

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000339/25
to the Commission
Sandro Ruotolo (S&D)
(27 January 2025)

Subject: Italy's violation of the European Media Freedom Act

On Friday 24 January, the CEO of RAI — whose top managers are appointed by the Government, an arrangement at odds with Article 5 of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) — sent out a circular announcing the designation of 'editorial managers' for all of the national broadcaster's programmes.

The decision has been met with strong criticism, especially by the Union of RAI Journalists, USIGRAI, which labelled the move an attempt to control the state broadcaster's editorial line by curbing the autonomy of its presenters and directors.

We cannot let RAI become a tool in the hands of whichever government is in office, especially given the existence of EU regulations like the EMFA.

The decision to directly manage Italy's public broadcaster will compromise its editorial independence and impartiality and is a blatant violation of Article 3 of the EMFA. Having come into force on 8 November 2024, Article 3 obliges Member States to ensure that recipients of media services in the Union have 'the right to receive a plurality of news and current affairs content, produced with respect for editorial freedom of media service providers'.

In the light of the above:

1. Does the Commission not agree that the RAI CEO's decision is a flagrant breach of EU media legislation?
2. If it does, what steps will it take to ensure that the Italian Government complies with the EMFA?

Submitted: 27.1.2025

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(12 March 2025)

The Commission attaches great importance to upholding and fostering pluralistic and independent media in the EU and condemns any form of interference in the professional activities of journalists and their editorial independence.

Article 3 of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) ⁽¹⁾ is aimed at fostering citizens' right to have access to pluralistic and editorially independent media content, by requiring Member States to put in place framework conditions for safeguarding such right. It does not apply to actions or decisions taken by media service providers related to their internal organisation.

Nonetheless, the EMFA also provides for a set of safeguards — which will start applying in August 2025 — for the independent functioning of public service media, including requirements for Member States to ensure that public service media provide impartial and pluralistic information and opinions to their audiences. In this light, any action or decision taken by public service media providers should guarantee and not undermine their editorial independence and ability to fulfil their public service remit.

The Commission is following closely the preparations in Member States, including Italy, to implement and apply EMFA and will engage with the relevant national authorities to ensure that the national initiatives in this respect are in line with the Act's objectives and requirements.

The Commission will also continue to monitor the situation of media freedom and pluralism in Italy and in all the other Member States, including within the forthcoming 2025 Rule of Law Report ⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2024/1083, OJ L, 2024/1083, 17.4.2024.

⁽²⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/annual-rule-law-cycle_en