

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001421/24
to the Commission**

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(24 July 2024)

Subject: Censorship of a private channel and threat to media pluralism in France

By means of its decision of 24 July, the French Regulatory Authority for Audiovisual and Digital Communication (Arcom) banned the channel C8 from TNT. Arcom is thereby preventing a private channel from offering an independent viewpoint that is respectful of political pluralism and popular among viewers. Meanwhile, two openly left-oriented channels have been authorised, despite the fact that recent surveys show that left-wing and centre-based perspectives largely dominate the public audiovisual sector, which receives more than EUR 4 billion per year in public funding.

TNT massively shapes the French audiovisual landscape and remains the only means of receiving television for almost 20% of TV households. C8, its presenters and owners had already been subject to political pressure, including during hearings in the French National Assembly. Although the members of Arcom are appointed by the public authorities, this decision appears to be a form of censorship and a direct attack on media freedom and pluralism in France.

Will the Commission remind the French Government of its obligation to protect the rule of law, the plurality of information and freedom of expression, as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights?

Submitted: 24.7.2024

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Vestager on behalf of the European Commission
(25 September 2024)

The Commission is committed to safeguarding pluralistic and independent media, essential for democracy and the rule of law, and to the functioning of the internal market for media. Independent authorities play a key role in this, as important rule of law safeguards and integral to national systems of checks and balances.

The licensing or administrative authorisation of audiovisual media services are a national competence. Member States need to ensure that their legislation, national policies and administrative procedures respect EU law and values, including on a free, independent, and diverse media ecosystem, which is integral to a free and open democratic debate.

The European Media Freedom Act⁽¹⁾, which will apply fully from 8 August 2025, requires that legislative, regulatory, or administrative measures taken by a Member State that are liable to affect media pluralism or the editorial independence of media service providers operating in the internal market have to be duly justified and proportionate. Such measures shall be reasoned, transparent, objective, and non-discriminatory.

In the context of the annual Rule of Law Report, the Commission regularly monitors media freedom and pluralism in the Member States, including the independence, resources, and capacity of the regulatory authorities.

Regarding France, the Commission refers to the relevant country chapter of the 2024 Rule of Law Report⁽²⁾, where it considered that the solid national legal framework permits the media regulator, Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique (ARCOM), to operate independently.

In her political guidelines⁽³⁾ for the new mandate the President-elect of the Commission renewed her commitment to the Rule of Law Report and to investing in upholding the rule of law in the EU.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1083>

⁽²⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/27db4143-58b4-4b61-a021-a215940e19d0_en?filename=1_1_58120_communication_rol_en.pdf and the relevant country chapter https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/5e07c320-2475-4c0c-bdbd-6eda76460cdd_en?filename=25_1_58064_coun_chap_france_en.pdf

⁽³⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/president-elect-ursula-von-der-leyen_en