name, address or registered office, postal address, email address, or website contact and telephone contact. It does not include ownership structure, which means that often journalists try to identify ultimate control and links through their research.<sup>38</sup>

In **Italy**, media ownership data remains limited due to the lack of obligation for registered companies to publish information on their ownership structure. This information is now only accessible through direct request via Generalised Civic Access to AGCOM.<sup>39</sup>

The media market in **Romania** appears to be diverse but is vulnerable to political and economic influence, and a lack of ownership transparency persists. Acquisitions in 2025, such as the purchase of the independent outlet G4media by the Romanian media company Titluri Quality have brought this problem back into the public debate. The move makes Titluri Quality, which also owns the news platform mediafax.ro, the largest online media conglomerate.<sup>40</sup>

Due to the absence of adequate legal transparency requirements, the public is unable to identify who stands behind a media outlet, e.g. due to contact details not being up-to-date, and what political or commercial interests may influence its editorial line.

A new law in **Greece** (Law 5212/2025) aims to update the framework for the Print Media Registry and Online Media Registry, simplify registration, reduce administrative burden and further strengthen transparency in the print and online media sector.<sup>41</sup> It also expands the scope of the online registry to cover online

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36 Media Ownership Monitor Germany, Indicators of Risk to Media Pluralism: Ownership Transparency. <https://germany.mom-gmr.org/en/findings/indicators/#ownership-transparency>

37 Hungarian Media Law, Art. 41.

38 International Press Institute, Hungary: Media Capture and EMFA Monitoring Report 2025 (2025), <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/HUNGARY-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-Overview-1.pdf>

39 See footnote 22

40 Gândul article, "G4media.ro group acquired by Titluri Quality, creating Romania's largest digital media group", 13 August 2025, [www.gandul.ro/diverse/g4media-ro-group-acquired-by-titluri-quality-creating-romaniias-largest-digital-media-group-20603012](http://www.gandul.ro/diverse/g4media-ro-group-acquired-by-titluri-quality-creating-romaniias-largest-digital-media-group-20603012)

41 Law 5212/2025 (FEK A' 105/23.06.2025), [https://www.karagilanis.gr/files/nomos\\_5212\\_2025.pdf](https://www.karagilanis.gr/files/nomos_5212_2025.pdf)

media where digital audio files (e.g. podcasts) are uploaded and published.

The Register of Beneficiaries, which could aid with more ownership transparency, however, is still not publicly accessible. Access is essentially limited to competent authorities and obliged entities/persons - meaning journalists' access is not straightforward.<sup>42</sup>

In **Ireland**, public databases, such as the Media Ownership Monitor Ireland, offer searchable data on ownership structures and cross-links between media entities. However, despite those being available, corporate ownership structures and beneficial ownership can still be complex.<sup>43</sup>

The new Mass Media Act in **Slovenia** establishes a new Media Register where media providers are required to submit detailed information on all direct and indirect owners (natural or legal persons), including their ownership shares or voting rights, as well as the identity of the beneficial owners.<sup>44</sup> However, the Media Register is currently still in the process of being established.

Even though the EMFA entered into force in August 2025, media outlets in **Spain** are not complying with transparency obligations, as they have not been publishing beneficial owners or detailing institutional advertising received.<sup>45</sup> There is also still no operational public register of media ownership.

However, the Democratic Governance Bill, which is under consideration since July 2025, plans to create a State Register of Media Service Providers with information on ownership structure, the annual amount of institutional advertising received and advertising revenue from third countries.

In **Bulgaria** implementation of existing rules is also inconsistent. Under Bulgarian law, media service providers must disclose their ownership structure. However, many outlets are not revealing their beneficial owners.

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42 International Press Institute (IPI) and Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC) (2025), *ibid.* <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/GREECE-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-Overview-1.pdf>

43 Transparency International Ireland tested access to beneficial ownership registers in 14 EU countries – and was refused by Ireland, 30 September 2025, [https://transparency.ie/news\\_events/ti-tested-access-beneficial-ownership-registers-14-eu-countries-%E2%80%93-and-was-refused](https://transparency.ie/news_events/ti-tested-access-beneficial-ownership-registers-14-eu-countries-%E2%80%93-and-was-refused)

44 Slovenia, The Media act (*Zakon o medijih*), 3 September 2025, <https://pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO8930>

45 Fernando Varela, Spanish media outlets are ignoring the European regulation governing them one month after it took effect ('Los medios españoles ignoran el reglamento europeo que los regula un mes después de su entrada en vigor), infoLibre, 8 September 2025, [https://www.infolibre.es/medios/medios-espanoles-ignoran-reglamento-europeo-medios-mes-despues-entrada-vigor\\_1\\_2057431.html](https://www.infolibre.es/medios/medios-espanoles-ignoran-reglamento-europeo-medios-mes-despues-entrada-vigor_1_2057431.html)

## Financing framework, including allocation of state advertising

State advertising is a crucial income stream for many media outlets. The allocation of state funds should be transparent, and clear rules should be in place. This is not the case in many countries, where even if such rules exist, they are difficult to enforce. However, some countries have taken steps to implement reforms and made the process easier to comprehend.

In **France**, the Audiovisual and Digital Communications Regulatory Authority (ARCOM) manages the procedures for granting and withdrawing television frequencies and fines. The procedures are fairly transparent. With regards to the granting of television frequencies, ARCOM puts out calls for projects, including certain specifications and pluralism requirements, which applicants have to meet.

In February 2025, the television channels C8 and NRJ12 ceased broadcasting. This was following an ARCOM decision not to renew their broadcasting due to numerous sanctions imposed on C8, including for incitements

to hatred (€7.6 million for 36 warnings and fines<sup>46</sup>).

Public broadcasters in **Germany** are financed through adaptable fees paid by citizens. At the end of 2024, the federal states rejected a 58-cent increase in the broadcasting licence fee proposed by an independent committee, putting public broadcasters under increasing economic pressure. The broadcasting corporations have lodged a constitutional complaint against this with the Federal Constitutional Court, whose decision is still pending.<sup>47</sup>

In the past, the financing model has been used by far-right actors as a pretext for political attacks against the institutions, labelling it a *Zwangsg Gebühr* (compulsory fee). In October 2025, the Federal Administrative Court decided that the payment of the broadcasting fee is linked to a diverse and balanced overall programme.<sup>48</sup> Under this precedent, contributors may in future cases challenge their payment obligations on the grounds of an alleged lack of diversity or balance in programming. The Court noted that current evidence does not indicate systemic imbalances, yet the decision nevertheless exposes public broadcasters

46 Appel aux candidatures national sur la TNT, l'Arcom prend acte de la décision du Conseil d'Etat 19 February 2025, <https://www.arcom.fr/presse/appeal-aux-candidatures-national-sur-la-tnt-larcom-prend-acte-de-la-decision-du-conseil-detat>

47 SWR, Federal States refuse increase in Broadcasting Fee until 2027 (Länder lehnen Erhöhung von Rundfunkbeitrag bis 2027 ab), 13 December 2025, <https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/rheinland-pfalz/kein-hoererer-rundfunkbeitrag-mpk-schweitzer-zufrieden-ard-zdf-halten-verfassungsbeschwerde-100.html>

48 Federal Administrative Court, Judgement of 15 October 2025 - BverwG 6 C 5.24 -, <https://www.bverwg.de/151025U6C5.24.0>

to heightened rhetorical attacks from far-right actors.<sup>49</sup>

As part of the implementation of EMFA in **Malta**, the Office for Advertising and the Media was established in August 2025. Its role is to oversee state advertising and media transparency. However, information about the allocation of indirect state subsidies for media outlets by the government, in the form of advertising or sponsorships, is not publicly available, and there is no legislation that regulates the process.

Transparency around licensing procedures, licence allocation, fines and penalties improved in 2025 in **Croatia** through the introduction of a new media ownership and financing platform introduced in April.<sup>50</sup>

At the same time, there is an extensive misuse of public funds by state bodies to influence media content, as well as the over-dependence of local media on public funds. According to

the CEM, already existing rules around transparency are difficult to enforce because there are no consequences when they are broken. There is also a need for stricter rules on fair and non-discriminatory distribution of state advertising.<sup>51</sup> Currently, concerns exist that media perceived to be close to public authorities are favoured in the allocation of funds.

No change has been made in **Hungary**, where there are still no regulations that limit the scope or set rules for the transparency of state advertising. It is known that state advertisers favour pro-government companies and exclude independent media. This has serious consequences for the media market. State advertising constitutes 30% of the overall ad market, and KESMA receives 75-80% of its revenue from state ads.<sup>52</sup>

The financing model in **Italy**, largely based on the RAI licence fee, currently does not comply with EMFA requirements for adequate, sustainable, predictable and multiannual financial

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49 Felix W. Zimmermann, A Gift for Public Broadcasting (Ein Geschenk für den öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunk), 15 October 2025, <https://www.lto.de/recht/meinung/m/gericht-erlaubt-klagen-gegen-rundfunkbeitrag>

50 Agency for Electronic Media (AEM), eMediji - Public Access to Media Ownership and Financing Data (eMediji - Javni pristub podacima o vlasništvu i financiranju medija), <https://aem.hr/about-the-agency/>

51 Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), Reforms without Protection, The Shrinking Space for Journalism in Croatia, 11 June 2025, <https://www.mfr.eu/reforms-without-protection-the-shrinking-space-for-journalism-in-croatia/>

52 European Commission, 2025 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Hungary, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2025 Rule of Law Report, The rule of law situation in the European Union, 8 July 2025, [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/524bd8d4-33ba-4802-891f-d8959831ed5a\\_en?filename=2025%20Rule%20of%20Law%20Report%20-%20Country%20Chapter%20Hungary.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/524bd8d4-33ba-4802-891f-d8959831ed5a_en?filename=2025%20Rule%20of%20Law%20Report%20-%20Country%20Chapter%20Hungary.pdf) p 20.

resources. It lacks clear, pre-established, objective transparency criteria, and it does not ensure stable multi-year funding.

According to an amendment of the 2026 budget law, the government proposes an overall reduction of €30 million over the next few years (2026-2028) in RAI licence fees paid by commercial businesses to the public service media.<sup>53</sup> If implemented, this measure would result in a material reduction in the resources allocated to RAI.

Under the EMFA, public authorities must establish clear criteria for state advertising. Coimisiún na Meá will have responsibility for the role in **Ireland**.<sup>54</sup> Currently, however, there is no legislative provision as the Media Regulation Bill has not advanced beyond the draft phase.<sup>55</sup>

The Media Act in **Slovenia** aims at increasing transparency in state advertising. Article 20

requires publishers to report all funds received from public bodies, while the ministry automatically updates data fields using official state databases. Article 21 obliges public entities and those under their predominant influence to submit annual data to the Ministry of Culture by the end of February. The Ministry is then responsible for making this information publicly available on its official website.<sup>56</sup>

In October 2025, the government in **Spain** announced a tender for a new state DTT license (Digital Terrestrial Television; a TV license) valid for 15 years. Only Mediaset España and minority shareholders of PRISA submitted bids.<sup>57</sup> Atresmedia, Vocentom, Kiss FM and PRISA itself did not participate. The limited competition raises concerns about the consolidation of the duopoly if Mediaset obtains the license.

The 2025 Institutional Advertising and Communication Plan allocates €161.16 million

53 Gaspari, Losso, Lotito, and Bergesio, Amendment No. 110.0.40 (Text 3) to Bill No. 1689, Senate of the Republic, <https://www.senato.it/show-doc?id=1486504&cidoggetto=1477272&leg=19&tipodoc=EMENDC>

54 Coimisiún na Meán, State Advertising, <https://www.cnam.ie/industry-and-professionals/codes-legislation/legislation/european-media-freedom-act/state-advertising/>

55 Department of Culture, Communications and Sport Minister O'Donovan secures government approval of the General Scheme of the Media Regulation Bill, 3 July 2025, <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-culture-communications-and-sport/press-releases/minister-odonovan-secures-government-approval-of-the-general-scheme-of-the-media-regulation-bill/>

56 Slovenia, The Media act (*Zakon o medijih*), 3 September 2025, <https://pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO8930>

57 TDT Ingresos de 2,5 M€ y un aval de 6 M€: los requisitos para optar a una licencia TDT, 20 October 2025, <https://dircomfidencial.com/medios/ingresos-de-25-me-y-un-aval-de-6me-los-requisitos-para-optar-a-una-licencia-tdt-20251020-0405/>

to 146 campaigns (an increase of 16% and a record high in the last 18 years).<sup>5859</sup>

## Public service media

Public service media play an essential role in democratic societies, acting as an independent, impartial and diverse source of information that operates for the public benefit and not for commercial profit. Unfortunately, this is not the case everywhere. In many Member States, governments influence public broadcasting in order to further their agenda. Last year saw the continuation of political pressure on many public broadcasters, as well as continued threats to their budgets.

Public service media in **Belgium** have been subjected to austerity measures. In July 2025, the management contract for RTBF, a public service broadcaster for the French-speaking community of Belgium, was amended on the initiative of the French-speaking Media

Minister, saying that RTBF should not become the centre of gravity for French-language broadcasting.<sup>60</sup> The amendment provides for €133 million in budget cuts by 2028, with several programs already being cut.

The situation in the Flemish-speaking part is similar. In July, a new management contract between VRT, one of the national public service broadcasters for the Flemish community, and the Flemish government was signed. The contract calls for savings of €16 million over the next four years, a freeze of salaries for five years and the cutting of 50 jobs.<sup>61</sup> In September, a reform of local French-language media was approved, calling for a one-third reduction of the number of media outlets. The High Council for Audiovisual Media issued an opinion pointing to the risk to pluralism and the quality of local coverage.<sup>62</sup>

In **Bulgaria**, political influence, lack of funding and transparency problems continue to

58 Ministry for Digital Transformation and the Civil Service (Ministerio para la Transformación Digital y de la Función Pública), Press release, “El Gobierno convoca el concurso de la nueva licencia de TDT”, 14 October 2025, <https://digital.gob.es/comunicacion/notas-prensa/secretaria-digitalizacion-e-inteligencia-artificial/2025/10/2025-10-14>

59 Institutional Advertising and Communication Commission, 2025 Institutional Advertising and Communication Plan (Plan de Publicidad y Comunicación Institucional 2025), January 2025, <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/serviciosdeprensa/cpci/Documents/Plan%202025.pdf>

60 RTBF, An amendment to the management contract, Minister Galant refocuses the RTBF’s remit, (**Un avenant au contrat de gestion : la ministre Galant recentre les missions de la RTBF**) 11 July 2025, <https://www.rtbef.be/article/un-avenant-au-contrat-de-gestion-la-ministre-galant-recentre-les-missions-de-la-rtbf-11574918>

61 VRT, *VRT unions announce action against cost-cutting measures starting Tuesday*, 8 September 2025, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2025/09/08/vakbonden-vrt-willen-vanaf-morgen-actievoeren-tegen-besparingspl/>.

62 High Council for Audiovisual Media, *Local media reform project: the sector submits its opinion*, 14 November 2025, <https://www.csa.be/172945/projet-de-reforme-des-medias-de-proximite-le-secteur-remet-son-avis/>.

impede the genuine independence of public service media.

The independence of HRT (Hrvatska radiotelevizija, Croatian Radiotelevision) in **Croatia** remains questionable, as the Programming Council and Supervisory Board are appointed through a politicised process. In September 2025, Siniša Kovačić was appointed as the director of the Croatian Reporting News Agency. In 2016, as the acting Director General of the national Radiotelevision broadcaster, Mr Kovačić was involved in controversies surrounding political influence and a corruption affair regarding external productions and contracts.<sup>63</sup> HRT also remains vulnerable to economic influence, with concerns about adequate, predictable funding as well as the reliance on state-controlled funding mechanisms. In 2025, HRT underwent a significant workforce reduction with the goal of cutting up to 700-800 jobs.<sup>64</sup>

**Denmark** has two media outlets considered as public service media: DR (officially the Danish

Broadcasting Corporation) and TV2 Denmark. They are considered to be independent. In 2025, the editor-in-chief of DR stepped down after the outlet aired a documentary about Greenland that was heavily criticised. The film dealt with Danish cryolite mining in its former colony. Discussions broke out about the amount of money made with these businesses and whether the number quoted related to profit or turnover. Minister of Culture Morgens Jensen called the documentary “poor journalistic craftsmanship”.<sup>65</sup> At first, DR stood behind the film, but later withdrew it. Producer Michael Bévort called the decision political. However, there is ongoing criticism, especially from right-wing parties, that public service media, and especially DR, are too left-leaning in their interviews and news coverage. The party Liberal Alliance called for the removal of government subsidies and demanded that the outlet should operate as a private broadcaster.<sup>66</sup>

The **French** Dati Bill aims to merge France Télévisions, Radio France, France Médias

63 TRIS portal, Maja Sever, President of the European Federation of Journalists: The Week When Zagrebačka Panorama Died and Politics Took Over HINA (Maja Sever, predsjednica Europske federacije novinara: Tjedan kad je umrla Zagrebačka panorama, a politika osvojila Hinu), 25 September 2025, <https://tris.com.hr/2025/09/maja-sever-predsjednica-europske-federacije-novinara-tjedan-kad-je-umrla-zagrebacka-panorama-a-politika-osvojila-hinu/>

64 Vuk TesijaBalkan Insight, Croatian Radio and Television Workers Rally Against Government Layoffs, 28 March 2025, <https://balkaninsight.com/2025/03/28/croatian-radio-and-television-workers-rally-against-govt-layoffs/>

65 Miranda Bryant, Greenland documentary forces Danes to confront their colonial heritage, The Guardian, 23 March 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/13/greenland-documentary-forces-danes-to-confront-their-colonial-heritage>,

66 Liberal Alliance, Citizens should be able to opt out (Liberalalliance: Borgerne skal kunne fravælge DR), 2025, <https://www.liberalalliance.dk/borgerne-skal-kunne-fravaelge-dr/>

Monde and the INA into a single entity under the direction of a single chief executive officer.<sup>67</sup> Several unions,<sup>68</sup> including the National Union of Journalists,<sup>69</sup> strongly oppose the project, denouncing the threat to the independence of public service media from political power and a lack of neutrality. A motion to reject the reform was adopted in July 2025 in the national assembly. It must go back for a second reading in the Senate.<sup>70</sup> A report by the Dati's own Ministry of Culture warns that keeping the status quo would pose a threat to public broadcasting.

While public service broadcasters in **Germany** continue to enjoy considerable editorial independence from the government and other state institutions, there has been increasing debate about their independence. In some cases, even government representatives accuse them of having one-sided political leanings. This has

translated into calls for adjustments to programming content.<sup>71</sup>

In December 2025, amendments to the State Media Treaty for Broadcasters<sup>72</sup> came into force. The official aim is to get up to speed with further digitalisation and to streamline public broadcasters. The latter in particular means a tougher austerity programme. The three major broadcasters, ARD, ZDF and Deutschlandradio, must cut a total of 16 linear radio stations, two linear television news channels and one linear children's programme. In addition, the federal states tightened the so-called ban on press similarity, making it more difficult for public broadcasters to use texts in their digital offerings.<sup>73</sup> While it was generally acknowledged that a reform was necessary, there were concerns that the federal states bowed to private media companies and right-wing attacks on public broadcasting.

67 France 24, FRANCE 24 coverage resumes as public media reform bill heads back to Senate, 30 June 2025, <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20250630-france-24-news-coverage-disrupted-as-staff-strike-against-public-media-merger>

68 CGT France, Public Broadcasting: The Struggle Paid Off (Audiovisuel public : la lutte a payé!), 1 July 2025, <https://www.cgt.fr/comm-de-presse/audiovisuel-public-la-lutte-paye>

69 Syndicat National des Journalistes, Ensemble, défendons l'audiovisuel public !, 28 June 2025, <https://www.snj.fr/ensemble-defendons-laudiovisuel-public/2413>

70 Laurent Geslin, All you need to know about France's public broadcasting reform, Euractive, 1 July 2025, <https://www.euractiv.com/news/all-you-need-to-know-about-frances-public-broadcasting-reform/>,

71 Kristina Dunz, Eva Quadbeck, A Talk with Wolfram Weimer (Wolfram Weimer im Gespräch), Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland, 2 October 2025, <https://www.rnd.de/politik/kulturstaatsminister-weimer-mahnt-reformen-bei-ard-und-zdf-an-und-warnt-vor-google-NIAPW5E7TFG3TPM4W6N4A5L35U.html>

72 Reform Treaty (Reformstaatsvertrag / 7. MÄStV), <https://rundfunkkommission.rlp.de/rundfunkkommission-der-laender/reformstaatsvertrag>

73 Tagesschau, This will change as a result of the Reform Treaty (Das ändert sich durch den Reformstaatsvertrag), tagesschau.de, 1 December 2025, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/reformstaatsvertrag-in-kraft-100.html>

Similarly to other countries, public service media in **Greece** receives most of its revenue through a licence fee. A new law in 2025, Law 5253/2025, aimed to modernise the legal framework governing the organisation and operation of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT S.A.) and strengthen its public character and competitiveness in the mass media market.<sup>74</sup> The law updates the public service framework by reshaping governance, oversight, and funding. It provides for a nine-member Board, with five members appointed by the General Assembly following a proposal by the competent minister and consultation with Parliament's Committee on Institutions & Transparency; two members are elected by ERT employees, one with financial/audit expertise and one from academia.<sup>75</sup> The law also strengthens the oversight structure, for example, ERT must now submit a transparency report on the use of the licence fee and publish it online.

