

**Question for written answer E-002930/2024/rev.1
to the Commission**
Rule 144
Tomasz Froelich (ESN)

Subject: The Freilich affair and the threat to freedom of expression and media pluralism in the EU posed by the ‘debanking’ of patriotic media and activists

Shortly before Christmas, the Steiermärkische Sparkasse closed the bank account of the Austrian magazine *Freilich* with just four weeks’ notice¹, thus depriving the magazine of existentially important services.

The Steiermärkische Sparkasse did not give any grounds for this decision, which is suspected of being politically motivated. *Freilich* is a patriotic magazine positioned away from the left-wing liberal mainstream, which has recently attracted attention by conducting investigative research into such subjects as the German Greens’ fantasies of banning the AfD².

Some 90 bank accounts belonging to the Identitarian activist Martin Sellner have already been closed in Austria, the European Union and beyond³.

1. Does the Commission regard the ‘debanking’ of politically exposed media or activists as a danger to democracy, freedom of expression and media pluralism in Europe?
2. What avenues does the Commission think there are for resolving this kind of conflicts, given that in the aforementioned cases there is a clear conflict between freedom of expression and media pluralism on the one hand and the banks’ private autonomy on the other?
3. Does the Commission intend to take account of the rule-of-law problems posed by ‘debanking’ in its rule-of-law reports?

Submitted: 13.12.2024

¹ <https://www.freilich-magazin.com/blog/bankkonto-gekuendigt-angriff-auf-freilich-und-auf-uns-alle>

² <https://www.freilich-magazin.com/politik/undercover-unter-gruenen-wie-die-gruenen-tatsaechlich-ueber-ein-afd-verbotsverfahren-denken>

³ <https://martinsellner.info/zensur-repression/>