

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001814/26
to the Commission
Jaume Asens Llodrà (Verts/ALE)
(4 May 2026)**

Subject: Safeguarding press freedom and protecting journalists in the EU

There are growing signs in the EU of a shrinking civic space, driven by pressures and sanctions that may hinder journalistic work, including surveillance practices, administrative obstacles, and a particularly hostile environment when covering protests, the war in Gaza and other conflicts. Protecting press freedom requires that security measures, sanctions and judicial cooperation fully respect the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and ensure proportionality, transparency and effective avenues for redress.

1. How does the Commission assess the deterioration of press freedom in the EU, including the use of sanctions, strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), accreditation restrictions, surveillance and the criminalisation of protest coverage, and what concrete measures will it take to prevent reprisals and guarantee effective protection and remedies for journalists?
2. What actions can the Commission take to help ensure that, in the coverage of armed conflicts, no journalist in the EU is investigated, detained, sanctioned or expelled for their reporting, and to guarantee clear guidelines and safeguards in the application of sanctions and judicial cooperation so as to avoid penalising journalistic work?

Submitted: 4.5.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(16 July 2026)**

The European Media Freedom Act ⁽¹⁾ provides effective safeguards for media and journalists against political interference and surveillance, protecting their editorial independence and journalistic sources. Provisions on editorial independence, whereby media service providers of news and current affairs must guarantee that editorial decisions are taken freely, apply since February 2025. Those regarding safeguarding journalistic sources apply since August 2025. Its correct implementation is a priority for the Commission.

The European Democracy Shield ⁽²⁾ recognises the essential role of free and independent media and journalists as public watchdogs and foresees additional measures for their protection. The Anti-SLAPP Directive ⁽³⁾ protects them from strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) in civil cross border cases. The Commission will update the 2021 Recommendation on the safety of journalists ⁽⁴⁾ and review the impact of the 2022 Recommendation on protecting journalists from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings ⁽⁵⁾. The former encourages Member States to investigate and prosecute all criminal acts against journalists in an impartial independent, effective, transparent and timely manner, making full use of existing legislation. It also calls for better safety of journalists during protests and demonstrations.

The EU restrictive measures are designed and applied in line with the Charter of Fundamental Rights ⁽⁶⁾. The EU pays particular attention to avoiding unintended effects on legitimate journalistic work. All measures are imposed following unanimous decision by Member States. The implementation and enforcement are principally their responsibility, with a monitoring role for the Commission.

⁽¹⁾ European Media Freedom Act — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1083/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ European Democracy Shield: Empowering Strong and Resilient Democracies — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52025JC0791>.

⁽³⁾ Directive (EU) 2024/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings ('Strategic lawsuits against public participation') — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1069/oj/eng>.

⁽⁴⁾ Commission Recommendation on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals in the European Union <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2021/1534/oj/eng>.

⁽⁵⁾ Commission Recommendation on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022H0758>.

⁽⁶⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/char_2012/oj/eng.