Despite the EMFA entering into force in 2025, Greece has not yet introduced substantive reforms that would guarantee the independence of public service media, and the political and structural vulnerabilities remain largely unresolved.<sup>76</sup> The Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation and the Athens-Macedonian News Agency (ANA-MPA) continue to operate under varying degrees of political supervision.

Public service media in **Hungary** are heavily influenced by the government. State media broadcasts government propaganda without allowing space for criticism or questioning. In May 2025, public broadcasters showed a logo with “Voks 2025 Szavazzunk!” (“Vote 2025, let's vote”) on screen, an advertisement for the highly controversial national consultation initiated by the government against Ukraine's EU membership.<sup>77</sup> The Media Council imposed fines of just 1.5 million Ft. (€5,000) on media outlets for promoting the logo.<sup>78</sup>

74 Law 5253/2025 - Government Gazette 212/A/, Modernization of the legal framework governing the organization and operation of the “Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT S.A.)” and strengthening of its public character and competitiveness in the mass media market, Νόμος 5253/2025, 25 November 2025, <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/enemerose-tupos-radiophono-teleorase/nomos-5253-2025.html>

75 Law 5253/2025 (Gov. Gazette A' 212/25.11.2025), 25 November 2025, [https://www.aade.gr/sites/default/files/2025-12/%CE%9D5253\\_2025.pdf](https://www.aade.gr/sites/default/files/2025-12/%CE%9D5253_2025.pdf)

76 International Press Institute (IPI) and Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC) (2025), *ibid.*

77 Katalin Erdélyi: With Rogán's approval, public television is shoving the government's pro-Ukrainian propaganda in viewers' faces, (Rogán engedélyével tolja a nézők arcába a köztévé a kormány ukrájnas propagandáját), 12 June 2025, <https://atlatszo.hu/kozadat/2025/06/12/rogan-engedelyevel-tolja-a-nezok-arcaba-a-kozteve-a-kormany-ukrajnas-propagandajat/>

78 Népszava, Media Council fines several media outlets close to the NER over the Voks2025 logo, (Népszava: A Voks2025 logója miatt bírságolta meg több NER-közeli médiát a Médiatanács), 31 July 2025, [https://nepszava.hu/3289358\\_mediatanacs-birsag-nmhh-voks2025](https://nepszava.hu/3289358_mediatanacs-birsag-nmhh-voks2025)

The think tank Republikon Institute published an analysis of the evening news broadcasts of M1, the primary public service television broadcaster, from February to June 2025. The research showed that Fidesz-KDNP politicians were given 73% of screen time, whereas opposition politicians only got 27%, and virtually no negative news about Fidesz-KDNP was aired.<sup>79</sup>

The current functioning of **Italy's** public service media, RAI, is regulated by the Consolidated Law on Audiovisual Media Services (so-called TUSMA).<sup>80</sup> In recent years, several reform proposals have been advanced, both from the government and the opposition parties, to align with the European Media Freedom Act. In September 2025, the 8th Permanent Committee of the Senate adopted a unified text that became the basis for the continuation of the reform process.<sup>81</sup>

The functioning of RAI remains seriously undermined by undue political interference. Since the proposed appointment of government-backed Simona Agnes as RAI President

in October 2024, a majority of the RAI Supervisory Commission has boycotted voting sessions so the required majority for her appointment cannot be reached. This means that RAI does not have a properly appointed president.<sup>82</sup> While some proposals of the reform text can be seen as positive, such as the extension of the Board of Directors mandate from three to five years, others are more problematic. The proposal includes a lowering of the required quorum for the appointment of the Board of Directors and for confirming the President. Instead of a three-fourths qualified majority, an absolute majority would be enough to appoint Board members after the third vote, and confirming the President would be possible after the second opinion vote by the Supervisory Commission.

In July 2025, the news board of **Latvian** Public Service Media (LSM) adopted its new strategic priorities for 2026-2029. They state, amongst others, that content in foreign languages (including Russian, English and Ukrainian) will be produced and distributed only in the digital environment, and

79 Republikon Institute, ConnectEurope, Féléves közmédia-monitoring. A 2025. február-júliusi 19:30-as híradók alapján, pp. 10–11. (Half-yearly public media monitoring. Based on the 7:30 p.m. news broadcasts from February to July 2025), September 2025, [https://republikon.hu/media/165840/002\\_Koezmedia-feleves-jelentes\\_V3.pdf](https://republikon.hu/media/165840/002_Koezmedia-feleves-jelentes_V3.pdf)

80 Legislative Decree No. 208 of 8 November 2021, <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legislativo:2021-11-08;208>

81 Senato della repubblica, Legislatura 19<sup>a</sup> - 8<sup>a</sup> Commissione permanente - Resoconto sommario n. 210 del 17/09/2025, [http://www.senato.it/show-doc?leg=19&tipodoc=SommComm&id=1473376&part=doc\\_dc-allegato\\_a&rif=0](http://www.senato.it/show-doc?leg=19&tipodoc=SommComm&id=1473376&part=doc_dc-allegato_a&rif=0)

82 Albanesi, E. (2025), Il testo unificato sulla riforma della RAI in discussione in Commissione al Senato: uno “specchietto per le allodole” per l’Unione europea?, Articolo 21, 21 November 2025, <https://www.articolo21.org/2025/11/il-testo-unificato-sulla-riforma-della-rai-in-discussione-in-commissione-al-senato-uno-specchietto-per-le-allodole-per-lunione-europea/>.

linear radio broadcasting will be exclusively in Latvian from 2026 onwards. This directly affected Latvijas Radio 4 (LR4) – the Russian-language channel of former Latvijas Radio – which ceased its FM broadcast on 31 December 2025.<sup>83</sup>

Some Latvian politicians and public figures, as well as civil society, expressed concerns about the potential negative impact on social cohesion and media pluralism due to limiting content in Russian, as it might also limit access to fact-checked news and fuel disinformation in communities that still heavily rely on Russian-language media.<sup>84</sup>

No changes have been made to licensing procedures in **Malta**. Changes that have been made to enhance the independent governance and editorial independence of the public service have not been felt since their application in August 2025. As part of Malta's implementation of EMFA, the Public Broadcasting

Service's CEO role must now be issued by public call. The new law, however, does not provide for transparency with regard to the appointment of the chairperson and the management board of the PBS. PBS's Board of Directors is still appointed by the PM.

The lack of editorial independence of the state broadcasters remains an ongoing issue. In 2025, PBS came under fire when its lineup ahead of the elections featured presenters closely linked to the ruling Labour Party. This prompted criticism from viewers, political observers and industry insiders.<sup>85</sup>

On 26 November 2025, the parliament in **Romania** voted for new leadership for public media outlets TVR and SRR.<sup>86</sup> While both new appointees have a journalistic background, they enjoy clear political backing. The Boards of Directors of TVR and SRR continue to be composed exclusively of politically appointed members.<sup>87</sup> While both SRR and TVR are

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83 LSM.lv Ziņu redakcija, No sagatavošanās uz rīcību – Latvijas Sabiedriskais medijs nākamgad ieviesīs jaunu stratēģiju, 30 December 2025, <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/30.12.2025-no-sagatavosanas-uz-ricibu-latvijas-sabiedriskais-medijs-nakamgad-ieviesis-jaunu-strategiju.a628229/>

84 Reporters Without Borders, RSF and its partners are extremely concerned by Latvian proposal to ban Russian-language content on public service media, 9 September 2025, <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-and-its-partners-are-extremely-concerned-latvian-proposal-ban-russian-language-content-public>

85 TVM faces public outcry over labour-aligned programming ahead of elections, The Shift News, 26 September 2025, <https://theshiftnews.com/2025/09/26/tvm-faces-public-outcry-over-labour-aligned-programming-ahead-of-elections/>.

86 Pagina de media article, Președinții TVR și Radio România, validați de Parlament, 26 November 2025, [www.paginademedia.ro/stiri-media/adriana-saftoiu-robert-schwartz-radio-romania-tvr-22252199](http://www.paginademedia.ro/stiri-media/adriana-saftoiu-robert-schwartz-radio-romania-tvr-22252199)

87 Pagina de media article, Comisiile Parlamentare au avizat noii membri CA ai TVR și Radio România. Monica Ghiurco, membru CA la TVR din partea AUR. Astăzi urmează votul în plen, 18 November 2025, [www.paginademedia.ro/stiri-media/audieri-consilu-administratie-tvr-radio-public-22240767#google\\_vignette](http://www.paginademedia.ro/stiri-media/audieri-consilu-administratie-tvr-radio-public-22240767#google_vignette)

legally defined as ‘autonomous’ and ‘editorially independent’, both institutions continue to be subject to political interference.<sup>88</sup> The former head of TVR, Dan Turturică, stated in 2025 that interference did not focus on editorial content but rather staffing decisions, including appointments to management positions and prime-time programmes.<sup>89</sup>

Romania’s public service media is also under financial pressure. The funding for TVR has undergone significant changes. In the past, SRR and TVR received money through license fees paid by taxpayers. In 2025, both outlets operated on the basis of direct budgetary allocations, which placed them under the same regime of control and oversight as a ministry. This could lead to increasing political control.

At the end of 2025, the new Director General of TVR authorised the broadcast of an

investigation produced by the independent online media outlet Recorder. The investigation addressed corruption within the justice system and explicitly named senior figures from the political party that had supported the appointment of the new Director.<sup>90</sup>

In 2025, the media landscape in **Slovakia** underwent a dramatic transformation characterised by what domestic and international observers describe as a process of state capture.<sup>91</sup> The overhaul of the public service broadcaster STVR brought concerns regarding its independence, as new legislation exposed STVR to more direct political control and created a state of financial instability due to its direct link to the state budget without pre-set annual allocations. Political pressure also impacted broadcast content. Political discussions were largely replaced by formats where high-ranking

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88 The International Press Institute (IPI) and the Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC), Media capture monitoring report, Romania, November 2025, p. 6, <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/ROMANIA-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-Overview-5.pdf>

89 Pagina de media interview, „Dan-Cristian Turturică, șeful TVR în ultimii ani, vine LIVE în Studioul Paginademedi.ro”, 20 November 2025, [www.paginademedi.ro/stiri-media/dan-cristian-turturica-tvr-interviul-lunii-paginademedi-22244332](http://www.paginademedi.ro/stiri-media/dan-cristian-turturica-tvr-interviul-lunii-paginademedi-22244332)

90 Hotnews article, Documentarul Recorder a avut pe TVR 1 un vârf de audiență mai mare decât toate emisiunile TVR din 2025, mai puțin dezbateră electorală prezidențială / Câți români s-au uitat la „Justiție capturată” / Polemică pe marginea difuzării”, 11 December 2025, <https://hotnews.ro/documentarul-recorder-a-avut-pe-tvr-un-varf-de-audienta-mai-mare-decat-toate-emisiunile-din-2025-mai-putin-dezbaterea-electoralala-prezidentiala-cati-romani-s-au-uitat-la-justitie-capturata-2127836>

91 Ivan Godarsky, Public Broadcaster’s State Capture. Its Trust has Rapidly Declined, MEMO98, 17 June 2025, <https://www.memo98.sk/article/digital-news-report-2025-slovakia-public-broadcaster-state-capture-its-trust-has-rapidly-declined>

officials could deliver monologues without critical questions or pushback.<sup>92</sup>

The National Assembly in **Slovenia** adopted in December 2025 amendments to the Act on RTV Slovenia, modifying the existing legal framework governing the public service broadcaster.<sup>93</sup> It would change financing arrangements and certain governance aspects of the broadcaster, including the allocation of state budget funds for specific public service obligations such as minority and cultural programming.<sup>94</sup> Adopted changes also address certain short-term funding gaps but do not resolve the structural weaknesses of RTV Slovenia's financing model.

In the last months of its term, the government also approved a proposal for a new Act on STA (Slovenian Press Agency), introducing several measures aimed at strengthening the long-term independence and financial sustainability of the public service. Among others, it redefines the public service role and prohibits

the state from interfering in STA's editorial independence and content decisions.<sup>95</sup>

The Slovenian Association of Journalists criticised the STA law's provisions on financing and governance, noting that the adopted text does not materially improve financing arrangements and instead introduces excessive bureaucracy and restrictive mechanisms.<sup>96</sup>

Multiple cases of systemic political interference at both the state and regional levels were documented in 2025 in **Spain**. On 8 July 2025, protests took place in front of eleven regional RTV headquarters "in defence of public broadcasters so they are free of political interference". The protests were held on the same day that Concepción Pombo was elected as Director General of the Audiovisual Services Corporation of Galicia (CSAG, formerly Radio Television Corporation of Galicia). Pombo had been News Director for the last eight years, and workers, as well as the opposition, see her as the main person responsible for information

92 Memo98, Politické diskusie za 15 mesiacov - koalíciejšia STVR, bojkot hnutia Slovensko, 25 October 2025, <https://www.memo98.sk/sk/clanok/politicke-diskusie-za-15-mesiacov-koalicnejsia-stvr-ignoracia-hnutia-igo-ra-matovica>

93 Slovenia, Radiotelevizija Slovenija Act (*Zakon o Radioteleviziji Slovenija*), 15 July 2005, and subsequent modifications, <https://pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO4461>.

94 Al. Ma., 'DZ sprejel spremembe zakonov o RTV SLO, javnih financah in socialnem varstvu', *MMC RTV SLO, STA*, 19 December 2025, [www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/dz-sprejel-spremembe-zakonov-o-rtv-slo-javnih-financah-in-socialnem-varstvu/767849](http://www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/dz-sprejel-spremembe-zakonov-o-rtv-slo-javnih-financah-in-socialnem-varstvu/767849).

95 STA (2026), 'Državni zbor sprejel novi zakon o Slovenski tiskovni agenciji', *NI*, 3 February 2026, <https://n1info.si/novice/slovenija/drzavni-zbor-sprejel-novi-zakon-o-slovenski-tiskovni-agenciji/>.

96 STA (2025), 'Društvo novinarjev opozarja: v predlogu zakona o STA namesto varovalk nesmiselne omejitve', *NI*, 4 December 2025, <https://n1info.si/novice/slovenija/drustvo-novinarjev-opozarja-v-predlogu-zakona-o-sta-namesto-varovalk-nesmiselne-omejitve/>.

manipulation that has been denounced for more than seven years. The protest platform ‘RTVs públicas en luch’ said: “We have found that all political parties that come to power, all of them, put their hands in the public media and use them at will to show the reality they want us to create”.<sup>97</sup>

## Independent media and telecommunications authorities and bodies

Media and telecommunications authorities are tasked with supervising the national media market and enforcing its rules. To do so in an impartial and consistent way, they need to be able to work independently and without influence. While this is mostly the case on paper, media bodies often face political influence through the processes in which members and leadership roles are appointed. Additionally, many lack the funding and staff to fulfil their tasks.

A 2024 report by the Commission of the European Union on **Belgium** stressed that a growing point of concern was the relationship between the Journalistic Ethics Council (CDJ, *Conseil de déontologie journalistique*) and the High Council for Audiovisual Media (CSA, *Counsel Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel*).<sup>98</sup> Overlapping mandates had led to legal and procedural tensions. Following a 15 April 2025 Council of State decision, prerogatives of both institutions have been clarified.<sup>99</sup> Belgian public service broadcaster RTBF had received a warning from CSA following a segment the regulator considered an advertisement. CDJ joined RTBF in challenging the decision, noting that CSA had intervened on ethics and journalistic work in an unauthorised manner. The Council of State annulled the CSA decision and reinforced the CDJ’s interpretation of the articulation of competences between the two bodies. Namely, that the legislator entrusts the first line of action to the CDJ in terms of mixed complaints and limits cases of double control.<sup>100</sup>

97 Federation of Journalists’ Unions (FeSO), Rallies outside public broadcasters to demand they remain “free from political interference,” (Federación de Sindicatos de Periodistas (FeSO): Concentraciones ante las RTVs públicas para exigir que estén «libres de injerencias políticas), 8 July 2025, <https://fesperiodistas.org/concentraciones-ante-las-rtvs-publicas-para-exigir-que-estén-libres-de-injerencias-políticas/>

98 European Commission, *2025 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Belgium, SWD(2025) 901 final*, 8 July 2024, p. 12.

99 Council of State, Decision n° 262.987, 15 April 2025, <https://www.raadvst-consetat.be/Arrets/262000/900/262987.PDF>

100 Conseil de déontologie journalistique: Le Conseil d’État donne droit à l’action de première ligne du Conseil de déontologie journalistique sur les plaintes en matière d’audiovisuel, 18 April 2025, <https://www.lecdj.be/fr/le-conseil-detat-donne-droit-a-laction-de-premiere-ligne-du-conseil-de-deontologie-journalistique-sur-les-plaintes-en-matiere-daudiovisuel/?highlight=CONSEIL+D’ÉTAT&hilité=CONSEIL+D’ÉTAT>

The Council of Electronic Media (CEM) is the media regulator for radio and television in **Bulgaria**. While it is legally required to operate independently from the state, it has long been subject to criticism of lack of impartiality. Parliament and the President appoint CEM members, and a law is supposed to ensure financial autonomy. However, there is a lack of funding and staff.

In 2025, it was not possible to reach a majority for appointing a new Director General of the public broadcaster BNT. Emil Koshlukov, the current Director, has stayed in his role three years past his original mandate because none of the candidates were able to secure the necessary number of votes. Complicating the process are numerous appeals from certain candidates and subsequent suspension of the process by the courts.<sup>101102</sup> In the autumn of 2025, the Sofia District Court of Administration suspended the newest procedure for the election of Director General, which had originally been planned for 16 October 2025.<sup>103</sup> In September 2025, CEM issued a statement

regarding a letter Koshlukov had sent about the legal appeal.<sup>104</sup> He threatened to involve authorities to enforce sanctions and fines if CEM did not comply with recent court decisions.<sup>105</sup> CEM and observers criticised this. The ongoing dispute, as well as the failure to appoint a new Director General, has further damaged the reputation of the media regulator as well as the public service broadcaster.

In **Croatia**, the principal media regulator remains the Agency for Electronic Media (AEM), established under the Electronic Media Act. AEM performs administrative, professional, and technical functions for the Council for Electronic, which serves as its governing body and the primary regulatory authority for electronic media. For both institutions, their election processes remain a key issue. Members of the Council are appointed and can be dismissed by the Croatian Parliament without the voices of experts – making it subject to political will. There is still no dedicated regulatory body for print media. The first draft of the law, which would implement EMFA,

101 The Sofia Globe, Bulgaria's media regulator to hold new procedure to elect head of Bulgarian National Television, 15 July 2025, <https://sofiaglobe.com/2025/07/15/bulgarias-media-regulator-to-hold-new-procedure-to-elect-head-of-bulgarian-national-television/>

102 Radio Bulgaria, Council for Electronic Media fails to elect new director general of public service TV BNT, 15 July 2025, <https://bntnews.bg/en/post/137326/council-for-electronic-media-fails-to-elect-new-director-general-of-public-service-tv-bnt>

103 Sofia District Administrative Court Suspends New Procedure for Election of BNT Director General, 1 October 2025, <https://bntnews.bg/news/sofia-district-administrative-court-suspends-new-procedure-for-election-of-bnt-director-general-1358334news.html>

104 Council for Electronic Media, CEM's Position Regarding a Letter from Emil Koshlukov (СЪВЕТ ЗА ЕЛЕКТРОННИ МЕДИИ: Позиция на СЕМ по повод писмо от Емил Кошлуков), 11 September 2025)

105 <https://bntnews.bg/news/emil-koshlukov-kam-sem-sprete-farsa-1355506news.html>.

shows that AEM would be transformed into a new Media Agency, a single regulatory body with jurisdiction over the entire media sector.<sup>106</sup> In 2025, AEM launched a public platform for media ownership and financing transparency (*Platforma vlasništvo i financiranje medija*), providing easily accessible data on broadcasters and electronic publications.<sup>107</sup>

The Radio and Television Board (Radio- og TV-nævnet) is an independent public regulatory body in **Denmark** under the Radio- and Television-Act and is directly appointed by the Minister for Culture. The Danish Press Council (Pressenævnet) is an independent body handling complaints about the mass media under the Media Liability Act. Denmark's main media regulators are generally regarded as independent with low risk of political interference in decisions, though the ministerial appointment process for the Radio

and Television Board has sometimes been criticised for potential political influence. In 2025, the government announced intentions to introduce a publicly funded Ombudsperson for the media with expanded legal powers.<sup>108</sup> The Ombudsperson would be able to directly influence editorial content, report defamation and libel cases to the police and investigate these cases independently.<sup>109</sup>

ARCOM is, among other roles, the media supervisory and regulatory authority in **France**. Overall, ARCOM is an independent body, even if its funding by the State may impact its full independence. Members are appointed by various political bodies: one by the President of the Republic, three by the President of the National Assembly, three by the President of the Senate, one by the Council of State and one by the Court of Cassation.<sup>110</sup> In November 2025, the Journalism Ethics and Mediation

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106 Republica Hrvatska Ministarstvo Kulture i Medija, Usvojen Prijedlog zakona o provedbi Uredbe o uspostavi zajedničkog okvira za medijske usluge na unutarnjem tržištu kojim se preuzima Europski akt o slobodi medija, 20 November 2025 <https://min-kulture.gov.hr/vijesti-8/usvojen-prijedlog-zakona-o-provedbi-uredbe-o-uspostavi-zajednickog-okvira-za-medijske-usluge-na-unutarnjem-trzistu-kojim-se-preuzima-europski-akt-o-slobodi-medija/28852>

107 Agency for Electronic Media (AEM), Media Ownership and Financing Platform – Public Data on Media Ownership and Financing (Predstavljena platforma za javnu objavu podataka o vlasništvu i izvorima financiranja medija), <https://aem.hr/blog/2025/04/28/predstavljena-platforma-za-javnu-objavu-podatak-o-vlasnistvu-i-izvorima-financiranja-medija/>

108 Danish ministry of Culture, MEDIEANSVARSUDVALGET HAR AFLEVERET SINE ANBEFALINGER, 28 January 2025, [https://kum.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/medieansvarsudvalget-har-afleveret-sine-anbefalinger?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://kum.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/medieansvarsudvalget-har-afleveret-sine-anbefalinger?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

109 European Federation of Journalists, Denmark: MFRR partners oppose introduction of new state-funded media Ombudsperson, 19 September 2025, <https://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2025/09/19/denmark-mfrr-partners-oppose-introduction-of-new-state-funded-media-ombudsperson/>

110 Arcom: Gouvernance, <https://www.arcom.fr/nous-connaitre/notre-institution/gouvernance>

Council (CDJM) – a mediation body between journalists, media outlets, press agencies and the public – published a new recommendation concerning advertising practices.<sup>111</sup>

In **Germany**, the German Federal Network Agency (Bundesnetzagentur, BNetzA) has been designated as the German Digital Services Coordinator (DSC) under the Digital Services Act. However, funding for this new role is still lacking, and only a third of the necessary staff could be hired, limiting the capacity to enforce effectively.

