











Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2022/2057(INI)	Procedure completed
The protection of journalists around the world and the European Union's policy on the matter		
Subject		
3.30.08 Press, media freedom and pluralism		
6.10.08 Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Foreign Affairs	 WISELER-LIMA Isabel	14/07/2021
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 SÁNCHEZ AMOR	
		Nacho	
		 OETJEN Jan-Christoph	
		 SATOURI Mounir	
		 KARSKI Karol	
		 KOULOGLOU Stelios	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 Culture and Education	 WALSH Maria	02/09/2022

Key events			
07/07/2022	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
24/05/2023	Vote in committee		
01/06/2023	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0206/2023	Summary
11/07/2023	Results of vote in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2022/2057(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/9/09153

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE740.635	10/01/2023	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE742.328	02/02/2023	EP	
Committee opinion	CULT	PE737.240	02/03/2023	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0206/2023	01/06/2023	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0267/2023	11/07/2023	EP	Summary

The protection of journalists around the world and the European Union's policy on the matter

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Isabel WISELER-LIMA (EPP, LU) on the protection of journalists around world and the European Union's policy on the matter.

Recent years have shown a decline in press freedom and a growing pattern of physical attacks, harassment, including online, and intimidation aimed at silencing and slandering journalists, in particular war correspondents, investigative journalists working to expose corruption, trafficking, corporate abuse, or wrongdoings of political actors, and journalists reporting on situations in certain totalitarian states or dictatorships.

According to figures published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), 1 668 journalists were murdered worldwide in connection with their work between 2003 and 2022. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 67 journalists were killed worldwide in 2022.

Protecting journalists against violence and intimidation

Recalling that democracy cannot function in the absence of reliable and accessible information both online and offline, Members stressed the need to protect journalists from all types of violence and stressed the importance of protecting the independence of journalists, safeguarding freedom of expression, ensuring media diversity and preserving the fundamental right of every citizen to be informed.

Members condemned all crimes, including physical attacks, kidnappings, torture, intimidation and hate speech, committed against journalists and media professionals worldwide, including within the EU. They also condemned all arbitrary detentions of journalists as well as all pre-trial detentions based on political motives or abusive laws.

Expressing concern about the lack of specific policy or legal frameworks to protect journalists from violence and threats worldwide, Members called on countries around the world to adopt legislation and measures to create a legal environment to prevent and prosecute acts of repression against journalists.

The report called on the authorities to draw up national action plans, in close collaboration with journalist organisations, to improve the working conditions of journalists. Journalists travelling to conflict zones should be adequately insured. The media should provide journalists with the necessary training, particularly in safety and first aid.

Members called for effective monitoring toolkits to be developed in collaboration with journalists' organisations, and for the European External Action Service (EEAS) to continue to report regularly to Parliament on the overall situation regarding media freedom and violations of journalists' rights worldwide.

Media independence, strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs)

The report condemned, in the strongest possible terms, any attempt to silence independent media or undermine their freedom and pluralism and to restrict the public's access to reliable information via internet shutdowns, illegal and/or disproportionate surveillance, blocking or filtering of online content. In particular, Members condemned attempts to control public service media and deplored the adoption by some non-EU

countries of so-called foreign agent laws. They called on governments to effectively counter abuse and not misuse protective measures to prevent freedom of expression or enable censorship. They also condemned the growing use of surveillance equipment and spyware to monitor, intercept and censor the work of journalists.

The report condemned the use of SLAPPs and called for the Commission's proposal for a directive against SLAPPs against journalists in the EU to cover the external dimension of SLAPPs, in order to protect journalists based in the EU from abusive prosecutions by authorities in non-EU countries.

Members also made the following recommendations:

- the EU should step up its action to protect journalists abroad through the activities of its delegations;
- the EU should encourage the use of media education to improve citizens' and societies' understanding of the societal role played by journalism and promote exchange programmes for journalists. Members reiterated their call for media literacy to be integrated into formal and informal settings, including school curricula;
- measures should be implemented to protect journalists from online and gender-based violence on social media and other digital platforms. Members stressed that women journalists, in particular, are also exposed to sexual harassment and violence;
- the EU Special Representative for Human Rights should make the safety of journalists, media professionals and associated staff one of his main priorities in his relations with the authorities of third countries;
- the EEAS should: (i) put in place an emergency response plan to be implemented by EU delegations, based on a range of protective measures; (ii) develop a structured approach to support journalists facing digital threats; (iii) encourage exchanges of views between law enforcement agencies and journalists in order to allow the latter to freely cover protests or demonstrations in countries hosting an EU delegation.

The Council is invited to impose targeted sanctions under the EU's global human rights sanctions regime (EU Magnitsky Act) on individuals and entities committing human rights violations against journalists and media professionals.

Lastly, the Commission and Member States are invited to (i) promote sustainable measures to protect, fund and support media pluralism and independent journalism in all their agreements and partnerships with third countries; (ii) ensure that EU funding programmes are known and accessible to local civil society organisations working for the safety of journalists and their freedom of expression.

The protection of journalists around the world and the European Union's policy on the matter

The European Parliament adopted by 583 votes to 7, with 48 abstentions, a resolution on the protection of journalists worldwide and EU policy in this area.

