

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000993/26
to the Commission**

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(10 March 2026)

Subject: Use of EU funds for ‘Voices — the European Festival of Journalism and Media Freedom’

On 10-12 March, Florence will host ‘Voices — the European Festival of Journalism and Media Freedom’. Now into its third year, the event is funded by EU funds under a Commission call that supposedly made available a total of EUR 3 million (covering up to 90% of eligible costs) for three editions of the festival. The event boasts the patronage of the Municipality of Florence, Corecom Toscana and the Order of Journalists.

The list of speakers — with Fanpage director Francesco Cancellato, *La Repubblica* journalist Paolo Berizzi, UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese and Università per Stranieri di Siena rector Tommaso Montanari topping the bill — is redolent of a startling political and cultural bias in favour of the centre-left. Guests include Sandro Ruotolo, MEP for the Partito Democratico, and Barbara Floridia, a senator for the Five Star Movement.

In light of this, can the Commission answer the following:

1. What is the total amount of public money intended for the staging of the festival?
2. Which individuals cherry-picked the speakers and on the basis of what criteria?
3. Is the Commission aware of the event line-up and the predominance of speakers of a certain political and cultural persuasion?

Submitted: 10.3.2026

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(22 May 2026)

The Voices European Festival of Journalism and Media freedom receives co-funding from the Commission, following an open call for proposals with a maximum total contribution of EUR 3 000 000, for the duration of 27 months.

This is a preparatory action initiated by the European Parliament, which are typically defined as experimental initiatives designed to test the feasibility of new actions and prepare new programmes.

The festival is organised as a project carried out by a consortium of European and local organisations with strong EU-wide networks for media.

As such, the choice of speakers is made by a dedicated coordinator designated by each of the organising partners. The Commission has no involvement in this process.

It should also be recalled that the concerned call for proposals included strict, transparent and pre-established criteria to select projects and that the Commission does not have a role in implementation decisions taken by the beneficiaries.

The Commission is committed to ensuring that projects are properly implemented in accordance with the terms of each agreement in line with the Financial Regulation ⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2509/oj/eng>.