The National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV) is the administrative authority responsible for the supervision and regulation of the radio and television market in **Greece**. While the NCRTV is set out as an independent authority, its independence is challenged by the politicised appointment procedure and recurring concerns about accountability and enforcement capacity. The main reason is the selection of members by a parliamentary committee where the ruling party has a majority.

The media and telecommunications landscape in **Hungary** remains largely unchanged, with no substantial improvements observed. The NMHH, which regulates telecommunications and media with its embedded Media Council, is formally independent but effectively controlled by the governing party. The NMHH's annual budget, incorporating the Media Council's funding, is determined by Parliament upon the president's recommendation. Additionally, the NMHH obtains revenue from its own sources.<sup>112</sup> In 2025, the NMHH's budget totalled 59.5 billion Ft. (€149.6 million), including the Media Council's operating budget of 736 million Ft. (€1.85 million).<sup>113</sup> The Media Council is responsible for investigating complaints about unbalanced reporting by public service media. In 2025, it received 59 complaints. None resulted in administrative action, with the Council either refusing to open proceedings or terminating them without substantive review.<sup>114</sup>

The National Audiovisual Council (CNA) is an autonomous public authority under parliamentary oversight in **Romania**. It acts as a guarantor of the public interest in the field of

111 Le Conseil de déontologie journalistique et de médiation (CDJM): Le CDJM publie sa nouvelle recommandation, Publicité ou information, comment éviter la confusion? >, 13 November 2025, <https://cdjm.org/2025/11/13/le-cdjm-publie-sa-nouvelle-recommandation-publicite-ou-information-comment-eviter-la-confusion.com>

112 Civil Liberties Union for Europe. (2025). Rule of Law Report 2025: Hungary country report, <https://www.liberties.eu/f/vdxw3e>.

113 Act LXIII of 2024 on the Consolidated Budget of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority for 2025, Annexes 1 and 2

114 NMHH decisions about balanced reporting, last access 16 April 2025, [https://nmhh.hu/tart/kereses?HND-TYPE=SEARCH&name=doc&fld\\_keyword=%22kiegyens%C3%BAlyozott%20t%C3%A1j%C3%A9koz-tat%C3%A1s%22&\\_clearfacets=1&\\_clearfilters=1&fld\\_compound\\_target=allfields&fld\\_compound=&page=1](https://nmhh.hu/tart/kereses?HND-TYPE=SEARCH&name=doc&fld_keyword=%22kiegyens%C3%BAlyozott%20t%C3%A1j%C3%A9koz-tat%C3%A1s%22&_clearfacets=1&_clearfilters=1&fld_compound_target=allfields&fld_compound=&page=1).

audiovisual communication. However, according to reports, it applies ineffective sanctions and operates with an insufficient budget.<sup>115</sup>

At the end of 2025, Mediasind, the Romanian journalists' trade union, requested during a meeting with the European Commission's Social Dialogue Committee for the audiovisual sector, support for launching infringement proceedings against the Romanian government for failing to comply with the European Media Freedom Act.<sup>116</sup> Mediasind argues that Romania has made no real progress towards depoliticisation and sustainability of public media institutions. On the other hand, the Union of Professional Journalists of Romania (UZPR) claimed in a statement issued in November 2025 that it had already participated in a meeting of the Senate's Culture Committee, where amendments to the Audiovisual Law (Law No. 504/2002) were discussed.<sup>117</sup>

In **Slovakia**, along with the restructuring of the public broadcaster STVR, a new legislative

initiative emerged in parliament aimed at a total transformation of media oversight. The proposal would create the National Media Office (NMÚ) and envisages a fundamental concentration of power in the hands of a single statutory body – the Chairperson of the Office – who would be directly elected and dismissed by the National Council of the Slovak Republic and is granted broad executive powers. The Chairperson would also independently approve the institution's internal statutes and organisational rules. This would essentially replace the current form of collective decision-making and make the regulatory body more vulnerable to political interference.<sup>118</sup> Also notable is the mechanism for dismissing the Chairperson: the National Council may remove them if they act in conflict with the institution's statutes. However, as the Chairperson drafts these statutes themselves, they effectively define the conditions under which they can be removed.

The Dutch Media Authority (*Commissariaat voor de Media*, CvdM) and the Authority for

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115 The International Press Institute (IPI) and the Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC), Media capture monitoring report: Romania, November 2025, p. 9, <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/ROMANIA-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-Overview-5.pdf>

116 Mediasind press release, Federația FAIR-MediaSind solicită Comisiei Europene sprijin pentru declanșarea procedurii de infringement împotriva Guvernului României, 8 December 2025, <https://mediasind.ro/federatia-fair-mediasind-solicita-comisiei-europene-sprijin-pentru-declansarea-procedurii-de-infringement-impotriva-guvernului-romaniei/>

117 Union of Professional Journalists of Romania press release, UZPR și-a prezentat, la Comisia pentru cultură și media a Senatului, setul său de amendamente la proiectul Legii Audiovizualului, 25 November 2025, <https://uzpr.ro/25/11/2025/uzpr-si-a-prezentat-la-comisia-pentru-cultura-si-media-a-senatului-setul-sau-de-amendamente-la-proiectul-legii-audiovizualului/>

118 The legislative proposal no. 1110 submitted to the National Council of the Slovak Republic <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/zakon&tMasterID=10576>

Consumers and Markets (ACM) continue to operate as independent regulators and generally contribute effectively to safeguarding media freedom and pluralism in **the Netherlands**. The CvdM participates in the newly established European Board for Media Services, and EMFA's rules are gradually being integrated into national practice, as outlined in policy communications from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.<sup>119</sup>

The Agency for Communication Networks and Services (AKOS) in **Slovenia** would have been tasked under the proposal for the new Media Act to conduct media concentration assessments and enforce anti-concentration measures. After having weak and inefficient media anti-concentration measures for several decades, media experts criticised that this demanding media regulatory area would be added to AKOS's tasks.<sup>120</sup> However, in the final text, the task was assigned to the Slovenian Competition Protection Agency (AVK). This change to the text was introduced without dedicated public consultation, a decision

criticised for undermining transparency and regulatory coherence.<sup>121</sup>

The Journalists' Court of Honour is a self-regulatory body co-founded by the Slovenian Association of Journalists and the Slovenian Union of Journalists, and its members are appointed by the founding organisations' representative bodies. In 2025, it published a decision relating to the Code of Ethics for 27 complaints.

The effectiveness of the Comisión Nacional de los Mercados y la Competencia (CNMC) in **Spain** is severely compromised by the failure to implement the Digital Services Act. Despite being the appointed Digital Services Coordinator, the repeal of Royal Decree-Law 9/2024 in January 2025 left it without sanctioning powers.<sup>122</sup> On 7 May 2025, the European Commission sued Spain before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) for non-compliance.<sup>123</sup>

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119 Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), Policy Communications on EMFA Implementation, 2024–2025.

120 L. M. (2025), 'Nov medijski zakon pod plazom kritik, To je potencialno nevarno v vsaki državi, N1, 7 January 2025, <https://n1info.si/novice/slovenija/nov-medijski-zakon-pod-plazom-kritik-to-je-potencialno-nevarno-v-vsaki-drzavi/>

121 Barbara Eržen, Zadnji hip večje spremembe, razpravo o zakonu o medijih bodo še nadaljevali, *Delo*, 8 April 2025, [www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/zadnji-hip-vecje-spremembe-razpravo-o-zakonu-o-medjih-bodo-nadaljevali-jutri](http://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/zadnji-hip-vecje-spremembe-razpravo-o-zakonu-o-medjih-bodo-nadaljevali-jutri)

122 'El decreto "ómnibus" del Gobierno: qué medidas se han tumbado y por qué se podrían haber presentado por separado', Maldita.es, 23 January 2025, <https://maldita.es/malditobulo/20250123/decreto-omnibus-medidas-por-separado/>

123 'Bruselas lleva a España al TJUE por no dar a la CNMC poderes en la ley de servicios digitales', The Objective, 7 May 2025, <https://theobjective.com/espana/tribunales/2025-05-07/bruselas-espana-tjue-cnmc-ley-servicios-digitales/>

## Online media

**Bulgaria** has still not appointed a dedicated Digital Services Coordinator. In May 2025, the European Commission sent a reasoned opinion calling on Bulgaria to comply with the Digital Services Act.<sup>124</sup>

In **Croatia**, the Law on the Implementation of the Digital Services Act was adopted in 2025, transposing key institutional and procedural obligations into national law.<sup>125</sup> The government designated the Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries (HAKOM) as the Digital Services Coordination (DSC) for Croatia.<sup>126</sup> Beyond the formal designation, there has been very limited practical implementation of the DSC's role. While HAKOM possesses strong technical expertise as a sectoral regulator, its role as a media-relevant supervisory authority under the DSA remains underdeveloped. There were also no significant legislative or policy developments to comprehensively address the financing framework

for online media. The online media market remains largely dependent on advertising revenues, which are predominantly captured by large online platforms.

The Supreme Court of **Estonia**, on 12 November 2025, delivered a judgement that social media should not be considered a public space.<sup>127</sup> The case was about a person who had posted a video on social media in which he cursed, mocked and insulted others. Under the Law Enforcement Act, a public space is defined as a territory, building, room or part that is made available to or used by an unspecified number of persons. The Court concluded that this must be interpreted as referring exclusively to physically existing places or objects. Consequently, social media does not fall within the definition of 'public place' and the individual was not found to have violated public order regulations applicable to public spaces.<sup>128</sup> While this demonstrates that social media is largely free from censorship, the ruling also raises concerns about how individuals

124 European Commission, Commission calls on Bulgaria to comply with the Digital Services Act, 7 May 2025 <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-calls-bulgaria-comply-digital-services-act>

125 Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries (HAKOM), Adoption of the Law on the Implementation of the Digital Services Act (Usvojen Zakon o provedbi Akta o digitalnim uslugama), 10 April 2025, <https://www.hakom.hr/en/adoption-of-the-act-on-the-implementation-of-the-digital-services-act/12067> <https://www.hakom.hr/hr/usvojen-zakon-o-provedbi-akta-o-digitalnim-uslugama/>

126 Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries (HAKOM), Decision Appointing HAKOM as the Coordinator for Digital Services of the Republic of Croatia (Odluka o imenovanju HAKOM-a Koordinatorom za digitalne usluge Republike Hrvatske), <https://www.hakom.hr/hr/odluka-o-imenovanju-hakom-a-koordinatorem-za-digitalne-usluge-republike-hrvatske/11630>.

127 <https://evrimagaci.org/gpt/estonian-supreme-court-limits-public-order-law-online-516194>

128 Supreme Court of Estonia (Riigikohus), Case No. 4-24-1037, 12 November 2025, <https://www.riigikohus.ee/et/lahendid/?asjaNr=4-24-1037/37>

may have greater freedom to engage in aggressive or abusive behaviour online.

In **France**, ARCOM is the national authority responsible for supervising social media platforms and networks. Moderation of illegal content remains too weak. The League of Human Rights and SOS Racism filed a complaint and referred to ARCOM in December 2025 for an unmoderated publication of crimes against humanity.<sup>129</sup>

The NMHH in **Hungary** is the designated Digital Services Coordinator. In 2025, the NMHH published an annual report describing its role and the DSA enforcement framework.<sup>130</sup> There has been an increase in blog posts presented as news-style articles on matters they claim are of public interest. Often, they contain defamatory content targeting individuals who are active in public life. Because these blogs are not registered with the NMHH, the Civil Code does not allow affected persons to initiate press rectification procedures against them,

even though their content is often amplified by pro-government media outlets.

Government-linked entities (state agencies, Fidesz officials, state-organised media outlets) dominated digital ad spending in Hungary in early 2025. Government-affiliated actors paid for 87% of the roughly €10.6 million (4.1 billion Ft.) spent on Google and Meta ads in Hungary.<sup>131</sup> Following Google and Meta's political advertising prohibition, advertisers recategorised political material under commercial headings.<sup>132</sup> This has significantly reduced ad transparency.

**Malta** has not introduced any new measures to supervise the online ecosystem. In particular, Malta has not taken actions to bolster the safety of journalists online or to protect women journalists in line with the European Commission's 2021 Recommendation on the Safety of Journalists. Online media portals receiving state advertising are now being supervised by the Office for Advertising and the Media.

129 LDH: Denial of Crimes against Humanity and Holocaust Denial on Social Media Platform X, LDH AND SOS Racism file a complaint against Grok's post, (LDH: Contestation de crime contre l'humanité et négationnisme sur le réseau social X: La LDH et SOS Racisme portent plainte contre la publication de Grok), 1 December 2025, <https://www.ldh-france.org/contestation-de-crime-contre-lhumanite-et-negationnisme-sur-le-reseau-social-x-la-ldh-et-sos-racisme-portent-plainte-contre-la-publication-de-grok-2>

130 Nemzeti Média- és Hírközlési Hatóság, Annual activity report of the Hungarian digital service coordinator, 26 August 2025, [https://english.nmhh.hu/article/254348/Annual\\_activity\\_report\\_of\\_the\\_Hungarian\\_digital\\_service\\_coordinator?utm](https://english.nmhh.hu/article/254348/Annual_activity_report_of_the_Hungarian_digital_service_coordinator?utm)

131 Political Capital, The Houdini Ads - How political advertisements slip through Google's and Meta's filtering systems, 19 December 2025. [https://politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article\\_read=1&article\\_id=3614](https://politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article_read=1&article_id=3614)

132 Political Capital, The Houdini Ads - How political advertisements slip through Google's and Meta's filtering systems, 19 December 2025, [https://politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article\\_read=1&article\\_id=3614](https://politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article_read=1&article_id=3614)

The 2024 and 2025 elections in **Romania** revealed significant shortcomings in the application of the DSA.<sup>133</sup> The emergence of entities tasked with verifying the accuracy of online content and the possibility of removing posts deemed non-compliant by authorised bodies has been perceived by parts of the public as a form of censorship.

The new Media Act in **Slovenia** extends the scope of regulation to digital media and new forms of media communication. Article 3 includes a definition of an ‘influencer’ as a person who periodically publishes content intended to influence public opinion or engages in commercial communication with a significant audience. Individuals who regularly publish content on online platforms with at least 10,000 followers fall within this category and are thus subject to specific transparency and content requirements.<sup>134</sup>

The Inspectorate for Culture and Media granted a three-month transitional period during which enforcement of applicable media content and transparency obligations was deferred, except in cases involving child protection and hate speech. With the end of the

transitional period, the Inspectorate has signalled that it will issue administrative penalties based on complaints, guided by its Annual Work Plan, strategic priorities and enforcement priorities.<sup>135</sup>

## Public trust in media

The Digital News Report 2025 in **Belgium** shows that the public trust in media in Belgium is considerably low, where 43% trust in news overall, down one percentage point compared to 2024.<sup>136</sup> There is a significant difference in media trust between the Flemish-speaking part (51%) and the French-speaking part (35%) of the country. The numbers show a worrying decline in media trust in comparison to 2016, when overall trust in the media stood at 51%.

In **Bulgaria**, the trust in the media is steadily declining, with recent reports showing numbers as low as 26% in 2025.<sup>137</sup> Part of the reason for these numbers could be the volatile political environment, but the same report also shows a high level of news avoidance (63%). The Bulgarian National Television and the Bulgarian National Radio are the most trusted outlets.

133 Coaliția „ONG-uri pentru Cetățean” (2025), *Starea democrației în 2024: anul marilor dezbinări*, [https://www.starea-democratiei.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/mic\\_final\\_starea\\_dem\\_2024-3\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.starea-democratiei.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/mic_final_starea_dem_2024-3_compressed.pdf)

134 Slovenia, The Media act (*Zakon o medijih*), 3 September 2025, <https://pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO8930>

135 Hari, N. (2026), ‘Konec poskusne dobe za vplivneže, kaj prinaša novi zakon?’, *Svet24*, 4 January 2026, <https://svet24.si/novice/slovenija/zakon-o-medijih-vplivnezi-inspektorat-ciril-komotar-minuta-1870954>

136 Ike Picone, Digital News Report 2025, 17 June 2025, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/belgium>

137 Reuters Institute, Digital News Report 2025, 17 June 2025, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/bulgaria>

In **Croatia**, studies show a slight decline in trust in the media. The Reuters Institute *Digital News Report 2025* states that 36% of the tested subjects trust “most news most of the time”, showing a slight decrease from 39% in 2017, with the most-watched commercial channels Nova TV and RTL among the most trusted.<sup>138</sup> Worryingly, there seems to be a trend of news avoidance, with 61% of participants stating they regularly or occasionally avoid news.

The *GLOBSEC Trends 2025* report in the **Czech Republic** shows that 57% of respondents say they trust “standard mainstream media”. It also shows that Czech participants had the lowest belief in conspiracy theories in the region, linking this result explicitly to the high consumption of standard news outlets.<sup>139</sup> The 2025 Digital News Report showed that trust in media has increased from the all-time low in 2023, reaching 33%.<sup>140</sup>

According to a 2025 survey commissioned by the Government Office in **Estonia**, Estonians trust Estonian-language television and radio

the most (80%), followed by national Estonian-language newspapers and news portals (76%). Among other ethnic groups, trust is more fragmented, and no single information channel enjoys high overall trust. Compared to the previous year, trust levels among Estonian respondents have remained stable, while trust among other ethnic groups has declined slightly.<sup>141</sup>

People’s trust in the media in **France** continues to deteriorate, according to a survey published in January 2025.<sup>142</sup> 62% of those asked are suspicious of what the media say (an increase of 5% since 2023), and for 44% of French people, the topics covered by the media lack diversity and are always the same.

A representative survey conducted by the opinion research institute, Infratest dimap, in May 2025 confirmed a generally high level of public confidence in the media landscape in **Germany**. According to the survey, 83% of all Germans rated the quality of the information provided as good or very good. 61% considered

138 Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, *Digital News Report 2025*, [https://www.odg.it/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/REUTERS-Digital\\_News-Report\\_2025\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.odg.it/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/REUTERS-Digital_News-Report_2025_compressed.pdf)

139 GLOBSEC, *GLOBSEC Trends 2025, Defending Freedom in Challenging Times*, GLOBSEC, May 2025, [https://www.globsec.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/GLOBSEC%20Trends%202025\\_1.pdf#page=38.03](https://www.globsec.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/GLOBSEC%20Trends%202025_1.pdf#page=38.03)

140 Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, *Digital News Report 2025*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (University of Oxford), June 2025, pp. 76-77, [https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Digital\\_News-Report\\_2025.pdf#page=76.08](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Digital_News-Report_2025.pdf#page=76.08)

141 Government Office (Riigikantselei), *Avaliku arvamus seireuuring*, June 2025, <https://www.riigikantselei.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2025-06/2025%2006%20AA%2023%20seire%20raport%20-%20avaldamiseks.pdf>

142 Franceinfo, *Près de deux tiers des Français ne font pas confiance aux médias sur les sujets d’actualité*, 14 January 2025, [https://www.franceinfo.fr/economie/medias/pres-de-deux-tiers-des-francais-ne-font-pas-confiance-aux-medias-sur-les-sujets-d-actualite-selon-le-nouveau-barometre-la-croix\\_7012100.html](https://www.franceinfo.fr/economie/medias/pres-de-deux-tiers-des-francais-ne-font-pas-confiance-aux-medias-sur-les-sujets-d-actualite-selon-le-nouveau-barometre-la-croix_7012100.html)

the information in the media as credible, which represents an increase of five percentage points compared to 2023. Contrary to supporters of other parties, 68% of AfD supporters believe that public service broadcasting is dispensable. Besides traditional media, the study also surveyed trust in social media platforms as sources of information on political events. The platforms, led by TikTok, consistently ranked at the bottom compared to other outlets.<sup>143</sup>

In **Greece**, public trust in the media remains extremely low and available indicators suggest further deterioration rather than recovery. In Reporters Without Borders' 2025 World Press Freedom Index, Greece ranks 89th globally. The report links chronically low trust to structural features of the media ecosystem.<sup>144</sup> The Reuters Institute *Digital News Report 2025* records that only 22% of Greeks surveyed trust news "overall".<sup>145</sup> Decline in trust was also observed for major outlets such as ERT and SKAI during a period marked by public protests and strong criticism of mainstream coverage of the railway Tempio disaster.