Recent years have shown a decline in press freedom and a growing pattern of physical attacks, harassment, including online, and intimidation aimed at silencing and slandering journalists, in particular war correspondents, investigative journalists working to expose corruption, trafficking, corporate abuse, or wrongdoings of political actors, and journalists reporting on situations in certain totalitarian states or dictatorships.

According to figures published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), 1 668 journalists were murdered worldwide in connection with their work between 2003 and 2022. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 67 journalists were killed worldwide in 2022.

Protecting journalists against violence and intimidation

Recalling the essential role that journalists can play in promoting and safeguarding democratic values, human rights and fundamental freedoms, Parliament stressed the need to protect journalists from all types of violence. It stressed the importance of protecting the independence of journalists, safeguarding freedom of expression, ensuring media diversity and preserving the fundamental right of every citizen to be informed.

Members condemned all crimes, including physical attacks, kidnappings, torture, intimidation and hate speech, committed against journalists and media professionals worldwide, including within the EU. They also condemned all arbitrary detentions of journalists as well as all pre-trial detentions based on political motives or abusive laws.

Parliament recalled the essential role played by journalists, particularly political journalists and investigative reporters. It reaffirmed its concern about the state of media freedom in the world, given the abuses and attacks suffered by journalists and media professionals in many countries.

Expressing concern about the lack of specific policy or legal frameworks to protect journalists from violence and threats worldwide, Members called on countries around the world to adopt legislation and measures to create a legal environment to prevent and prosecute acts of repression against journalists and to ensure proper investigation and follow-up, including effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions. They called on the authorities to do their utmost to ensure that those responsible are held to account and to put an end to impunity.

Parliament deplored the fact that journalists and media professionals often work in precarious and deteriorating employment and security conditions. It called on the authorities to draw up national action plans, in close cooperation with journalists' organisations, to improve the working conditions of journalists. Journalists travelling to conflict zones should be adequately insured.

Recalling the obligation to protect freedom of expression, including for satirists and press cartoonists, Members deplored the increasing attempts by religious and state authorities to restrict freedom of expression and criticism by invoking religious or blasphemy laws. They also expressed their support for the work of whistleblowers and their editors, who expose abuses around the world.

Media independence, strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs)

The report condemned, in the strongest possible terms, any attempt to silence independent media or undermine their freedom and pluralism and to restrict the public's access to reliable information via internet shutdowns, illegal and/or disproportionate surveillance, blocking or filtering of online content. In particular, Members condemned attempts to control public service media and deplored the adoption by some non-EU countries of so-called foreign agent laws. They called on governments to effectively counter abuse and not misuse protective measures to

prevent freedom of expression or enable censorship. They also condemned the growing use of surveillance equipment and spyware to monitor, intercept and censor the work of journalists.

The report condemned the use of SLAPPs and called for the Commission's proposal for a directive against SLAPPs against journalists in the EU to cover the external dimension of SLAPPs, in order to protect journalists based in the EU from abusive prosecutions by authorities in non-EU countries. It called for the EU to provide legal support and other assistance for journalists targeted by SLAPPs and to step up its action to protect journalists abroad through the activities of its delegations.

Members also made the following recommendations:

- the EU should encourage the use of media education to improve citizens' and societies' understanding of the societal role played by journalism and promote exchange programmes for journalists. Members reiterated their call for media literacy to be integrated into formal and informal settings, including school curricula;
- measures should be implemented to protect journalists from online and gender-based violence on social media and other digital platforms. Members stressed that women journalists are much more likely to be victims of online harassment than their male colleagues;
- EU delegations should make more public statements, either preventively or in response to serious violations or restrictions of the right to freedom of opinion and expression around the world, including attacks on journalists or their detention in countries outside the EU;
- the EU Special Representative for Human Rights should make the safety of journalists, media professionals and associated staff one of his main priorities in his relations with the authorities of third countries;
- the EEAS should: (i) put in place an emergency response plan to be implemented by EU delegations, based on a range of protective measures; (ii) develop a structured approach to support journalists facing digital threats;
- EU delegations, diplomatic missions of EU Member States and like-minded partners should take initiatives to communicate with and support journalists and independent media in countries outside the EU in order to facilitate their work and working conditions.

The Council is invited to impose targeted sanctions under the EU's global human rights sanctions regime (EU Magnitsky Act) on individuals and entities committing human rights violations against journalists and media professionals.

Lastly, the Commission and Member States are invited to (i) promote sustainable measures to protect, fund and support media pluralism and independent journalism in all their agreements and partnerships with third countries; (ii) ensure that EU funding programmes are known and accessible to local civil society organisations working for the safety of journalists and their freedom of expression.

Transparency				
SATOURI Mounir	Shadow rapporteur	AFET	25/01/2023	Reporters sans frontières
WISELER-LIMA Isabel	Rapporteur	AFET	21/12/2022	Tageblatt
WISELER-LIMA Isabel	Rapporteur	AFET	20/12/2022	reporter.lu
WISELER-LIMA Isabel	Rapporteur	AFET	09/11/2022	Deutsche Welle
OETJEN Jan-Christoph	Shadow rapporteur	AFET	20/10/2022	Journalists