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Press release | 27.02.2024

MEPs vote for EU-wide rules to protect journalists, environmental & human rights defenders from abusive legal attacks

SLAPPs

Today, MEPs have just voted on the outcome of trilogue negotiations on the Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) Directive. SLAPPs are a particular form of harassment increasingly used against journalists, environmental and human rights defenders, and whistleblowers. The Greens/EFA Group have long fought for an end to the use of SLAPPs, which can be used by governments, corporations or powerful individuals against critical voices.

Marie Toussaint MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur for the file in the Legal Affairs Committee, comments:

"Until now those who seek to expose the truth have faced costly and damaging and court proceedings that are manifestly unfounded and abusive. For too long, governments, corporations and powerful individuals have been able to silence journalists, environmental and human rights defenders and whistleblowers. This Directive, while incomplete and imperfect, is a solid first step in protecting those who speak up.

"Thanks to the efforts of our group, we managed to improve the Directive, when it comes to information and transparency, as well as data collection provisions, in order to allow for better grasping of the phenomenon and its impact on victims across the EU.

"However, it was disappointing to see the strong opposition of Member States during the negotiations to the introduction of specific rules on compensation for victims of SLAPPs. We also regret that it was not possible to broaden the cross-border definition of cases covered by the safeguard mechanisms, in order to protect as many victims as possible."

Diana Riba i Giner MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur for the file in the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee, comments:

"From the dozens of SLAPPs against Daphne Caruana Galizia open at the time of her assassination to the legal action taken by Shell against Greenpeace, it's clear that the corrupt, rich and powerful have been able to

use the legal system to attack their critics. That's why it's welcome that we will finally have EU-wide legislation designed to protect those seeking to speak out.

"This first of its kind legislation will introduce specific safeguard mechanisms, both inside and outside the courtroom, to protect victims against the heavy costs of SLAPPs. Legal action against those speaking up can have huge psychological and financial damages for individuals. This new law aims to change this and create an environment where wrongdoing can be exposed without fears of repercussions."

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