In comparison to other EU Member States, people in **Hungary** trust radio, television and print media less, according to the Eurobarometer. However, trust in websites and social media is higher.<sup>146</sup> The NMHH published a survey in March 2025, which was conducted in December 2024, that underlines these findings.<sup>147</sup> Trust in media is generally low, being highest regarding television and lowest regarding print media. Hungarians think that online media is less biased than traditional media.

In **Ireland**, the Digital News Report Ireland 2025<sup>148</sup> revealed that RTÉ News (72%), local radio news (72%) and local newspapers (71%) are the most trusted news sources. Also, the *Irish Times* newspaper (70%) and BBC News (70%) rank high in trustworthiness. In **Italy**, trust in news has slightly increased in 2025, from 34% to 36%, but remains at a generally low level.<sup>149</sup> Those who use television (43%) and broadcasters' news websites (40%) show higher levels of trust in news, whereas those who rely on non-traditional sources (32%) and social media (27%) report lower levels of trust.

143 Julia Linn, The Media Germans trust in (Welchen Medien die Deutschen vertrauen), tagesschau.de, 12 May 2025, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/gesellschaft/medien-glaubwuerdigkeit-100.html>

144 Reporters Without Borders (RSF) (2025), World Press Freedom Index. Available at: <https://rsf.org/en/index>

145 Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2025), Digital News Report 2025. Oxford: University of Oxford. Available at: [https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Digital\\_News-Report\\_2025.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Digital_News-Report_2025.pdf)

146 Standard Eurobarometer 104 - Autumn 2025, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3378>

147 Nemzeti Média- és Hírközlési Hatóság: Médiatudatosság és a médiába vetett bizalom, 21 March, 2025, [https://nmhh.hu/cikk/251348/Mediatudatosság\\_es\\_a\\_mediaba\\_vetett\\_bizalom](https://nmhh.hu/cikk/251348/Mediatudatosság_es_a_mediaba_vetett_bizalom)

148 Dublin City University, Local news sources among the most trusted - Digital News Report, 17 June 2025, <https://www.dcu.ie/commsteam/news/2025/jun/local-news-sources-among-most-trusted-digital-news-report>

149 Cornia, A. (2025), Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2025 - Italy, Reuters Institute and University of Oxford, 17 June 2025, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/italy>.

A recent study in **Latvia** indicated a slight decline in public trust in media content, including on social media platforms. Respondents generally viewed media information cautiously, with many considering it only partially reliable.<sup>150</sup> Trust in commercial media has fallen, whereas perceptions of public media remain largely unchanged. 33% of respondents believe that public media content is mostly or fully trustworthy. In contrast, 24% of Latvians find commercial media content reliable. The study also highlights a broader decline in engagement with traditional media: public media reached 72% of the population in 2025, down 4% from 2024.

In **Malta**, trust in the media often differs depending on party affiliation. According to the latest Eurobarometer study, trust in Malta's written press remains the lowest in Europe, 20 percentage points lower than the EU average.<sup>151</sup> Trust in radio and TV fares better, at 46% and 50% respectively.

Public trust in the media in **Romania** stands at 26.9%, according to a 2025 public opinion barometer.<sup>152</sup> Of the surveyed institutions, the media ranks in eighth place, only better than the government and parliament. The low level of trust also affects major news brands and may be linked to sustained political attacks against mainstream newsrooms and persistent concerns regarding the opaque financing of certain media outlets by political parties. Notably, the only television news channel that appears to have maintained relatively stable public trust is Realitatea Plus, which openly promoted far-right narratives following the presidential elections in November 2025.

In **Slovenia**, the trust in the media has increased slightly compared to previous years.<sup>153</sup> Media outlets still attract lower trust than many other professions and institutions, reflecting ongoing scepticism among the public toward the credibility of the media environment.<sup>154</sup>

150 *Nacionālās elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu padome: Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību (2025)*, <https://www.neplp.lv/lv/petijumi>

151 Neville Borg, Most people don't trust political parties or the government: Eurobarometer, Times of Malta, 30 November 2024, <https://timesofmalta.com/article/most-people-don-t-trust-political-parties-government-eurobarometer.1101777>

152 Inscop Research website, national barometer, *June-July 2025*, [www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/03.07.2025-BAROMETRUL-Informat.ro-INSCOP-Incredere-institutii-nationale.pdf](http://www.inscop.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/03.07.2025-BAROMETRUL-Informat.ro-INSCOP-Incredere-institutii-nationale.pdf)

153 For more information, see Valicon webpage with the poll results on [www.valicon.net/sl/ogledalo-slovenije-jesen-2025/](http://www.valicon.net/sl/ogledalo-slovenije-jesen-2025/)

154 Ž. U. and STA (2025) 'Zaupanje v parlament raste, afera v Novem mestu potopila policijo in sodišča', *Delo*, 7 November 2025, [www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/zaupanje-v-parlament-raste-afere-v-novem-mestu-potopila-policijo-in-sodisca](http://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/zaupanje-v-parlament-raste-afere-v-novem-mestu-potopila-policijo-in-sodisca)

## Progress towards implementing European Commission recommendations

In the area of media freedom and pluralism, the European Commission's 2025 report contained 16 recommendations for the 22 countries surveyed in the *Liberties Rule of Law Report 2026*. Specifically, nine recommendations focused on the independence or funding of public service media, three concerned state advertising transparency, two concerned media ownership transparency, and two were related to the independence of media regulatory authorities. Collectively, this area accounts for the majority of the 27 media-related recommendations across the 22 countries covered in Liberties' report.

As shown in the table below, in 2025, there was either no progress or regression in implementing a majority of the recommendations in this area. Liberties' member organisations assessed either 'no progress' or 'backsliding' for 12 of the 16 recommendations; progress of some sort was noted for only four recommendations. In two of the areas, there was no progress by any Member State towards the implementation of any recommendation.

The areas covered under the 'media freedom and pluralism' umbrella are, both individually and collectively, essential to the existence of a truly free and plural media landscape, which makes the lack of progress on these recommendations extremely concerning. Adding to this concern is that the vast majority of these 16 recommendations are long-standing: 13 were first

issued in 2022, when the Commission began making recommendations to Member State governments, and have been repeated every year since, suggesting a lack of will on the part of Member States and ineffective enforcement on the part of the Commission. The remaining three recommendations were all issued for the first time in the Commission's 2024 report, while last year's report featured no new media recommendations for the 22 countries studied.

European Commission 2025 Recommendations: Media Freedom and Pluralism				
Area	# of recommendations	Countries with recommendations	In progress	No progress / Backsliding
Public service media	9	Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia	3	6
State advertising transparency	3	Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary	0	3
Media ownership transparency	2	Czech Republic, France	0	2
Independence of media authorities	2	Hungary, Poland	1	1

# Safety and protection of journalists

## Key findings:

- In 2025, smear campaigns, including by politicians, harassment, physical violence and even attacks with explosive devices were common for journalists.
- Media workers covering demonstrations continue to be vulnerable to violence from protesters or the police.
- SLAPPs remain a common issue for journalists and media outlets alike, with the number of cases even increasing in some countries. Despite the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive, there is still no effective protection.
- Women journalists continue to experience sexual harassment and even threats of rape while conducting their work.

## Attacks against journalists, including online harassment

The president of the **Belgian** Movement for Reform (*Mouvement Réformateur*) Party, Georges Louis Bouchez, physically threatened a journalist for RTBF, a public service broadcaster, and pressured the outlet to withdraw and modify a press article.<sup>155</sup> RTBF had reported about an article in the news magazine *Le Vif*, accusing Bouchez and his partner of having been spotted in a car with a PMR card, used by people with reduced mobility to, among other things, receive free parking. The article in its original form had contained errors, which Bouchez had told a RTBF journalist in a phone call. He also said the journalist “may need a card afterwards”, but later claimed to have been misunderstood.<sup>156</sup> The Association of Professional Journalists strongly condemned

155 Le Vif, There is tension between Georges-Louis Bouchez and RTBF following the broadcast of an audio clip, 10 August 2025, <https://www.levif.be/belgique/politique/le-torchon-brule-entre-georges-louis-bouchez-et-la-rtbf-apres-la-diffusion-dun-extrait-sonore/>; Le Soir, ‘An attack of rare violence’, RTBF’s SDJ strongly condemns Bouchez’s comments towards one of its journalists, 11 August 2025, <https://www.lesoir.be/692586/article/2025-08-11/agression-dune-rare-violence-la-sdj-de-la-rtbf-condamne-fermement-les-propos-de>

156 Daniel Fontaine, Menaces proférées par Georges-Louis Bouchez contre un journaliste de la RTBF, les coulisses de l’incident, RTBFAktus, 11 August 2025, <https://www.rtb.be/article/menaces-proferees-par-georges-louis-bouchez-contre-une-journaliste-de-la-rtbf-les-coulisses-de-l-incident-11586553>

the events, calling them “unacceptable and particularly serious”.<sup>157</sup>

A 2025 fact-checking mission in **Bulgaria** carried out by the Council of Europe’s Safety of Journalists Platform and the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), with the participation of AEJ-Bulgaria, highlighted multiple safety issues for journalists.<sup>158</sup> While the overall situation has improved in recent years, concerns remain about political pressure and online harassment. Physical attacks, on the other hand, are relatively uncommon. Nevertheless, in August 2025, journalist Blagoy Bekriev and camera operator Kaloyan Kalchev from NOVA TV were spat on, kicked and beaten by demonstrators while reporting on a protest in Sopot, during the visit of

the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.<sup>159</sup>

The situation for journalists in **Croatia** is worrying. The Croatian Journalists’ Association (HND) documented 27 incidents of attacks, threats and pressure against journalists.<sup>160</sup> In August 2025, a month marking the 30th anniversary of ‘Operation Storm’, a full-scale offensive during the Croatian War, war veterans attacked journalist Melita Vrsaljko for allegedly publicly insulting and attacking the dignity of Croatian war veterans. Vrsaljko said police told her to leave the city because they could not guarantee her safety.<sup>161</sup> This is not the first time Vrsaljko was attacked while conducting her work.<sup>162</sup> Writer and columnist Milijenko Jergović’s apartment building was

157 Association of professional journalists, AJP press release, 11 August 2025, <https://www.ajp.be/communique-de-la-ajp/>

158 Media Freedom Rapid Response, Bulgaria: Press Freedom Undermined by Political Polarisation and Delayed Reforms, 26 September 2025, <https://www.mfrr.eu/bulgaria-press-freedom-undermined-by-political-polarisation-and-delayed-reforms/>

159 AEJ Bulgaria: Протестиращите, нападнали екип на Nova телевизия, трябва да бъдат наказани, (AEJ Bulgaria: The protesters who attacked a Nova TV crew must be punished), (in Bulgarian), 2 September 2025, <https://aej-bulgaria.org/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%89%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%B-%D0%B8-%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%BF-%D0%BD%D0%B0-nova-%D1%82%D0%B5/>

160 Croatian Journalists’ Association, Safe Journalists in Croatia, Attacks and Political Pressure on Journalists, Alarming Trendy in the Region (Safe Journalists u Hrvatskoj: Napadi i politički pritisci na novinare, u regiji alarmantni trendovi), <https://hnd.hr/safe-journalists-u-hrvatskoj-napadi-i-politicki-pritisci-na-novinare-u-regiji-alarmantni-trendovi/>

161 Dnevnik, Branitelji u Benkovcu napali novinarku, Što je za to vrijeme radila policija? 22 August 2025, <https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/prekinut-festival-u-benkovcu-veterani-i-navijaci-marsirali-uz-ustaske-povike-napadnuta-novinarka---930653.html>

162 Metamorphosis Foundation, Fact-Checkers condemn physical attack against journalist of Croatian fact-checking service, Faktograf, 24 July 2024, <https://globalvoices.org/2024/07/24/fact-checkers-condemn-physical-attack-against-journalist-of-croatian-fact-checking-service-faktograf/>

vandalised with graffiti threatening him (“One August night, Milikenko will not fare well. Our State. Our Rules.”). The graffiti came just days after Jergović was verbally attacked while drinking a coffee in Zagreb.<sup>163</sup>

A study by the **Czech** Committee of the International Press Institute (IPI CZ) and Ipsos, which was published in April 2025, highlighted the consequences attacks on journalists can have on the free press. Almost 40% of the questioned media workers stated that they were experiencing attacks regularly (6% daily, 15% weekly and 17% monthly). Worryingly, 14% of the respondents have considered ending their careers due to the aggression they are experiencing.<sup>164</sup> In **France**, a collective of 131 French media outlets warned in December 2025 that intimidation against the press had “gone a step further”.<sup>165</sup> Threats could range from verbal or physical assaults to legal attacks.

Violence against journalists in **Germany** is increasing according to the government’s response to a parliamentary inquiry from the party Die Linke. Between 1 April 2024 and 30 November 2025, 818 politically motivated attacks were registered, of which 89 were incidents of violence. One-third of these attacks can be attributed to members of the right-wing.<sup>166</sup> On 11 August 2025, two journalists were attacked by neo-Nazis who left a regional train, coming back from a right-wing anti-CSD protest. Police were investigating twelve perpetrators.<sup>167</sup>

Reporting about the Israel-Palestine conflict has exposed journalists to attacks. The German ARD reporter Sophie von der Tann fell victim to a smear campaign while reporting about Israel’s policies in Gaza and the West Bank. Israel’s reserve army spokesman called her “the face of new German hatred of Jews and Israel” at a journalism award ceremony. Israel’s ambassador to Germany, Ron Prosor,

163 Vijesti Online, Miljenko Jergović had a threatening message written on the facade of the building he lives in in Zagreb, 29 August 2025, <https://en.vijesti.me/world-a/balkan/772546/Miljenko-Jergovic-had-a-threatening-message-written-on-the-facade-of-the-building-he-lives-in-in-Zagreb>

164 Czech Institute for Public Integrity (CZIPI) / Ipsos, Ipsos presentation for CZ IPI — media perception and trust survey in Czechia (Ipsos pro CZ IPI – prezentace), Czech Institute for Public Integrity (CZIPI) / Ipsos, 23 April 2025, [https://czipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Ipsos-pro-CZ-IPI-prezentace\\_23042025\\_FIN.pdf](https://czipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Ipsos-pro-CZ-IPI-prezentace_23042025_FIN.pdf)

165 Basta!, An appeal to the Ministers of Justice and the Interior: respect freedom of the press, strengthen the protection of sources (Appel aux ministres de la justice et de l’intérieur, respectez la liberté de la presse, renforcez le secret des sources), 11 December 2025, <https://basta.media/appeal-aux-ministres-de-la-justice-et-de-l-interieur-respectez-la-liberte-de-la>

166 Tagesschau, Number of attacks against journalists increase (Zahl der Straftaten gegen Journalisten gestiegen), 12 February 2025, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/gesellschaft/angriffe-journalisten-medien-100.html>

167 Taz, Young Journalists beaten and kicked (Junge Journalistinnen geschlagen und getreten), 11 August 2025, <https://taz.de/Neonazi-Angriff-am-Bahnhof-Ostkreuz/!6102904/>

accused von der Tann of “distorting and relativising history”.<sup>168</sup> Other media workers experience similar attacks when reporting critically about measures of the Israeli government.<sup>169</sup>

A very worrying event took place on 10 July 2025 in **Greece**. An explosive device containing five sticks of TNT was thrown at the home of journalist Yannis Pretenteris in the Athens area.<sup>170</sup> Pretenteris is one of the country’s most well-known journalists and the editor of the weekly newspaper *To Vilma*. According to the police, the perpetrator lit the fuse and threw the explosive into Pretenteris’ yard. Luckily, the device did not explode.

In **Hungary**, while media workers seldom face physical threats from the general public, their work is most often obstructed by state actors.

The biggest attack on journalists’ independent work was a Russian-style bill on the ‘Transparency of Public Life’. While the bill itself was postponed, it still led to a narrative of foreign-funded journalists who threaten national sovereignty. In June 2025, the Sovereignty Protection Office (SPO) launched a smear campaign against Válasz Online and journalist Szabolcs Vörös following his interview with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.<sup>171</sup> The SPO claimed that Válasz Online was able to conduct and publish the interview only because it was part of the “Ukrainian propaganda machine”.<sup>172</sup> The publication subsequently filed a defamation lawsuit against the SPO, which is currently ongoing.

In **Italy**, the Mapping Media Freedom platform showed 118 attacks against journalists in

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168 Noura Maan, Middle East-Correspondent Sophie von der Tann, award winning and under attack (Nahost-Korrespondentin Sophie von der Tann, preisgekrönt und attackiert), *Der Standard*, 5 December 2025, <https://www.derstandard.de/story/3000000299448/nahost-korrespondentin-sophie-von-der-tann-preisgekroent-und-attackiert>

169 For examples for other attacks by Israeli officials, see RSF, Intimidation Attempts against Sophie von der Tann / Colleagues show Solidarity (Einschüchterungsversuche gegen Sophie von der Tann / Kolleginnen zeigen sich solidarisch), 4 December 2025, <https://www.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de/artikel/pressemitteilungen/4148/einschuechterungsversuche-gegen-sophie-von-der-tann-kolleginnen-zeigen-sich-solidarisch>

170 International Federation of Journalists, Greece: Attempted bomb attack on journalist Yannis Pretenteris, 11 July 2025, <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/article/greece-attempted-bomb-attack-on-journalist-yannis-pretenteris>

171 See Safety of Journalists Platform Alert no. 122/2025, <https://fom.coe.int/en/alerte/detail/107642645;globalSearch=false>

172 Ukrainian propaganda financed by Brussels (Sovereignty Protection Office, Ukrán propaganda brüsszeli finanszírozással) (in Hungarian), 11 June 2025, <https://szuverenitasvedelmihivatal.hu/hirek/ukran-propaganda-brusszeli-finanszirozassal>

Italy in 2025, of which more than 50% were verbal attacks and 15 physical attacks.<sup>173</sup> 20 journalists are currently under police protection, the highest number in Europe and a signal for the ever-present climate of fear that particularly affects journalists working on investigations into organised crime.<sup>174</sup> In May 2025, the Italian Ministry of the Interior ordered armed police protection for Luciana Esposito following serious threats due to her reporting on criminal activity in connection with several clans in eastern Naples.<sup>175</sup>

On 17 October 2025, an explosive device detonated under the car of Sigfrido Ranucci, one of Italy's leading investigative journalists, outside of his home.<sup>176</sup> While no one was injured, two cars and a nearby home were damaged. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni condemned the attack. Just a few days prior, Ranucci had

revealed highlights of an upcoming series about the 'Ndrangheta organised crime group.<sup>177</sup>

While there were no physical attacks against media professionals in **Malta** in the last year, there were multiple instances of smear campaigns or discrediting by the government. In July, former Maltese EU Commissioner John Dalli published a post on Facebook in which he accused independent media platforms of conspiracy and that they “invented stories and hallucinations”.<sup>178</sup> In January 2025, Prime Minister Robert Abela attacked independent news outlet The Shift News, claiming that “90% of what they report contain falsehoods”, after several ministers were investigated because of news reports by the media house. Abela called the news outlets “forces of darkness” and “fake news blogs”.<sup>179</sup>

173 Media Freedom Rapid Response: Monitoring Report 2025, <https://www.mappingmediafreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/MFRR-Monitoring-Report-2025.pdf>

174 Reporters without borders, Italy 2025, <https://rsf.org/en/country/italy>

175 Falco, N. (2025), Luciana Esposito, threatened by the clans, has been given a bodyguard. She is the sixth journalist from Campania to receive protection (Assegnata la scorta a Luciana Esposito, minacciata dai clan. È la sesta giornalista campana sotto protezione), Fanpage, 23 May 2025, <https://www.fanpage.it/napoli/assegnata-la-scorta-a-luciana-esposito-minacciata-dai-clan-e-la-sesta-giornalista-campana-sotto-protezione/>

176 Committee to Protect Journalists, “Italian investigative journalist Sigfrido Ranucci targeted in car bombing”, 20 October 2025, <https://cpj.org/2025/10/italian-investigative-journalist-sigfrido-ranucci-targeted-in-car-bombing/>

177 France24, Bomb destroys prominent Italian investigative journalist's car, 17 October 2025, <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20251017-bomb-destroys-prominent-italian-investigative-journalist-car>

