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Media Freedom Act a victory for democracy in dark times

Today, Members of the European Parliament have just voted in favour of the outcome of trilogue negotiations on the European Media Freedom Act, which is aimed at protecting journalists and the freedom of and plurality of media in the EU. The Greens/EFA Group has long fought for EU-level rules to address issues such as high media market concentration, the fair allocation of state funding and the independence of public service media and national regulatory authorities.

Diana Riba i Giner MEP, shadow rapporteur for the file in the CULT Committee, comments:

“The freedom of the press is under severe threat in Europe with the assassinations of journalists, the closures of independent outlets and the concentration of media under private or government connected conglomerates. The Media Freedom Act will enshrine in law that governments or private interests must not interfere in the editorial decisions or media operations.

“The final text of the agreement no longer refers to the possibility of spying on journalists on the basis of vague "national security" imperatives as the Council had wanted. This is a victory for all defenders of press freedom and democracy and is a Greens/EFA success. The Media Freedom Act is a victory for democracy in dark times.”

Daniel Freund MEP, shadow rapporteur for the file in the LIBE Committee, comments:

“This is a victory against the oligarchs and autocrats who want to crush independent voices and bend them to their whim. We have seen how in countries like Hungary, the government has transformed the media landscape from a series of independent outlets to a wall of pro-government propaganda piping to the same tune.

“Under the Media Freedom Act, the allocation of state advertising, sometimes used as an instrument to asphyxiate certain media and favour others, must now be transparent and fair. State ownership and potential influence must also be disclosed, which will help reduce political pressure on the press. Thanks to our efforts in the negotiations, we have included strong safeguards in the text when it comes to the protection of journalists' sources. However, the EU Commission will need more efficient instruments at hand in order to take action against Orban's propaganda machine. Concerned letters from Brussels will not make Orban give up his control over the Hungarian media sector. To protect media freedom in Europe, the EU Commission has to be empowered to break Orban's media monopoly.”

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