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Support for independent journalism is the best antidote

Fake News

The European Commission has today presented its proposals on how to counter “Fake News”.

The Greens/EFA group has also published today a report on [Alternative models of financing investigative journalism](#) (1).

Josep Maria Terricabras, Vice President of the Greens/EFA group and shadow rapporteur for media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union (2), comments:

“The best antidote to fake news is good news. Well-funded independent journalism with high professional standards is key to addressing disinformation and propaganda.

“While much of the responsibility lies with national governments, the EU cannot afford to be idle. A thriving democracy relies on investigative journalism and that’s why we called on the European Parliament to create a prize to profile the best quality investigative journalism. With the next EU budget coming soon, we have also proposed the creation of permanent fund to support investigative journalism and greater support for the Media Pluralism Monitor.”

Julia Reda, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur the copyright directive, comments:

“It is important that the European Commission has recognised the need to take action to tackle fake news. But this must not be used as an excuse to push through their own agenda. The Commission is again making the tenuous connection between fake news and their so-called link tax (3). Whatever the merits of this idea, it has nothing to do with stopping the distribution of fake news. In fact, it may make things worse.

“Putting a price tag on spreading articles from legitimate press publications risks decreasing the circulation of professional news, and misses the point: that independent, investigative journalism needs to be given space to thrive. As the report we commissioned on financing investigative journalism shows, we should be encouraging transnational networks of journalists to continue to act as society’s watchdogs, and scrapping regulations that constrain journalists and undermine freedom of expression.”

1. The Greens/EFA report

The report, which was written by researchers at the University of Hamburg, assesses the different funding models available to investigative journalists and outlines possible policy solutions. A [summary is available on the Greens/EFA website](#) and [the full report is accessible here](#).

2. The report on **media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union** will be voted on in plenary on Thursday, 3 May 2018.

3. The Link Tax

The Commission's proposal on combating fake news includes a call for neighbouring rights for press publishers, aka a “link tax”. This is part of the copyright reform plans currently being debated in the European Parliament and Council. In an open letter released on Wednesday, 169 academics (including of journalism studies) stated that the plan will “play into the hands of producers of fake news” because it will “restrict further the circulation of quality news”, and thus “not guarantee the availability of reliable information so much as the dominance of fake news”. [See their letter here](#). The proposal was not included in the recommendations of the Commission's own high level expert group on Fake News.

The “presumption rule”, an alternative proposal supported by the Greens/EFA group, would help publishers enforce their rights without sabotaging the circulation of legitimate news.

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Responsible MEPs



Felix Reda

Vice-President



Josep Maria Terricabras

EFA President and first Vice President of the Greens/EFA Group

Contact person



David Weir

Press & Media Advisor EN (English language press)

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