178 Former EU Commissioner accuses independent media platforms of conspiracy & fabrication, 10 June 2025, <https://www.mapmf.org/alert/33395>

179 Matthew Farrugia, [WATCH] Abela vows to protect under-fire ministers, ‘They have to pass over my dead body’, 15 January 2025, [https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/133165/watch\\_abela\\_vows\\_to\\_protect\\_under-fire\\_ministers\\_they\\_have\\_to\\_pass\\_over\\_my\\_dead\\_body](https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/133165/watch_abela_vows_to_protect_under-fire_ministers_they_have_to_pass_over_my_dead_body)

In the **Netherlands**, the recorded number of attacks against journalists increased for the third year in a row in 2025. There were 106 threats, 67 incidents of intimidation and 55 cases involving physical violence. Most of them occurred on the street while journalists or photographers were working.<sup>180</sup> Additionally, political rhetoric increasingly challenges the credibility of independent journalism. Notably, Vice-Prime Minister Mona Keijzer of the populist BoerBurgerBeweging (BBB) amplified online claims that put into question whether the public broadcaster NOS spreads propaganda.<sup>181</sup> Over the course of a month, Keijzer posted or retweeted 12 messages with accusations of lack of neutrality and poor quality of information.<sup>182</sup>

The same is true for **Romania**, where instances of physical violence are uncommon, but journalists nevertheless face frequent verbal

intimidation and physical obstruction. These attacks are also being committed by those in power. The head of the Prime Minister's press office physically pushed journalists who were waiting to question the Prime Minister.<sup>183</sup> During the 2025 presidential election, verbal attacks and intimidation were especially prevalent. The leader of the main opposition party, AUR (*Alianta pentru Unirea Românilor*), repeatedly used aggressive rhetoric against journalists. Prior to the second round of the presidential elections in May 2025, he secretly recorded and publicly released a conversation with representatives of the television channel Digi24, an act widely criticised as an attempt to intimidate the press.<sup>184</sup>

Romanian journalist Sidonia Bogdan became the victim of a smear campaign and online attacks after she expressed her opinions on a range of highly polarising public issues on

180 262 incidents reported to PersVeilig in 2025; violence against journalists on the rise (PersVeilig: 262 incidenten gemeld bij PersVeilig in 2025, geweld tegen journalisten neemt toe) (in Dutch), 2 January 2025, [262 incidenten gemeld bij PersVeilig in 2025, geweld tegen journalisten neemt toe - PersVeilig](#)

181 NOS, Cabinet members distance themselves from suspicious X-message by Keijzer regarding NOS (Kabinetsleden nemen afstand van verdachtmakend X-bericht Keijzer over NOS), 28 November 2025, [Kabinetsleden nemen afstand van verdachtmakend X-bericht Keijzer over NOS](#)

182 Jan Hoedeman and Elodie Verweij, Mona Keijzer provokes House anger after attack on NOS: 'Truly ridiculous' (Mona Keijzer wekt toorn Kamer na aanval op NOS: 'Echt ridicuul'), AD NIEUWS, 27 November 2025, [Mona Keijzer wekt toorn Kamer na aanval op NOS: 'Echt ridicuul' | Politiek | AD.nl](#)

183 Pagina de media article, Incident in Parliament: A Government employee pushes journalists trying to ask questions to Prime Minister Ilie Bolojan (Incident în Parlament: Un angajat al Guvernului împinge jurnaliștii care încearcă să-i pună întrebări premierului Ilie Bolojan), 26 November 2025, [www.paginademedi.ro/stiri-media/angajat-al-guvernului-impinge-jurnalistii-care-incearca-sa-i-puna-intrebari-premierului-ilie-bolojan-22251951](#)

184 ActiveWatch open letter, Mr. Simion's war with the press represents his flight from the truth, violates the right to freedom of the press, and represents an attack on democracy (Războiul cu presa al domnului Simion reprezintă fuga sa de adevăr, încalcă dreptul la libertatea presei și reprezintă un atac la democrație), 13 May 2025, [https://activewatch.ro/articole/r%C4%83zboiul-cu-presa-al-domnului-simion-reprezint%C4%83-fuga-sa-de-adev%C4%83r-%C3%AEn-calc%C4%83-dreptul-la-libertatea-presei-%C8%99i-reprezint%C4%83-un-atac-la-democra%C8%99Bie/](#)

her personal Facebook account.<sup>185</sup> One of those issues was the appointment of Oana Gheorghiu, a co-founder of the Romanian NGO Dăruiește Viață (Give Life), as Deputy Prime Minister, which led to public criticism, among other reasons, due to some of Gheorghiu's statements being called anti-US. In her post, Bogdan had said this should be seen as rivalry between parties. Bogdan's post led to multiple days of attacks and discreditation by individuals, anonymous social media accounts and other journalists alike.<sup>186</sup> In an additional post, Bogdan made public her intention to file a criminal complaint against journalist Ovidiu Vanghele, whom she accuses of "abuse of human dignity".<sup>187</sup>

In 2025, the online platform Report Attack recorded 17 attacks against journalists in **Slovenia**, including insults and attacks on personal or professional integrity, use or threat of legal action, verbal threats, threats of physical

violence, harassment in comment sections or via social media platforms.<sup>188</sup> The number of reported attacks was higher than in the previous two years.

## Law enforcement's capacity to investigate attacks on journalists

**Croatia** maintains a formal mechanism for protecting journalists through law enforcement, with protocols established between the police and journalist associations to respond to threats, harassment, and attacks. The Ministry of the Interior is tasked with investigating attacks and safety incidents. However, reports show that enforcement remains uneven: investigations into attacks are often slow, and prosecutions are rare.

185 Sidonia Bogdan, Facebook post, 5 December 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/sidonia.bogdan.1/posts/pfbid-02n19azjNBZDELdFjxBqcgdQ2mojqgxB4eSB4r8KXsvMUDgJcW8sPw4zuFecPtF8el>

186 Laurențiu Ungureanu, Carmen Uscatu, co-founder of "Give Life", regrets a recent episode that sparked a public scandal (Carmen Uscatu, co-fondatoarea „Dăruiește Viață”, regretă un recent episod care a stârnit un scandal public), HotNews, 9 November 2025, <https://hotnews.ro/carmen-uscatu-co-fondatoarea-daruiește-viața-regreta-un-recent-episod-care-a-starnit-un-scandal-public-2105046>

187 Bianca Dogaru, The scandal between journalists Sidonia Bogdan and Ovidiu Vanghele is gaining momentum. Lili Ruse, from Digi24, and Maria Coman from Antena 3 are jumping to Sidonia's defense. "I'm glad that Sidonia has the courage to publicly take on this fight" / "As someone who is frequently cursed at by Vanghele, I understand perfectly what she's going through"(Scandalul dintre jurnaliștii Sidonia Bogdan și Ovidiu Vanghele ia amploare. În apărarea Sidoniei sar Lili Ruse, de la Digi24 și Maria Coman de la Antena 3. „Mă bucur că Sidonia are curaj să își asume public lupta asta" /"Ca una înjurată frecvent de la Vanghele, înțeleg perfect prin ce trece"), *gandul.ro*, 4 November 2025. <https://www.gandul.ro/actualitate/scandalul-dintre-jurnalistii-sidonia-bogdan-si-ovidiu-vanghele-ia-amploare-in-apararea-sidoniei-sar-lili-ruse-de-la-digi24-si-maria-coman-de-la-antena-3-20693965>

188 For more information, see the Report Attack platform on <https://novinar.com/prijavi-napad/>

On 31 July 2025, the Ministry of the Interior in **France** put out a ‘National Scheme on Urban Violence’ (*Schéma National Des Violences Urbaines*),<sup>189</sup> which was presented as a guide for the police on how to respond to incidents of urban violence. One sentence in the original guide relating to the work of journalists came under heavy scrutiny. Under the section “Legal Framework for Urban Violence”, it said that “the consideration of the status of journalists as enshrined in the national law enforcement scheme does not apply in a context of urban violence”. This raised concerns that this sentence could be used by the police to hinder the work of journalists.<sup>190</sup>

In September, an updated version of the guide was published. While it does not contain the abovementioned sentence, it also does not specify which legal regime applies to journalists in cases of urban violence. It only states that “the legal framework of urban violence is different from that of law enforcement”.<sup>191</sup>

The **Malta** Police Force has a unit which acts as the point of contact for journalists and the media. However, it is not specialised to investigate solely journalists’ safety. In response to a question by the Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation, our Maltese member organisation, the police said that since 2022, the Malta Police Force has conducted a total of 155 Threat of Life assessments, including 20 relating to journalists. However, it does not seem as though the police have taken any legal action against any individuals who have threatened or abused journalists in these instances. In February 2025, when journalists were attacked while covering the arraignment in a drug case, the Police reacted immediately and provided protection.<sup>192</sup>

189 Syndicat national de la police scientifique (SNPS), *Schéma national des violences urbaines (SNVU)* PDF, August 2025, <https://snpps.fr/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/SNVU.pdf>

190 Le Monde, *Le Monde*, New National Plan to Combat Urban Violence: “This new threat to freedom of the press is unacceptable (Nouveau schéma national des violences urbaines : « Cette nouvelle menace sur la liberté d’informer est inadmissible) (in French), 8 September 2025, [https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2025/09/08/nouveau-schema-national-des-violences-urbaines-cette-nouvelle-menace-sur-la-liberte-d-informer-est-inadmissible\\_6639972\\_3224.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2025/09/08/nouveau-schema-national-des-violences-urbaines-cette-nouvelle-menace-sur-la-liberte-d-informer-est-inadmissible_6639972_3224.html)

191 Ligue des droits de l’Homme (LDH), *National Scheme for Urban Violence and Operational Guide to Urban Violence (Schéma national des violences urbaines et guide opérationnel des violences urbaines)*, 7 October 2025, (Access 16 April 2026, <https://www.ldh-france.org/schema-national-violences-urbaines-et-guide-operationnel-des-violences-urbaines/>

192 Matthew Bonanno, *Watch*, Reporters intimidated with ‘disfigurement’ threats outside court, *Times of Malta*, 27 February 2025, <https://timesofmalta.com/article/watch-reporters-threatened-relatives-drug-heist-accused.1105807>

## Violence from law enforcement officers

In **France**, the State continues to undermine the confidentiality of journalistic sources through legal attacks and police seizures of journalists' equipment. In early 2025, a collective of 110 media outlets and journalistic organisations published an open letter to the French government calling for a reform of the law on the protection of journalistic sources.<sup>193</sup>

Calls to end police violence against journalists also became loud after journalists were attacked during budget protests. In September 2025 alone, six media workers were assaulted by law enforcement.<sup>194</sup>

While documenting a large demonstration at the Syntagma Square in Athens, **Greece**, in January 2025, photojournalist Marios Lolos was physically attacked by riot police.<sup>195</sup> At the end of the protest, Lolos was hit in the head with a flash grenade by a police officer. In video footage from the scene, a group of reporters

can be seen running when one of the police officers in riot gear throws the flash grenade towards them.

After protests in Brussels in October 2025 against the interception of a humanitarian boat mission to the Gaza Strip, **Belgium's** Comité P, responsible for monitoring police services, received 10 complaints about police violence. One of those was filed by journalist Erika Di Benedetto, who was at the demonstration to take pictures. While she was filming a police officer beating a woman, she was approached by another officer. Even though she identified herself as a member of the press, she was hit with a baton.<sup>196</sup>

Police in **Germany** were criticised following a demonstration against an AfD party conference in Saxony. The police surrounded the counter demonstrators, including 30 journalists. Media workers were not able to leave the blockade for 45 minutes. Additionally, during the remainder of the day, there were more instances in which journalists were blocked

193 National Union of Journalists and others, Open Letter to the Government Calling for Stronger Protection of Source Confidentiality, (Lettre ouverte au gouvernement pour le renforcement de la protection du secret des sources), 13 January 2025, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25486913-lettre-ouverte-au-gouvernement-pour-le-renforcement-de-la-protection-du-secret-des-sources/>

194 International Press Institute (IPI), France: MFRR condemn new resurgence of police violence against journalists, 25 September 2025, <https://ipi.media/france-mfrr-condemn-new-resurgence-of-police-violence-against-journalists/>

195 Mapping Media Freedom, 2025, <https://www.mapmf.org/alert/32914>

196 Joris Truyts, 10 complaints filed with the P Committee following the Flotilla protest in Brussels, "When I tried to film as a journalist, a police officer struck me with a baton, (10 klachten bij Comité P na Flotilla-betoging in Brussel: "Toen ik wou filmen als journalist, sloeg agent met wapenstok) (in Dutch), 6 October 2025, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2025/10/06/betoging-flotilla-brussel-politiegeweld-comite-p/>

by the police and not allowed to enter certain streets without AfD accreditation. While the police were clearing the protest, journalists fell victim to kicks and the use of pepper spray.<sup>197</sup>

## State surveillance and abusive lawsuits

### Surveillance of media workers and sources

Some steps have been taken in **Croatia** to adopt new or amend existing legislation to specifically regulate the use of spyware or other intrusive surveillance technologies with safeguards for journalists or media actors. Surveillance measures remain regulated under general criminal procedure and national security legislation.

Good news came out of **Hungary**. In 2025, the Constitutional Court ruled that a journalist's right to informational self-determination

was violated when courts rejected, without substantive review, his attempt to access information about surveillance carried out against him with Pegasus spyware.<sup>198</sup>

**Italy** lacks a comprehensive, dedicated legal framework regulating the use of spyware against journalists. In early 2025, cases emerged in which journalists such as Francesco Cancellato and Ciro Pellegrino were spied on using spyware, which did not prompt the Italian authorities to take convincing action to protect journalistic work.<sup>199</sup> A report by the parliamentary committee tasked with investigating the events did not produce concrete findings and was, according to several civil society actors, highly inadequate.<sup>200</sup> As of the end of 2025, no targeted action by the government had been taken to clarify the events.

In March 2025, it became public that two **Romanian** investigative journalists, Victor Ilie and Luiza Vasiliu, had been under surveillance, with their telephone conversations being wiretapped for several months as part

197 Menschen Machen Medien: Riesa, Restriction of Freedom of the Press (Riesa, Einschränkung der Pressefreiheit), 13 January 2025, <https://mmm.verdi.de/aktuelle-meldungen/riesa-einschraenkung-der-pressefreiheit-101101>

198 Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, You can't hide behind 'national security' without justification – we won our case at the Constitutional Court regarding the Pegasus affair, (Nem lehet indoklás nélkül a 'nemzetbiztonság' mögé bújni – nyertünk az Alkotmánybíróságon a Pegasus-ügyben), 16 May 2025, <https://tasz.hu/cikkek/nem-lehet-indoklas-nelkul-a-nemzetbiztonsag-moge-bujni-nyertunk-az-alkotmanybirosagon-a-pegasus-ugyben/>

199 Tondo Lorenzo, Kirchgaessner Stephanie, Second Italian journalist allegedly targeted with 'mercenary spyware', The Guardian, 1 May 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/01/second-italian-journalist-allegedly-targeted-with-mercenary-spyware>

200 Access Now (2025), No normalising spyware, Italy admits use, but not the full extent, Access Now, 6 June 2025, <https://www.accessnow.org/press-release/no-normalising-spyware-italy/>

of a criminal investigation conducted by the National Anticorruption Directorate.<sup>201</sup>

The newly adopted Media Act in **Slovenia** guarantees journalists the right to protect their sources and prohibits the use of intrusive surveillance software to monitor their communication on devices used by journalists.<sup>202</sup> The Media Act aligns with the European Media Freedom Act and the Digital Services Act.

### **Abusive lawsuits**

Threats of legal action to prevent the publication of information are not uncommon in **Belgium**. For example, the former mayor of Andenne, Claude Eerdeken, took journalist Mélanie De Grootte to court over an investigative video published in October 2024.<sup>203</sup> The investigation was published ahead of the municipal elections and accused Eerdeken of alleged intimidation, sexist behaviour and bullying. In mid-January 2025, the Walloon Minister for Local Authorities, François

Desquesnes, annulled the decision of the Andenne city council to take legal actions against De Grootte.<sup>204</sup>

In **Bulgaria**, the lack of judicial reform means that SLAPPs continue to be a problem for media workers. While the Association of Journalists Bulgaria documents SLAPPs against the media, there is no comprehensive monitoring of such cases. Investigative journalists, especially those working on topics like corruption and crime, are amongst the most targeted. Cases are often brought forward by major businesses and insurance companies, politicians and judges, and many of them involve extortionate demands for financial compensation.<sup>205</sup>

Many news outlets and journalists continue to be confronted with abusive lawsuits known as SLAPPs (strategic lawsuits against public participation). In **France**, the news outlet StreetPress alone is currently facing 13 legal proceedings, out of which twelve relate to accusations of ‘defamation’. The majority are

201 Hotnews article, ‘Two journalists, arrested by DNA in Iași after investigating a corruption case. ‘A terrible abuse, and someone should answer’ (Doi jurnaliști, filați de DNA Iași după ce au investigat un caz de corupție. ‘Un abuz îngrozitor, iar cineva ar trebui să răspundă’), 17 March 2025, <https://hotnews.ro/doi-jurnalisti-de-investigatie-filati-de-dna-iasi-dupa-ce-au-investigat-un-caz-de-coruptie-un-abuz-ingrozitor-iar-cineva-ar-trebuie-sa-raspun-da-1926901>

202 Slovenia, The Media Act (Zakon o medijih), 3 September 2025, <https://pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO8930>.

203 La Libre, A journalist from Wilfried in court after painting a portrait of Claude Eerdeken, 21 October 2024, <https://www.lalibre.be/belgique/elections-belges/elections-communales/2024/10/21/une-journaliste-de-wilfried-au-tribunal-apres-avoir-brosse-le-portrait-de-claude-eerdeken-4ETXMG5BHRDNHLVZMGWK4ZYBB4/>

204 Maïthé Chini, Belgian journalist sued for investigating conduct of Walloon mayor, 12 February 2025, <https://www.brusselstimes.com/1438977/belgian-journalist-sued-for-investigating-conduct-of-walloon-mayor>

205 Council of Europe’s Safety of Journalists Platform and the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), Bulgaria: Fragile Media Freedom Progress at Risk of Backsliding Without Urgent Reform, 2025, <https://www.ecpmf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/MFRR-Bulgaria-Report-2025.pdf>

being brought by actors from the far right who seek to undermine investigative work.<sup>206</sup> The French aerospace company Thales sued the independent media outlet Disclose for defamation. The legal action came after the outlet published information concerning Thales' exports of military equipment to Israel.<sup>207</sup>

SLAPPs remain a significant challenge for journalists in **Croatia**. Although preparatory steps have been taken to implement the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive, effective mechanisms for early dismissal of abusive lawsuits are not yet in place.

Similarly, the **Czech Republic** has not taken legislative steps to protect journalists from SLAPPs on the national level.<sup>208</sup> A study conducted by the Human Rights and Minority Protection Department of the Ministry of

Justice in spring 2025 found that SLAPPs are most often initiated by commercial companies or their representatives (62% of respondents had experience with this), followed by public figures such as politicians or officials (52%).<sup>209</sup>

The **German** Otto Brenner Foundation in 2025 published an empirical examination of SLAPPs.<sup>210</sup> Included was a survey of individuals affected by SLAPPs. The survey showed that intimidation occurs through threats of or actual lawsuits, but also contact attempts, demands for cease-and-desist letters and the involvement of law enforcement authorities.

The use of SLAPPs continued in **Hungary** in 2025. Prominent economic and political figures initiated multiple proceedings against multiple news outlets. Győző Orbán, the father of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán,

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206 Reporters Without Borders (RSF), 'En France, StreetPress sous pression judiciaire : l'urgence d'une transposition de la directive', 16 December 2025, <https://rsf.org/fr/en-france-streetpress-sous-pression-judiciaire-l-urgence-d-une-transposition-de-la-directive>

207 Gag order: Thales sues Disclose for defamation, (Procédure-bâillon: Thanles attaque Disclose en diffamation, 11 December 2025, <https://disclose.ngo/fr/article/procedure-baillon-thales-attaque-disclose-en-diffamation>

208 Government Council for Human Rights, Government of the Czech Republic, Resolution on strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) (Usnesení – šikanózní žaloby), Government of the Czech Republic (Vláda České republiky), 2025, <https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/rlp/cinnost-rady/zasedani-rady/Usneseni---sikanozni-zaloby.pdf>; Liga lidských práv, Protection against strategic lawsuits (SLAPPs) is still out of sight (Ochrana před šikanózními žalobami je stále v nedohlednu), Liga lidských práv, 24 September 2025, <https://llp.cz/blog/ochrana-pred-sikanoznimi-zalobami-je-stale-v-nedohlednu/>

209 Government of the Czech Republic, Questionnaire survey on strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP) (Dotazníkové šetření o šikanózních žalobách (SLAPP)), Government of the Czech Republic, 5 August 2025, [https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rlp/dokumenty/jine\\_dokumenty/dotaznikove-setreni-o-sikanoznich-zalobach-slapp-221165/](https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rlp/dokumenty/jine_dokumenty/dotaznikove-setreni-o-sikanoznich-zalobach-slapp-221165/)

210 Stefanie Egidy, Intimidation is the Goal (Einschüchterung ist das Ziel), Otto-Brenner-Stiftung, 19. March 2025, <https://www.otto-brenner-stiftung.de/was-wir-tun/publikationen/einschuechterung-ist-das-ziel/>

initiated proceedings before the Data Protection Authority against an opposition MP and five independent news outlets.<sup>211</sup> He alleged he was not a public figure and subject to unlawful processing of personal data following the publication of an article about the Hatvanpuszta estate owned by Orbán. One of the outlets, Gulyáságyú Média, based its article on aerial footage and publicly available information.

The owners of the Hungarian Company HELL continued their extensive litigation against Forbes in relation to wealth rankings and reporting on legal procedures.<sup>212</sup> Liberties' member organisation, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, which represents Forbes in

the proceedings, received a demand letter threatening the organisation with significant financial claims, notably 10 million Ft. (approximately €25,000), in response to the organisation's public communication on SLAPPs.<sup>213</sup>

Since the beginning of 2025, the Mapping Media Freedom has registered 23 new legal incidents targeting media professionals in **Italy**.<sup>214</sup> According to the available data, at the national level, the Italian television investigative programme Report<sup>215</sup> and the newsroom of the media outlet *Domani*<sup>216</sup> are among the most frequently targeted publications. Gaetano Caputi, Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, as well as Government

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211 Iván-Nagy Szilvia, Orbán's father reported Ákos Hadházy to the data protection authority over the Hatvanpuszta case, (Orbán apja jelentette Hadházy Ákost az adatvédelmi hatóságnál Hatvanpuszta miatt), (in Hungarian), 17 October 2025, <https://telex.hu/belfold/2025/10/17/hadhazy-akos-naih-orban-gyozo>

212 See the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union's related statement, 17 December 2025, <https://tasz.hu/cikkek/hat-eljarasban-gyoztunk-iden-a-hell-tulajdonosai-ellen/>

213 Társaság a Szabadságjogokért, This is how the wealthiest censor the press if we let them (Így cenzúrázzák a sajtót a leggazdagabbak, ha hagyjuk nekik), (in Hungarian), 13 February 2025, <https://ataszjelenti.444.hu/2025/02/13/igy-cenzurazzak-a-sajtot-a-leggazdagabbak-ha-hagyjuk-nekik>

214 Mapping Media Freedom, data [https://www.mapmf.org/explorer?q=report&f.from=2025-01-01&f.to=2025-11-30&f.country=Italy&f.type\\_of\\_incident=Legal+incident&show=list](https://www.mapmf.org/explorer?q=report&f.from=2025-01-01&f.to=2025-11-30&f.country=Italy&f.type_of_incident=Legal+incident&show=list)

215 For the number of legal incidents of which Ranucci and his team was a target of in the last 3 years, see: Mapping Media Freedom at [https://www.mapmf.org/explorer?q=report&f.from=2022-11-01&f.to=2025-11-30&f.country=Italy&f.type\\_of\\_incident=Legal+incident&f.source\\_of\\_incident=Legislation%3A+government%2Fpublic+official%28s%29,Political+party&show=list](https://www.mapmf.org/explorer?q=report&f.from=2022-11-01&f.to=2025-11-30&f.country=Italy&f.type_of_incident=Legal+incident&f.source_of_incident=Legislation%3A+government%2Fpublic+official%28s%29,Political+party&show=list)

216 For the number of legal incidents of which Domani was a target of in the last 3 years, see: Mapping Media Freedom at [https://www.mapmf.org/explorer?q=domani&f.from=2022-01-01&f.country=Italy&f.type\\_of\\_incident=Legal+incident&show=list&sort=timestamp%3Adesc](https://www.mapmf.org/explorer?q=domani&f.from=2022-01-01&f.country=Italy&f.type_of_incident=Legal+incident&show=list&sort=timestamp%3Adesc)

Undersecretary Giovanbattista Fazzolari, have each filed lawsuits against both outlets.<sup>217,218,219</sup>

While the climate for media workers in **Poland** has improved under the new government, there were still multiple convictions, as well as ongoing lawsuits. In December 2025, the Court of Appeal in Poznań issued a retrial of a case involving two bodyguards for businessman Mariusz Świtalski. According to the Court, there was enough evidence to link them to the kidnapping and murder of journalist Jarosław Zietara in 1989. Only three days later, a Judge from the District Court in Poznań prohibited Radio Poznań from linking Świtalski to the murder. For every instance they do, the public radio station would have to pay a fine of 50,000 zł (€11,800).<sup>220</sup>

In the absence of effective anti-SLAPPs legislation, abusive lawsuits remain an instrument to pressure journalists in **Romania**. The mayor of Târgu Jiu demanded 500,000 lei (€98,000) in damages from a journalist who criticised him.<sup>221</sup>

Strategic lawsuits against public participation were also used in **Slovakia** in 2025, including by high-ranking political figures. Still ongoing, for example, is a case filed in late 2024 by Prime Minister Robert Fico against Peter Bárđy, the editor-in-chief of Aktuality.sk and the publisher Ringier Slovak.<sup>222</sup> Fico seeks damages from each defender as high as €100,000 and objects to the use of a photograph on the cover of Bárđy's book 'Fico - Obsessed with Power'.

Minister of Culture Martina Šimkovičová filed a suit against former head of the Slovak

217 Mapping Media Freedom, Meloni's chief of staff Gaetano Caputi files lawsuit against Report, 31 July 2025, <https://www.mapmf.org/alert/33730>

218 Mapping Media Freedom, Domani journalists under investigation due to complaint by Meloni's chief of staff, 11 December 2024, <https://www.mapmf.org/alert/32574>

219 Mapping Media Freedom, Government undersecretary Giovanbattista Fazzolari files defamation lawsuit against Report, 2 February 2025, <https://www.mapmf.org/alert/33645>; Mapping Media Freedom, Undersecretary of State Fazzolari announces lawsuit against Domani, 12 February 2024, <https://www.mapmf.org/alert/31286>

220 P. Żytnicki, Businessman Świtalski demanded censorship. Court gags radio station for podcast about journalist's death (Biznesmen Świtalski zażądał cenzury. Sąd knebluje radio za podcast o śmierci dziennikarza), Wyborcza.pl, 12 January 2026, <https://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/7,36001,32517314,biznesmen-switalski-zazadal-cenzury-sad-knebluje-radio-za-podcast.html>

221 APADOR-CH press release, How much does freedom of expression cost in Gorj? (Cât mai costă libertatea de exprimare în Gorj?), 7 November 2025, <https://apador.org/en/cat-mai-costa-libertatea-de-exprimare-in-gorj/>

222 European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), Slovakia's Prime Minister launches SLAPP case against leading investigative journalist, <https://www.ecpmf.eu/slovakias-prime-minister-launches-slapp-case-against-leading-investigative-journalist/>

National Theatre (SND) Matej Drlička.<sup>223</sup> In December 2025, the Bratislava Regional Court issued a preliminary injunction prohibiting Drlička from making any public statement about the Minister. This case is cited by media experts as a dangerous precedent for using civil law to impose total silence on a critic of a public official.

In February 2025, **Slovenian** news outlet N1 Slovenija was hit with six separate civil defamation lawsuits filed by the University Psychiatric Clinic of Ljubljana, a public institution. The lawsuits are directed against N1 Slovenija, two journalists and associated legal entities in connection with investigative reporting on alleged violence and systematic issues in the clinic.<sup>224</sup> The Slovenian Association of Journalists publicly condemned the lawsuits and highlighted the troubling fact that a publicly

funded institution was pursuing legal action against journalists.<sup>225</sup>

## **New measures to improve the protection of journalists**

The government in the **Czech Republic** made amendments to the Criminal Code<sup>226</sup> which introduced penalties for crimes committed against a protected group or against a victim because of one of their unchangeable characteristics. The amendment extends protection to journalists and situations where the attack is motivated by the profession exercised.<sup>227</sup> The Czech IPI Committee set up the Safe Journalism Platform,<sup>228</sup> which aims to provide support and information for journalists who are facing threats, surveillance or other forms of pressure.

223 The Slovak Spectator, Slovakia just invented a real-life ‘She-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named’, 2 December 2025, <https://spectator.sme.sk/culture-and-lifestyle/c/slovakia-just-invented-a-real-life-she-who-must-not-be-named>

224 For more information, see Report Attack platform on <https://novinar.com/napad/napad-na-n1/>

225 STA and N1 (2025), ‘Društvo novinarjev: Zavržne SLAPP tožbe psihiatrične klinike proti N1’, *N1*, 26 February 2025, <https://n1info.si/novice/slovenija/drustvo-novinarjev-zavrzne-slapp-tozbe-proti-n1/>

226 Para 104 (§ 356) and 105 (§ 356 (1)) of Act No. 270/2025 Coll., amending Act No. 40/2009 Coll., the Criminal Code, as amended, Act No. 141/1961 Coll., on Criminal Procedure (Criminal Procedure Code), as amended, and other related acts. Available online: <https://www.e-sbirka.cz/sb/2025/270?zalozka=text>; Petr Svoboda: Criminal Code amendment: higher penalties for prejudice-motivated violence (Novela trestního zákoníku: předsudečné násilí – vyšší tresty), *Deník.cz*, 12 November 2025, [https://www.denik.cz/z\\_domova/novela-trestniho-zakoni-ku-predsudecne-nasili-vyssi-tresty.html](https://www.denik.cz/z_domova/novela-trestniho-zakoni-ku-predsudecne-nasili-vyssi-tresty.html).

227 Petr Svoboda, Criminal Code amendment: higher penalties for hate violence (Novela ího zákoníku: předsudečné násilí – vyšší tresty), *Deník.cz*, 12 November 2025, [https://www.denik.cz/z\\_domova/novela-trestniho-zakoni-ku-predsudecne-nasili-vyssi-tresty.html](https://www.denik.cz/z_domova/novela-trestniho-zakoni-ku-predsudecne-nasili-vyssi-tresty.html).

228 Bezpečná žurnalistika, Bezpečná žurnalistika (Safe Journalism) — resources for journalist safety and media freedom, Bezpečná žurnalistika, 2025, <https://bezpecnazurnalistika.cz/>;

The Cabinet of Ministers in **Latvia** in November 2025 approved the Journalists and Other Media Professionals' Safety Plan for 2025–2027.<sup>229</sup> Its aim is to strengthen media freedom, protect journalists from violence, threats, and persecution, and support the establishment of a robust legal and institutional framework. The Plan also emphasises the importance of public understanding of journalists' work and associated risks, involving not only civil society but also police, prosecutors, and the courts. The Ministry of Culture will establish a monitoring group to oversee the implementation. On 22 December 2025, the Latvian government approved the draft 'Law on the Protection of Persons Engaged in Activities in the Public Interest'<sup>230</sup> and the related amendments to the Civil Procedure Law.<sup>231</sup> Their aim is to strengthen protection against strategic lawsuits.

The **Slovenian** Association of Journalists continued to carry out various initiatives for the safety of journalists, such as maintaining the platform Report Attack. In 2025, the Ministry of Culture allocated limited funding to allow

for the continuation of these activities. There is, however, no interministerial or multidisciplinary coordination mechanism or a structured institutional framework for ensuring long-term sustainability and systemic protection of journalists.<sup>232</sup>

An original draft of the Media Act initially included a provision encouraging the conclusion of a national collective agreement for journalists and conditioning access to state aid on participation in collective bargaining. Both were removed from the final version adopted in September 2025.

## Gender-based violence

In **Croatia**, journalist Maja Sever, President of the Croatian Journalists' Union and the European Federation of Journalists, became the target of a sexist and vulgar insult by Dr. Boris Havel, professor at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb.<sup>233</sup> Havel posted an offensive post on his X account, referencing Sever's participation in an anti-fascist

229 Cabinet of Ministers, Journalists and Other Media Professionals' Safety Plan for 2025–2027 (Žurnālistu un citu mediju profesionāļu drošības plāns 2025.–2027. gadam), adopted on 11 November 2025, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/364395-zurnalistu-un-citu-mediju-profesionalu-drosibas-plans-20252027gadam>

230 Sabiedrības interesēs iesaistīto personu aizsardzības likums, <https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/structuralizer/data/nodes/68ee0795-751f-447a-bbed-8c3bb5881219/preview>.

231 Government of Latvia, Amendments to the Civil Procedure Law (Grozījumi Civilprocesa likumā), <https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/structuralizer/data/nodes/a4a63e16-7000-457b-abda-985127846887/preview>

232 The information provided by Špela Stare, Secretary General of the Slovenian Association of Journalists, 16 February 2026.

233 <https://safejournalists.net/alert/safejournalists-condemning-sexist-attacks-on-croatian-journalist-maja-sever/>

protest.<sup>234</sup> The post was widely condemned and the Faculty of Political Science issued a statement distancing itself from Havel.<sup>235</sup>

Two female journalists in the **Czech Republic** are facing aggressive defamation campaigns for doing their job. Both broke stories about male members of the government. The stories were about the Minister of Justice, who had received bitcoins with the equivalent value of 1 billion Kč (about €40 million) from a convicted drug trafficker. The other story concerned a criminal complaint filed by an ex-girlfriend of a Member of the Parliament, alleging that she had suffered years of sexual abuse, harassment and one instance of rape by him. Both journalists received threats, abuse and ridicule, often about their private lives and physical appearance.<sup>236</sup>

Broadcaster Ceska Televize issued a statement condemning calls for violence and hateful comments against the show *Chi Chi na gauči*, its creators and performers. *Chi Chi na gauči*

is a talk show hosted by the drag queen Chi Chi Tornado.<sup>237</sup>

After an on-air rape threat, radio host Sanne Gottlieb stepped down from the show 'Nattevagnet' in **Denmark**. During the show, listeners are able to call or send messages to the host about the topic of the broadcast. While broadcasting live in December 2024, Gottlieb received a rape threat from a listener. When she received another message from the same number a few weeks later, this time with no further threat, Gottlieb decided to call the number and record the conversation during a news segment. The man gave his name and told the host that he did plan to rape her, but he did not know where she lived – yet. Gottlieb went to the police the next day and an investigation was opened. She ultimately decided to step down as a host from the segment as she did not feel safe anymore.<sup>238</sup>

234 Boris Havel (@BorisHavel), 'Vele promatrači sa strane: "Jbš skup na kojem je Maja Sever najljepša."' X, 30 November 2025 <https://x.com/BorisHavel/status/1995193189511405796> accessed 16 April 2026. <https://x.com/BorisHavel/status/1995193189511405796>

235 <https://hnd.hr/profesor-boris-havel-dobio-opomenu-pred-otkaz-na-fpzg-u-zbog-vrijedanja-maje-sever/>

236 Jules Eisenchteter, Czech female journalists endure entrenched misogyny, online hate, Reporting Democracy, 7 August 2025, <https://balkaninsight.com/2025/08/07/czech-female-journalists-endure-entrenched-misogyny-online-hate/rd/>

237 Vše o ČT, Česká televize odsuzuje nenávistné projevy vůči pořadu Chi Chi na gauči a jeho tvůrcům, 13 August 2025, <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/pro-media/ceska-televize-odsuzuje-nenavistne-projevy-vuci-poradu-chi-chi-na-gauci-a-jeho-tvurcum/>

238 Anna Sol Jørgensen, For 10 years, Sanne has been taking care of 'The Night Watch'. But after a rape threat in the middle of the broadcast, it's over (I 10 år har Sanne passet 'Nattevagten'. Men efter en voldtægtstrussel midt i udsendelsen er det slut), Jo, 4 April 2025, <https://journalisten.dk/i-10-aar-har-sanne-passet-nattevagten-men-efter-en-voldtægtstrussel-midt-i-udsendelsen-er-det-slut/>

In **Italy**, journalists Francesca Barra<sup>239</sup> and Selvaggia Lucarelli<sup>240</sup> made public that they were among dozens of public figures whose images were manipulated and posted on a website hosting AI-generated nude photos. PersVeilig, an initiative of the Steering Group on Aggression and Violence against Journalists in the **Netherlands**, revealed that in 2025, 262 incidents of violence were reported to them. They also shared that the number of women who had made reports was lagging behind, with 39 reports made by female journalists. This is why PersVeilig will make it a priority in 2026 to reach out more to women.<sup>241</sup>

The ongoing project ‘Women in the Media: Ending Workplace Harassment in the Media Industry in Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina’<sup>242</sup> indicates in its initial findings for **Slovenia** that gender-based

violence, discrimination, and threats against women journalists emerge as widespread and structurally normalised features. Experiences range from sexist discreditation to physical threats and sexual harassment, frequently perpetrated by colleagues or superiors, while reporting remains consistently low.<sup>243</sup>

## Progress towards implementing European Commission recommendations

In the area of safety and protection of journalists, the European Commission’s 2025 report contained seven recommendations for the 22 countries surveyed in the *Liberties Rule of Law Report 2026*. In this area, the Commission’s

239 Natalia Distefano, Francesca Barra denounces a new sexist website: “My nude images. I never gave my consent, and these are fake” (Francesca Barra denuncia un nuovo sito sessista: «Le mie immagini nuda. Mai dato il consenso e queste sono false»), Corriere Della Sera Roma, 27 October 2025, [https://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/25\\_ottobre\\_27/francesca-barra-denuncia-un-nuovo-sito-sessista-le-mie-immagini-nuda-mai-dato-il-consenso-dd302891-6232-480d-9511-54ee47bfffk.shtml](https://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/25_ottobre_27/francesca-barra-denuncia-un-nuovo-sito-sessista-le-mie-immagini-nuda-mai-dato-il-consenso-dd302891-6232-480d-9511-54ee47bfffk.shtml)

240 Rosanna Scardi, Selvaggia Lucarelli: “Even my photos were fake on the site that strips women with artificial intelligence, more than 50 Italian victims” (Selvaggia Lucarelli, «Anche le mie foto fake nel sito che spoglia le donne con l’intelligenza artificiale, più di 50 le vittime italiane»), Corriere Della Sera Milano, 27 October 2025, [https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/25\\_ottobre\\_27/selvaggia-lucarelli-anche-le-mie-foto-fake-nel-sito-che-spoglia-le-donne-con-l-intelligenza-artificiale-piu-di-50-le-vittime-4af99b56-2239-4fa2-86fe-17d18eaadxlk.shtml](https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/25_ottobre_27/selvaggia-lucarelli-anche-le-mie-foto-fake-nel-sito-che-spoglia-le-donne-con-l-intelligenza-artificiale-piu-di-50-le-vittime-4af99b56-2239-4fa2-86fe-17d18eaadxlk.shtml)

241 Persveilig, 262 incidenten gemeld bij PersVeilig in 2025, geweld tegen journalisten neemt toe, 2 January 2025, <https://persveilig.nl/artikelen/meldingen-2025>

242 For more information, see the WIM project webpage on [www.zavod-krog.si/en/zenske-v-medijih](http://www.zavod-krog.si/en/zenske-v-medijih)

243 pse/STA (2025), A third of female journalists reported physical sexual harassment, according to a survey (Tretjina novinark glede na raziskavo poročala o fizičnem spolnem nadlegovanju), *Novinar*, 25 November 2025, <https://novinar.com/novica/tretjina-novinark-glede-na-raziskavo-porocala-o-fizicnem-spolnem-nadlegovanju/>

recommendations are generally vague, often resorting to language such as, “Continue ongoing efforts to strengthen legislative and non-legislative safeguards to improve the safety and protection of journalists”, although in some cases SLAPPs are explicitly mentioned, or protection against defamation penalties, as in Ireland’s recommendation.

As in the area of media freedom and pluralism, recommendations regarding the safety and

protection of journalists are long-standing. Of the seven recommendations in this area, six have been issued every year since 2022; only one, to Greece, is more recent (2024). However, Liberties’ member organisations report more progress towards implementation than in other areas, as four of the seven recommendations are deemed to be ‘in progress’. In the other three, ‘no progress’ was observed in 2025.

<b>European Commission 2025 Recommendations: Safety and Protection of Journalists</b>				
Area	# of recommendations	Countries with recommendations	In progress	No progress / Backsliding
Safety and protection of journalists	7	Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia	4	3

# Freedom of expression and censorship

## Key findings:

- Hate speech against journalists and other media workers remained a serious problem in 2025, particularly online.
- Efforts to fight disinformation have shown to be insufficient to stem its dissemination, with CSOs working at the national level reporting shortcomings with both national and EU legislation.
- Opposition to journalists accessing public information continues to be a problem, notably in Member States considered to have strong democratic and freedom-of-the-press traditions.

## Hate speech

Hate speech remains a significant problem across the EU, especially in the online sphere. Journalists, CSOs and rights and climate activists are often the targets of hate speech. These attacks, explored in more detail in the chapter ‘Safety and Protection of Journalists’, have been long-standing and continued with

great frequency in 2025. As in previous years, this report notes only modest efforts, if at all, to combat hate speech in the Member States and at the EU level. While the EU does have some tools to tackle hate speech, such as online hate through the Digital Services Act, the situation does not appear to be improving in any meaningful way. Indeed, the proliferation of online hate speech against journalists is acute and requires more action. According to the *Mapping Media Freedom Report 2025*,<sup>244</sup> 377 serious violations against journalists, including threats, hate speech and even death threats, were registered in online and digital environments in 2025, making it the most frequent setting for press freedom violations in the EU.

Against a backdrop of ongoing harassment and threats against journalists, in July 2025, following public criticism by **Croatia’s** Ombudsperson about how government institutions handle hate speech in the country, Prime Minister Andrej Plenković told the press that he’s free to ignore the Ombudsperson because “we choose her. She is there thanks to me.”<sup>245</sup> In **Estonia**, amendments to the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure regarding incitement to hatred and hate-motivated crimes were drafted

244 Media Freedom Rapid Response, Monitoring Report 2025 <https://www.mappingmediafreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/MFRR-Monitoring-Report-2025.pdf>

245 N1 Info, Plenković, as Prime Minister, to listen to the Ombudswoman? She is there thanks to me (‘Plenković: Pravobraniteljicu da ja slušam? Kao premijer? Ona je tamo zahvaljujući meni’), N1, 7 July 2025, <https://n1info.hr/vijesti/plenkovic-pravobraniteljicu-da-ja-slusam-kao-premijer-ona-je-tamo-zahvaljujuci-meni/>

in 2025, although civil society and other key experts, including the Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner, were not allowed to view the draft.<sup>246</sup>

**France's** ARCOM decided not to renew the broadcasting rights of several channels, in part because of their failure to comply with regulations around hate speech. Television channels C8 and NRJ12 ceased broadcasting in February and March 2025; C8 had received a total of 36 warnings and sanctions since 2012 for failing to comply with its legal obligations, particularly concerning human rights and hate speech.

A study published in 2025 by Italian Bocconi University, which analysed the impact of **Germany's** NetzDG law, found that increased content moderation significantly reduced hateful speech online.<sup>247</sup> While noting the ongoing concern that overly active content moderation can limit both freedom of expression and the plurality of online debate, the study found no

appreciable decline in the plurality of discourse on social media channels, suggesting that Germany's law against hate speech is having an overall positive impact without harming fundamental rights.

A study of the situation in **the Netherlands** found that online hate speech and threats against journalists were rising. A similar situation existed offline, as throughout 2025, multiple incidents of aggression and hate speech towards journalists were reported during local municipal council meetings, in particular those covering migration issues and public housing.<sup>248</sup> In 2025, public prosecutors in **Slovenia** continued to apply an overly restrictive interpretation of hate speech offences, focusing on direct incitement to violence while disregarding broader contextual elements, the totality of harm hate speech does to targeted groups, and relevant European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) case law, with the result being a serious under-enforcement of hate speech legislation.<sup>249</sup>

246 Kelly Grossthal, The Equal Treatment Network calls on the Ministry to take civil society's positions into account: the hate speech bill requires revision and further amendments (Võrdse kohtlemise võrgustik kutsub ministeeriumi üles arvestama vabakonna seisukohtadega: vaenukõne eelnõu vajab muutmist ja täiendamist), Estonian Human Rights Centre (Eesti Inimõiguste Keskus), 13 January 2026, <https://humanrights.ee/2026/01/vordse-kohtlemise-vorgustik-kutsub-ministeeriumi-ules-arvestama-vabakonna-seisukohtadega-vaenukone-eelnou-vajab-muutmist-ja-taiendamist/>

247 Carlos Rasmus Schwarz, Rafael Jiménez-Durán, Moderating Without Censoring, Bocconi University, 11 July 2025, <https://www.unibocconi.it/en/news/moderating-without-censoring>

248 NL Times, Threats, violence, and intimidation: 262 incidents reported against journalists in 2025, 2 January 2026, <https://nltimes.nl/2026/01/02/threats-violence-intimidation-262-incidents-reported-journalists-2025>

249 Kogovšek Šalamon, N. and Hrvatič S., Prosecutorial Practice on Hate Speech in Slovenia: Context, Trends, and Issues, *Annales: Series Historia et Sociologia*, 2025, pp. 487-502, <https://zdjp.si/ojs/index.php/ashs/article/view/270/149>

The European Commission held an event in 2025 titled ‘No Hate Speech Week 2025’, which kicked off on 18 June with a speech by Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection, Michael McGrath.<sup>250</sup> The event featured plenary sessions and workshops to exchange ideas to strengthen measures to combat hate speech in the EU, especially online. At the same time, last year brought criticism by several Member States against the EU for its lack of sufficient safeguards against hate speech. Among other things, **France, Austria and the Netherlands** urged the EU to pull funding from organisations that fail to uphold its values, and to redouble efforts to tackle hate speech.<sup>251</sup>

## Fighting disinformation

The spread of disinformation continues to be a problem across the EU, and the threat is becoming more severe as technologies such as generative artificial intelligence become both more effective and easier to access, and as politicians increasingly use disinformation to smear opponents and buoy their electoral chances. While several new initiatives to

combat disinformation were launched in 2025, the trend continues that existing tools to counter false information remain insufficient.

In March 2025, **Bulgaria** held the DisinfoHack 2025, bringing together students, experts and journalists to develop solutions to combat disinformation.<sup>252</sup> The event was held over two months, with participants undergoing training, mentoring sessions, and workshops with the aim of developing new strategies to identify and mitigate online misinformation and disinformation. This happened against a backdrop of increasing hostility and threats to journalists and fact-checkers in Bulgaria. Following Meta’s decision to halt its funding to fact-checking operations in the US, fact-checking organisations in Bulgaria, namely Factcheck.bg, became a target of smear campaigns, threats and harassment in 2025, complicating efforts to combat disinformation.<sup>253</sup>

At the close of 2025, **France** launched a new tool to combat disinformation called the French Response. It’s an official social media account, launched on X and maintained by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, that aims to respond to disinformation and

250 European External Action Service, Commissioner McGrath Opens the “No Hate Speech Week 2025” at the Council of Europe, 30 June 2025, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/council-europe/commissioner-mcgrath-opens-“no-hate-speech-week-2025”-council-europe\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/council-europe/commissioner-mcgrath-opens-“no-hate-speech-week-2025”-council-europe_en)

251 Elena Giordano, Nicholas Vinocur, EU urged to tighten anti-hate speech rules, Politico, 22 October 2025, <https://www.politico.eu/article/france-austria-netherlands-eu-tighten-funding-rules-tackle-hate-speech/>

252 GATE, Strong start of Bulgaria’s first innovative initiative to combat misinformation, 2025, <https://www.gate-ai.eu/en/news/strong-start-of-bulgarias-first-innovative-initiative-to-combat-misinformation>

253 AEJ-Bulgaria, Attacks on Factcheck.bg Show the Need for Fact-Checking (Атаките срещу Factcheck.bg показват нуждата от проверка на факти), 10 January 2024, <https://aej-bulgaria.org/factcheck-bg/>

attacks in satirical, social-media-savvy ways.<sup>254</sup> In October 2025, France initiated the ‘Paris Declaration on Multilateral Action for Information Integrity and Independent Media’, a coalition of more than 30 countries and international organisations that have committed to strengthening independent journalism to act as a bulwark against disinformation.<sup>255</sup> Other EU Member State governments to join the coalition include **Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia, Spain** and **Sweden**, among others.

The runup to the federal elections in **Germany** in February 2025 featured much discussion of disinformation and foreign interference.<sup>256</sup> There was particular focus on the spread of disinformation originating from outside the country and on the possibility of artificial intelligence being used in new ways to disseminate disinformation and sow confusion.

Eventually, the government levelled specific accusations against Russia, finding evidence of a large disinformation campaign ahead of the 2025 federal elections.<sup>257</sup>

2025 saw no efforts to curb the pervasive problem of disinformation in **Hungary**; on the contrary, the situation may have even deteriorated because of the elections scheduled for April 2026. It is widely known that the Orbán government remains one of the foremost disseminators of disinformation in the country and has fully captured public service media to assist in this effort. Hungarian public service media adopted a Russian intelligence statement suggesting that the EU and Ukraine were plotting to replace Orbán with opposition leader Péter Magyar.<sup>258</sup>

In 2025, **Ireland** experienced a rise in mis- and disinformation targeting migrants and minority communities, highlighting the need

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254 French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, ‘Quai d’Orsay Explains Its New Tool to Tackle Disinformation’, accessed 16 April 2026, <https://uk.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/quai-dorsay-explains-its-new-tool-tackle-disinformation>

255 La Maison Élysée, Paris Declaration on Multilateral Action for Information Integrity and Independent Media, 29 October 2025, <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2025/10/29/paris-declaration-on-multilateral-action-for-information-integrity-and-independent-media>

256 Süddeutsche Zeitung, Bundestag Election: Domestic Intelligence Service warns against Disinformation (Bundestagswahl: Verfassungsschutz warnt vor Desinformation), 24 January 2025, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/bundestagswahl-bundestagswahl-verfassungsschutz-warnt-vor-desinformation-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-250124-930-353952>

257 Süddeutsche Zeitung, Disinformation on Social Media: How to spot it easier (Desinformation in Social Media: So erkennt man sie leichter), 6 February 2025, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/wissen/bundestagswahl-desinformation-in-social-media-so-erkennt-man-sie-leichter-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-250206-930-367190>

258 Erik Uszkiewicz, How Orbán’s Anti - Ukraine Crusade Fuels Hungary’s Election War Maschine, Visegrad Insight, 10 October 2025, <https://visegradinsight.eu/how-orbans-anti-ukraine-crusade-fuels-hungarys-election-war-machine/>

to redouble efforts to push back against the spread of false information.<sup>259</sup> Ongoing debate around restricting Russian-language programming on public service media in **Latvia** continued in 2025, with some MPs and public figures warning that doing so could undermine social cohesion and media pluralism by cutting off factual, reliable information and increasing the risk that some audiences will then turn to sources that spread disinformation instead. As of the close of 2025, radio content in Russian will no longer be aired, although some minority-language content, including in Russian, Ukrainian and English, will be available via the LSM.lv digital platform.<sup>260</sup>

**Romania** still does not have a law on combating disinformation, and despite public pledges to act, 2025 brought no change to the status quo. However, the president announced the creation of a dedicated anti-disinformation

department within the Presidential Administration, aimed at strengthening institutional capacity to counter misinformation, especially online. Without clear definitions, procedures, or accountability mechanisms, this initiative risks reinforcing executive power in a sensitive area affecting freedom of expression, without adequate democratic oversight.<sup>261</sup> Throughout 2025, Liberties' Romanian member, APADOR-CH, sought clarification from the office of the president and the Supreme Council of National Defence (CSAT) regarding any concrete strategy, procedures, and safeguards for combating disinformation.<sup>262</sup> Despite asking specific questions, authorities refused to answer, including about who decides what does and does not constitute disinformation, and what remedies exist for those affected. At the same time, multiple incidents in 2025 involved citizens being contacted by police and pressured through fines, warnings, or informal

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259 Conor Hunt, Irish anti-migrant mobilisation enters 'more organised phase', RTÉ News, 9 July 2025, <https://www.rte.ie/news/2025/0709/1522655-irish-anti-migrant-mobilisation/>

260 LSM.lv News Editorial Office, From preparation to action – Latvian Public Media will implement a new strategy next year (No sagatavošanās uz rīcību – Latvijas Sabiedriskais medijs nākamgad ieviešis jaunu stratēģiju), 30 December 2025, <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/30.12.2025-no-sagatavosanas-uz-ricibu-latvijas-sabiedriskais-medijs-nakamgad-ieviesis-jaunu-strategiju.a628229/>

261 Cristian Pantazi, SOURCES President Nicușor Dan will establish a special department against disinformation in the Presidential Administration (SURSE Președintele Nicușor Dan va înființa un departament special împotriva dezinformării în Administrația Prezidențială), G4Media.ro, 7 January 2026, [www.g4media.ro/surse-presedintele-nicusor-dan-va-infiinta-un-departament-special-impotriva-dezinformarii-in-administratia-prezidentiala.html](http://www.g4media.ro/surse-presedintele-nicusor-dan-va-infiinta-un-departament-special-impotriva-dezinformarii-in-administratia-prezidentiala.html)

262 APADOR-CH, Combating disinformation must not become a tool of censorship (Combaterea dezinformării nu trebuie să devină instrument de cenzură), 13 June 2025, <https://apador.org/combaterea-dezinformarii-nu-trebuie-sa-devina-instrument-de-cenzura/>

requests to delete social media posts critical of authorities.<sup>263</sup> A partial definition of disinformation appeared only in the new Audiovisual Code adopted in 2025.<sup>264</sup> It should be noted, however, that this is an administrative act rather than a law, and applies only to audiovisual media providers, leaving the broader online and civic space largely unregulated but increasingly policed in practice.

In May 2025, the Board of **Slovakia's** newly formed public broadcaster, STVR, appointed Martina Flašíková as its Director General, following a closed-door meeting.<sup>265</sup> This is particularly troubling because Flašíková's prior experience was as a producer of pro-government disinformation. This, coupled with her family ties to people associated with the ruling party, has heightened concern that the country's public service media is well on its way to becoming a government propaganda machine.

The proliferation of disinformation in **Spain** is significant, and Liberties' Spanish member, Xnet, has warned authorities that the new Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising Regulation (TTPA)<sup>266</sup> will be insufficient to meaningfully change the situation. The TTPA's definition of 'political advertising' is abstruse, large platforms consistently refuse to fully comply with their obligations, and the regulatory approach seeks to correct content rather than tackle the root cause: the business model of disinformation based on mass profiling.

## Freedom of information

Journalists' right to access information is a necessary part of their job that enables them to fulfil their role as watchdogs and report on matters of public concern. The right to information is protected under EU law, foremost as a component of freedom of expression under

263 APADOR-CH, Cătălin Predoiu is a militiaman! (Cătălin Predoiu e un milițian!), 12 February 2025, <https://apador.org/catalin-predoiu-e-un-militian/>

264 National Audiovisual Council, DECISION No. 573 of June 25, 2025 on the Audiovisual Content Regulatory Code (DECIZIE nr. 573 din 25 iunie 2025 privind Codul de reglementare a conținutului audiovizual), CNA, 4 July 2025, [www.cna.ro/a-decizie-nr-573-din-25-iunie-2025-privind-codul-de-reglementare-a-continutului-audiovizual-jw3bdxt4gnjecm25skt7d6jy/](http://www.cna.ro/a-decizie-nr-573-din-25-iunie-2025-privind-codul-de-reglementare-a-continutului-audiovizual-jw3bdxt4gnjecm25skt7d6jy/)

265 Slovak Television and Radio, Martina Flašíková to lead Slovak public broadcaster, 13 May 2025 <https://enrsi.stvr.sk/articles/news/402021/martina-flasikova-to-lead-slovak-public-broadcaster>; Safety of Journalists Platform: Governance and Funding Structure of STVR Undermines Public Service Media Independence, 11 September 2025, <https://fom.coe.int/en/alerte/detail/107642814>

266 European Parliament and Council of the European Union, Regulation (EU) 2024/900 of 13 March 2024 on the transparency and targeting of political advertising (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 20.3.2024, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/900/oj>

Article 11 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.<sup>267</sup> Yet despite its importance, journalists' right to access information is both uneven and incomplete in many EU Member States.

In theory, freedom of expression is well protected in **Belgium** by Article 19 of the Constitution, which provides for the freedom to express one's opinions in all matters.<sup>268</sup> However, federal bureaucracies have adopted legal standards, within the scope of their powers, that regulate the right to access public documents. In practice, this complicates journalists' ability to access such documents, to such an extent that the European Commission has issued a recommendation in each of its rule of law reports since 2022 for the government to "strengthen the framework for access to official documents, in particular by improving request and appeal processes".<sup>269</sup> In 2025, no action whatsoever was taken to implement this recommendation.

In **Denmark**, journalists continue to face practical and structural challenges that restrict their ability to scrutinise those in power. The Access to Public Administrative Documents Act is widely criticised for limiting access to internal government communications, making it more difficult to trace political decision-making processes. Efforts to significantly strengthen

the act did not advance in 2025. Bureaucratic resistance and slow or partial disclosure continue to further reduce the depth and quality of journalistic access.

There has been no progress in 2025 towards advancing efforts to ensure consistent and effective implementation of the right of access to information in **Estonia**. Although a Commission recommendation to this effect has been given annually since 2022, journalists continued to face obstacles to accessing public information last year, in particular in the form of authorities determining, without proper justification, that requested documents were classified.

Journalists in **Germany** still face considerable obstacles to accessing information from public authorities. Despite a long-standing EU Commission recommendation to address this situation, 2025 saw little action at either the federal or state (*Länder*) level. At the level of the *Länder*, journalists still do not have the right to access documents, and enjoy only the right to have their questions answered. In order to access public documents, they need to base their claims on the freedom of information acts of the *Länder*, which still do not exist in two states (Bavaria and Lower-Saxony). As reported in previous Liberties Media Freedom

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267 The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>

268 Belgian Constitution, <https://www.dekamer.be/kvvcr/showpage.cfm?section=/publications/constitution&language=nl&story=constitution.xml>

269 European Commission, Rule of Law Report 2025, Belgium, [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/5fe5bb71-2898-4079-ad5a-19a3ff595a62\\_en?filename=5\\_1\\_63936\\_coun\\_chap\\_belgium\\_en.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/5fe5bb71-2898-4079-ad5a-19a3ff595a62_en?filename=5_1_63936_coun_chap_belgium_en.pdf)

Reports, Germany has not codified a legal basis for a right to information of the press in relation to federal authorities, and this did not change in 2025. It continues to be the case that some areas are effectively excluded from the right to information by the press; for example, the courts continue to deny all rights of the press to receive any information about pardon decisions made by the president.

Throughout 2025, **Hungary's** government continued to stifle journalists' access to information. Freedom of information requests are frequently refused, forcing journalists to initiate time-consuming litigation: although courts do often rule in favour of journalists, authorities' ability to delay proceedings and draw out court battles prevents timely reporting and obstructs effective journalistic work.

In 2025, access to information continued to be restricted in practice in **Romania**. Although the current government publicly committed to transparency at the start of its mandate, it banned photojournalists from attending the opening of government meetings, a long-standing practice until then. Despite protests and an official letter from a major news agency, the government maintained the ban, significantly limiting visual documentation of its activity. Individual members of the governing PNL party have also worked to restrict access

to information, including refusing to answer journalists' questions and walking out of press conferences, and declining to disclose information of public interest, such as any existing contractual agreements between political parties and media outlets. Restrictions on journalistic access have also been recorded within the opposition. The leader of the POT party, newly elected to Parliament in 2024, called the police on journalists who were waiting in the corridor outside her office waiting to question her, thereby treating their legitimate presence as a disturbance rather than an exercise of press freedom.<sup>270</sup>

## Progress towards implementing European Commission recommendations

In the area of freedom of expression and information, the European Commission's 2025 report contained four recommendations for the 22 countries surveyed in the *Liberties Rule of Law Report 2026*. All four of the recommendations concerned journalists' right to access public information, and all four recommendations date from the Commission's 2022 report. Furthermore, Liberties' members assessed no progress by any of the four

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270 Hotnews, Scandal in Parliament. Anamaria Gavrilă called the Police, disturbed by the presence of journalists in front of the POT parliamentary group (Scandal în Parlament. Anamaria Gavrilă a chemat Poliția, deranjată de prezența jurnaliștilor în fața grupului parlamentar POT), 19 March 2025, <https://hotnews.ro/video-scan-dal-in-parlament-anamaria-gavrila-a-chemat-politia-deranjata-de-prezenta-jurnalistilor-in-fata-grupului-parla-mentar-pot-1928883>.

Member States – and backsliding in Germany. All four of these countries – Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, and Germany – are generally considered strong democracies that do comparatively well in protecting media freedom and pluralism. It is therefore remarkable that

all four have for years failed to make even a modicum of progress towards implementing these recommendations.

<b>European Commission 2025 Recommendations: Freedom of Expression &amp; Information</b>				
Area	# of recommendations	Countries with recommendations	In progress	No progress / Backsliding
Access to information	4	Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia	0	4

# Progress towards transposing and implementing European Union legislation

The European Media Freedom Act<sup>271</sup> entered into force on 8 August 2025.<sup>272</sup> The landmark media freedom law requires Member States to adhere to new standards to protect the independence of public service media, ensure the fair allocation of state advertising expenditures, create transparency around media ownership structures, and protect journalists and their sources from surveillance, among other things. This law is crucial to the future of media freedom and pluralism across the EU. As this report lays out – and as previous editions of this report have found year after year – political influence and unfair practices undermine media freedom even in traditionally strong EU democracies; in others, the law is necessary to have any chance of resuscitating independent media entities and rehabilitating

the regulatory bodies and authorities that have been fully captured by the government.

By the end of 2025, five months after the EMFA entered into force, Member States across the bloc are still in the process of taking the steps to implement and enforce the law. In many states, its protections exist only on paper. Heightening concerns is the fact that in many countries that lag behind in implementation, governing politicians do not appear to be prioritising it, if they are even talking about the EMFA at all. In the worst case, there is open hostility to the law, most obviously in **Hungary**, where the Orbán government has initiated legal proceedings before the Court of Justice to have the bulk of the law annulled.<sup>273</sup>

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271 Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 (European Media Freedom Act) [2024] OJ L 1083, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1083> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1083>

272 Article 20, which, among other things, allows users the “right to easily change the configuration, including default settings, of any device or user interface controlling or managing access to and the use of media services providing programmes in order to customise the media offering in accordance with their interests or preferences” enters into force on 8 May 2027.

273 Action brought on 10 July 2024 – Hungary v European Parliament and Council of the European Union (Case C-486/24), 17 April 2024, <https://infocuria.curia.europa.eu/tabs/document?source=document&text=&docid=289589&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=27711140>

The EU Anti-SLAPP Directive<sup>274</sup> was officially adopted in April 2024 and entered into force on 6 May 2024, with Member States having until 7 May 2026 to transpose it into national law. The EU Directive aims to protect journalists, CSOs and activists from abusive, cross-border SLAPP suits. Among its protections are mandated early dismissal of manifestly unfounded claims and the possibility that claimants of such suits may be required to pay all legal costs, including the legal fees of the victim. The Directive does not apply to SLAPP cases that are purely domestic in nature, which, as noted in this report, significantly reduces the Directive's ability to effectively combat SLAPPs.

While some Member States have made good progress in transposing the Directive, many others are still behind. Furthermore, only very few governments have committed to going beyond the minimum requirements of the Directive, for example, by extending its protections to cover domestic cases as well. This is extremely concerning because the use of SLAPPs to silence watchdog journalism

and the work of CSOs and activists remains extensive across the EU. The Commission should prioritise the monitoring of the Directive's transposition and bring further action where necessary.

## Implementation of the EMFA

Liberties' **Bulgarian** member, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, reports that by the close of 2025, the government had taken no action to implement the EMFA. Ongoing political instability has not helped the situation, but there has been little public comment by politicians suggesting the issue is a priority for them, and it has largely not featured in public debate in the country.<sup>275</sup>

While **Croatia** claims to have made efforts to implement the EMFA, civil society organisations in the country are criticising the efforts as insufficient. Key structural reforms, such as establishing editorial independence of public service media and the independence of

274 Directive (EU) 2024/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings ('Strategic lawsuits against public participation'), 16 April 2024, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1069/oj/eng>

275 Media and Journalism Research Center, Media Capture Monitoring Report, Bulgaria 2025, 16 November 2025, <https://journalismresearch.org/media-capture-monitoring-report-bulgaria-2025/>

regulatory bodies, have not materialised. The law<sup>276</sup> the government proposed as a solution for bringing national law in line with the EMFA has faced strong criticism by the Croatian Journalists Association, Trade Union of Croatian Journalists and media professionals for failing to ensure the “full independence of regulatory bodies” from political influence.<sup>277</sup> For instance, the law does not even address the issue of political influence over the appointment of directors and governing bodies of public media service providers.

**France** did not implement the EMFA on time, and lawmakers did not vote on legislation to that effect by the close of 2025. There is a draft bill currently before the National Assembly, with action expected in 2026. As noted in this report, media freedom and, in

particular, media pluralism are not secure in France, where media is heavily concentrated and concerns exist over editorial independence of some of the country’s most-followed media outlets. It is thus extremely important for the legislature to act quickly in 2026 and adopt the necessary legislation to bring the country in line with the EMFA.<sup>278</sup>

Only very limited steps have been taken in **Greece**, and the country has not yet introduced substantive reforms that meet EMFA’s standards and guarantee the independence of regulators and public service media, ensure fair state funding practices, or strengthen media pluralism.<sup>279</sup> In **Hungary**, not only has the government taken no steps to implement the EMFA, it instead sued before the EU Court of Justice seeking to have the law largely

276 Croatian Parliament, Report of the Committee on Information, Informatization and Media on the Draft Law on the Implementation of Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 on the establishment of a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act), first reading, P.Z.E. No. 228, <https://www.sabor.hr/hr/radna-tijela/odbori-i-povjerenstva/izvjesce-odbora-za-informiranje-informatizaciju-i-medije-o-130>; Report of the Committee on Legislation on the Draft Law on the Implementation of Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 on establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act), P.Z.E. No. 228, <https://www.sabor.hr/hr/radna-tijela/odbori-i-povjerenstva/izvjesce-odbora-za-zakonodavstvo-o-prijedlogu-zakona-o-2779>

277 Croatian Journalists’ Association, Media in 2025 Marked by the Media Freedom Act, Press Subsidies, and the Vjesnik Fire (Medije u 2025. obilježio Akt o slobodi medija, subvencije tisku i požar Vjesnika), Hrvatsko novinarsko društvo, 31 December 2025, <https://hnd.hr/medije-u-2025-obiljezio-akt-o-slobodi-medija-subvencije-tisku-i-pozar-vjesnika/>

278 Reporters Without Borders, Media concentration in France: RSF calls on MPs to support new bill setting out key safeguards for pluralism and editorial independence, 11 February 2026, <https://rsf.org/en/media-concentration-france-rsf-calls-mps-support-new-bill-setting-out-key-safeguards-pluralism-and>

279 International Press Institute (IPI) and Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC), Media Capture Monitoring Report, Greece Measuring EMFA Compliance, International Press Institute, November 2025, <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/GREECE-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-Overview-1.pdf>

annulled. The Hungarian government argues that the law encroaches on national sovereignty and goes beyond the competencies of the EU. For its part, the Commission has launched an infringement proceeding<sup>280</sup> against Hungary for its non-compliance with the EMFA, signalling a standoff that freezes any possibility for change.<sup>281</sup>

In July 2025, the **Irish** government published the General Scheme of the Media Regulation Bill, which will implement the European Media Freedom Act when enacted into law.<sup>282</sup> No serious steps have been taken to implement the EMFA in **Italy**, where the public service media (Radiotelevisione italiana, RAI) remains weak and under increasing political influence, undermining governance, editorial, and financial independence. In September 2025, the 8th Permanent Committee of the Senate adopted a unified text proposing amendments to the Testo Unico dei Servizi Media Audiovisivi, or Consolidated Law on Audiovisual Media Services, but these amendments would not

meaningfully progress in bringing the country in line with the EMFA.<sup>283</sup>

Although **Malta** is still behind schedule in implementing the EMFA, 2025 saw more progress than in many other countries. National legislation has been brought forward to reform laws in view of meeting the EMFA's requirements, and structural changes have occurred, including the establishment of a new Office for Advertising and the Media, with broad powers as a watchdog to oversee state advertising and media transparency, and the standard transposition of the EMFA rules on surveillance and source protection.<sup>284</sup> Still, concerns remain that the public broadcaster is not sufficiently independent, and the manner of choosing directors of the country's media authority remains under extreme political influence.

**Poland** has taken the necessary first steps towards EMFA implementation, but much work remains to bring the country into compliance with the regulation. A draft law has

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280 European Commission, Commission calls on Hungary to comply with European Media Freedom Act and Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 11 December 2025, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-calls-hungary-comply-european-media-freedom-act-and-audiovisual-media-services-directive>

281 At the time of writing, a new government has been elected but not yet taken power, and it remains to be seen whether the lawsuit is withdrawn or what efforts the new government will make towards implementing EMFA.

282 Department of Culture, Communications and Sport Minister O'Donovan secures government approval of the General Scheme of the Media Regulation Bill, 3 July 2025, <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-culture-communications-and-sport/press-releases/minister-odonovan-secures-government-approval-of-the-general-scheme-of-the-media-regulation-bill/>

283 Senato della repubblica, 19th Legislature - 8th Standing Committee - Summary Report No. 210 of 17 September 2025 (Legislatura 19<sup>a</sup> - 8<sup>a</sup> Commissione permanente - Resoconto sommario n. 210 del 17/09/2025), (in Italian) [http://www.senato.it/show-doc?leg=19&tipodoc=SommComm&id=1473376&part=doc\\_dc-allegato\\_a&rif=0](http://www.senato.it/show-doc?leg=19&tipodoc=SommComm&id=1473376&part=doc_dc-allegato_a&rif=0)

284 Legal Notice 175 of 2025, <https://legislation.mt/eli/ln/2025/175/eng>

been introduced to reform national legislation and bring it into compliance with the EMFA. It introduces a number of reforms concerning the National Broadcasting Council, in particular related to the procedure for appointing members of the Council, but CSOs have called attention to the fact that the reform does not alter the existing model, wherein members are proposed and appointed by politicians.

**Romania** has not yet implemented any provision of the EMFA into its national legislation. Indeed, the only hint of movement in 2025 was official declarations of intent from the Ministry of Culture to harmonise national law and the EMFA during 2026. The lack of progress means that public service media remains open to political influence and in a state of severe financial strain, with media watchdog IFJ calling it “chronically underfunded.”<sup>285</sup>

Although **Slovenia** is also behind schedule in its efforts to implement the EMFA, there was real and promising progress last year. In parallel, the new Media Act, adopted in September

2025, introduced into law the standards and safeguards required under the EMFA, in particular the enhanced protection of journalistic sources and stricter conditions for the use of surveillance measures against journalists and newsroom devices.

## **Transposition of the Anti-SLAPP Directive**

The Anti-SLAPP Directive has not been transposed in **Bulgaria**. In September 2025, the Ministry expressed readiness to transpose the Directive in time, but the collapse of the government in December puts the timeline into question. In **Croatia**, the implementation of the anti-SLAPPs Directive remained at a preparatory stage. Some positive progress was made in relation to the soft measures of the Directive, such as the operation of a government working group and public-facing activities such as guidance materials and training sessions.<sup>286</sup> Issues, however, remain, for example, in the discussion on how to define ‘public

285 International Federation of Journalists, Romania, FAIR-MediaSind calls for infringement procedure against Romania due to EMFA violations, 30 March 2026, <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/reports/detail/romania-fair-mediasind-calls-for-infringement-procedure-against-romania-due-to-emfa-violations/category/press-releases>

286 Agency for Electronic Media (AEM), Meeting of Working Groups on Combating SLAPPs and Monitoring Implementation of the Protocols for the Protection of Journalists’ Safety (Održan sastanak radnih skupina za suzbijanje SLAPP-a te za praćenje provedbe protokola za zaštitu sigurnosti novinara), 4 November 2025, <https://aem.hr/en/blog/2025/11/04/odrzan-sastanak-radnih-skupina-za-suzbijanje-slapp-a-te-za-pracenje-provedbe-protokola-za-zastitu-sigurnosti-novinara/>

participation’, enabling early dismissal of manifestly unfounded cases.<sup>287</sup>

In **Germany**, the federal government has begun to implement the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive. In June 2025, the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection presented a draft law for the transposition of the Directive.<sup>288</sup> In December, the government significantly weakened the draft through a political compromise. It is not limited to the literal, one-to-one implementation of the Directive’s minimum standards, but adds a provision that limits its scope to cross-border cases.<sup>289</sup> This would severely cut the number of cases the law

would apply to. A study by the Otto Brenner Foundation showed that 96% of documented cases concerned purely domestic cases.<sup>290</sup>

While **Malta** had implemented the new Anti-SLAPPs Directive into national law, the text does not cover domestic cases. The published legislation is also limited to the bare minimum standards; the maximum penalty that may be imposed on the plaintiff is capped at €10,000, which might not be a big deterrent for wealthy individuals or big corporations.

**Denmark** is in a unique position, enjoying an opt-out from Justice and Home Affairs

287 Agency for Electronic Media (AEM), Meeting of Working Groups on Combating SLAPPs and Monitoring Implementation of the Protocol for the Protection of Journalists’ Safety (Održan sastanak radnih skupina za suzbijanje SLAPP-a te za praćenje provedbe protokola za zaštitu sigurnosti novinara), 4 November 2025, <https://aem.hr/en/blog/2025/11/04/odrzan-sastanak-radnih-skupina-za-suzbijanje-slapp-a-te-za-pracenje-provedbe-protokola-za-zastitu-sigurnosti-novinar/>; Agency for Electronic Media (AEM), Educational Brochure Presented to Combat Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP Lawsuits) (Predstavljena edukativna brošura radi suzbijanja strateških tužbi usmjerenih protiv javnog djelovanja – SLAPP tužbi), 9 May 2025, <https://aem.hr/en/blog/2025/05/09/predstavljena-edukativna-brosura-radi-suzbijanja-strateskih-tuzbi-usmjerenih-protiv-javnog-djelovanja-slapp-tuzbi-2/>

288 See Referentenentwurf des Bundesministeriums der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, Draft of a Law to Implement Guideline (EU) 2024/1069 (Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Umsetzung der Richtlinie (EU) 2024/1069), June 2025, [https://www.bmjv.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Gesetzgebung/RefE/RefE\\_Anti\\_SLAPP.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=4](https://www.bmjv.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Gesetzgebung/RefE/RefE_Anti_SLAPP.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4)

289 Referentenentwurf des Bundesministeriums der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, Draft of a Law to Implement Guideline (EU) 2024/1069 (Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Umsetzung der Richtlinie (EU) 2024/1069), December 2025, [https://www.bmjv.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Gesetzgebung/RegE/RegE\\_Anti\\_SLAPP.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=2](https://www.bmjv.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Gesetzgebung/RegE/RegE_Anti_SLAPP.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2)

290 Stefanie Egidy, Intimidation is the Goal (Einschüchterung ist das Ziel), Otto-Brenner-Stiftung, 19. March 2025, p. 61, <https://www.otto-brenner-stiftung.de/was-wir-tun/publikationen/einschuechterung-ist-das-ziel/>

matters,<sup>291</sup> and thus the transposition of the Anti-SLAPP Directive.<sup>292</sup> Still, the government is proceeding with bringing the country in line with the Directive, although transposition is still in the early stages. While current Danish legislation already provides a mechanism to protect freedom of expression and prevent abusive lawsuits, it is too early to observe any positive changes linked to the EU directive.

A freedom of information request by the **Hungarian** Civil Liberties Union filed to the Ministry of Justice showed no progress towards the transposition of the Anti-SLAPP Directive had been made in 2025.<sup>293</sup> The Ministry of Justice noted in their response, “We would also like to inform you that, unlike in other countries, journalists in Hungary have no reason to be afraid.”

The Defamation Amendment Bill in **Ireland** gives effect to aspects of the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive, but progress remains inadequate. In July 2025, more than 30 organisations expressed deep concern about the anti-SLAPP provisions in the Bill, noting that they were not sufficient to “meaningfully protect public-interest speech”.<sup>294</sup> The Bill does not fully transpose even the minimum standards and safeguards mandated by the EU law.

Throughout 2025, CASE Italia, the **Italian** anti-SLAPP working group,<sup>295</sup> sent multiple invitations to meet with the Ministry of Justice’s International Affairs Department. They went unanswered, and by the end of November 2025, there was no information to suggest that a technical working group for the transposition of the law had been established by the government. However, a bomb attack against investigative journalist Sigfrido Ranucci in October<sup>296</sup>

291 <https://www.thedanishparliament.dk/eu-information-centre/the-danish-opt-outs-from-eu-cooperation>

292 B.M.W. van Houtert, “The Anti-SLAPP Directive as a Roadmap for SLAPP Targets and the Obstacles Along the Way”, Maastricht University, 25 February 2025, <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/blog/2025/02/anti-slapp-directive-roadmap-slapp-targets-and-obstacles-along-way>

293 SLAPP monitor, <https://slapp-monitor.eu/>

294 Index on Censorship, Ireland’s Defamation (Amendment) Bill fails to protect public interest speech, 9 July 2025, <https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2025/07/irelands-defamation-amendment-bill-fails-to-protect-public-interest-speech/>

295 CASE Italia is an Italian informal working group established in 2021, coordinated by the Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa. The working group supports the Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe (CASE) in the fight against SLAPPs across Europe. Members of CASE Italia include: Amnesty International Italia, ARTICLE 19 Europe, Articolo 21, Certi Diritti, Environmental Paper Network, FADA Collective, Giulia Giornaliste, Greenpeace Italia, IrpiMedia, Meglio Legale, OBC Transeuropa, ReCommon, Rete No Bavaglio, STRALI, The Good Lobby Italia, Transparency International Italia, and Wikimedia Italia, <https://www.the-case.eu/about/>

296 Committee to Protect Journalists, Italian investigative journalist Sigfrido Ranucci targeted in car bombing, 20 October 2025, <https://cpj.org/2025/10/italian-investigative-journalist-sigfrido-ranucci-targeted-in-car-bombing/>

fueled a number of parliamentary motions by both opposition and majority parties to progress with transposing the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive.<sup>297</sup> Finally, on 16 December 2025, the Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Justice approved the majority's motion and announced that the government is working on the transposition of the Directive.<sup>298</sup>

**Poland's** Civil Law Codification Commission unveiled the country's first legislative proposal explicitly addressing SLAPPs in January 2025.<sup>299</sup> The proposal was amended in April following a consultation period, progress that was welcomed by civil society. It introduces tools like early dismissal of manifestly unfounded suits and other safeguards. But civil society organisation Article 19 and a coalition of Polish NGOs formed a working group and

cautioned that the overly narrow criteria and procedural hurdles could render key safeguards ineffective in practice. The working group therefore urged lawmakers to strengthen the bill before passing it.<sup>300</sup>

In April 2024, Minister of Justice Adam Bodnar pledged to abolish "criminal defamation".<sup>301</sup> Throughout 2025, media freedom groups and Poland's anti-SLAPP working group kept up pressure on the government to keep this promise. And while the Ministry and the Criminal Law Codification Committee presented a draft amendment, it only softened the offence rather than eliminated it. Civil society organisations reacted with disappointment and issued an open letter 'Fulfil promises - Decriminalise defamation now'<sup>302</sup> and held a '#STOPPSLAPP' protest in Kraków.<sup>303</sup>

297 Camera dei Deputati, Parliamentary motions, 1/00519, 1/00528, 1-00529, 11 December 2025, [https://documenti.camera.it/leg19/resoconti/assemblea/html/sed0582/leg.19.sed0582.allegato\\_a.pdf](https://documenti.camera.it/leg19/resoconti/assemblea/html/sed0582/leg.19.sed0582.allegato_a.pdf)

298 Camera dei Deputati, Resoconto stenografico dell'Assemblea - Seduta n. 585 di martedì 16 dicembre 2025, 16 December 2025, <https://www.camera.it/leg19/410?idSeduta=0585&tipo=stenografico>

299 Poland, Civil Law Codification Commission, Draft bill on the protection of persons participating in public debate against manifestly unfounded claims or abusive legal proceedings (Projekt ustawy o ochronie osób uczestniczących w debacie publicznej przed oczywiscie bezzasadnymi roszczeniami lub stanowiącymi nadużycie postępowaniami sądowymi), 14 April 2025, <https://www.gov.pl/web/sprawiedliwosc/projekty-aktow-prawnych3>

300 ARTICLE 19, Poland, Anti-SLAPP draft law is a positive step but key improvements essential, 1 July 2025, <https://www.article19.org/resources/poland-anti-slapp-draft-law-is-a-positive-step-but-key-improvements-essential/>

301 Dominika Sitnicka, Adam Bodnar announces the abolition of Article 212 of the Penal Code on defamation (Adam Bodnar zapowiada zniesienie art. 212 kodeksu karnego o zniesławieniu), OKO.press, 27 April 2024, <https://oko.press/adam-bodnar-zapowiada-zniesienie-art-212-kodeksu-karnego>

302 ARTICLE 19, Poland, Fulfil promises – Decriminalise defamation now, 25 April 2025, <https://www.article19.org/resources/poland-fulfil-promises-decriminalise-defamation-now/>

303 Batory Foundation, Enough of being punished for telling the truth. Protest against repressive lawsuits #STOPPSLAPP (Dość karania za mówienie prawdy. Protest przeciw pozwom represyjnym #STOPPSLAPP), maszglos.pl, Accessed 18 February 2026, <https://www.maszglos.pl/2025/10/dosc-karania-za-mowienie-prawdy-protest-przeciw-poz-wom-represyjnym-stopslapp/>

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APADOR-CH, Liberties' member organisation in **Romania**, together with several other civil society organisations, requested and obtained from the Ministry of Justice a commitment that the law transposing the Anti-SLAPP Directive would also cover domestic cases.<sup>304</sup> This would be an important inclusion in order for the law to have a robust impact, but by the end of 2025, there had been no further progress on the draft law and no certainty about the inclusion of this provision.

No progress has been made in **Slovakia** to transpose the Anti-SLAPP Directive. However, the Ministry of Justice submitted a proposal to the inter-ministerial comment procedure in late 2025, with a planned effective date of June 2026.<sup>305</sup> Similarly, the government in **Spain** has not yet taken steps to transpose the Anti-SLAPP Directive.

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304 APADOR-CH press release, The Ministry of Justice promises better protection for uncomfortable voices in society, through the upcoming anti-SLAPP law (Ministerul justiției promite o protecție mai bună a vocilor incomode din societate, prin viitoarea lege anti SLAPP), 27 February 2025, <https://apador.org/ministerul-justitiei-promite-o-protectie-mai-buna-a-vocilor-incomode-din-societate-prin-viitoarea-lege-anti-slapp/>

305 The legislative proposal and the related material submitted to the inter-ministerial comment procedure (process no. LP/2025/667) <https://www.slov-lex.sk/elegislativa/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2025/667>

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The Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties) is a non-governmental organization promoting and protecting the civil liberties of everyone in the European Union. We are headquartered in Berlin and have a presence in Brussels. Liberties is built on a network of national civil liberties NGOs from across the EU. Unless otherwise indicated, the opinions expressed by Liberties do not necessarily constitute the views of our member organizations.

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