



CPJ's Recommendations to the European Commission: Consultation for the European Democracy Shield

May 2025

The following Recommendations are addressed to the European Commission as part of its consultations in relation to the upcoming European Democracy Shield.

Journalist safety

- Make available financing and support to strengthen member states' efforts to implement the 2021 Journalist Safety Recommendation, including putting in place effective and independent rapid response mechanisms; training programs for law enforcement authorities, judges, and prosecutors; police training for supporting journalists at protests; and support to national and media regulatory authorities to establish dedicated working groups to prevent and address online attacks and threats to journalists. Ensure critical oversight systems so that all national measures are independent, demonstrably effective, and have the full trust of all journalists.
- Review the 2021 Journalist Safety Recommendation to establish if the scope could be expanded, and which areas could be strengthened, with a view to renewing a call to action for effective implementation by member states.
- Offer all means of support to assist the Council of Europe in the implementation of its "Journalists Matter" campaign which promotes the establishment of national action plans on journalist safety (and strengthening legal and institutional frameworks).
- In line with the Digital Services Act, hold very large online platforms (VLOPs) legally responsible for putting in place effective measures to protect journalists from online harassment.

Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation

- Offer financial and logistic support to member states to establish effective implementation of the European Commission's anti-SLAPP Recommendation (part of the anti-SLAPP "package"), including the training of judges, lawyers and journalists; support measures, such as legal aid schemes for SLAPPs victims or networks to provide legal advice and psychological support; awareness raising campaigns; data collection initiatives; and a strengthening of the independent work of nationally established focal points. Ensure critical oversight systems so that all national measures are independent, demonstrably effective, and have the full trust of all journalists.

European Media Freedom Act

- Provide financing and resources to the Secretariat of the European Board for Media Services to assist National Regulatory Authorities in the implementation and enforcement of the European Media Freedom Act.

- Ensure the European Media Freedom Act has influence and impact by swiftly investigating member states violating its provisions and initiating infringement proceedings where necessary.

Spyware

- Provide resources to assist journalists who seek to determine whether their devices or online accounts have been compromised, and provide independent checks by independent cybersecurity forensic investigators.

- Take all immediate steps to support and oversee, where applicable and to the fullest extent possible, the full implementation of the PEGA Committee's recommendations (including those to member states), and apply pressure on Member States to provide remedy for journalists targeted by abusive spyware.

- Publish the Commission communication on spyware and the legal boundaries on EU law, in particular as it relates to data protection, privacy and rule of law acquis, and national security; and use the publication to generate action-oriented discussions amongst member states on addressing abusive spyware.

Funding

- Conduct a financial needs assessment of the funding crisis affecting European media with a view to providing emergency funding; creating long-term, sustainable financial models; and increasing funds for EU media freedom reforms (including the European Media Freedom Act, the anti-SLAPP Package and the Journalist Safety Recommendation). Include such recommendations, if time allows, within the proposal for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034.

- Provide financial resources and logistical support to communities of journalists in exile in EU member states so that they can continue to report on their home countries.

Rule of law report

- Strengthen the Rule of Law Report of the European Commission, by increasing visibility and awareness among affected journalist communities in member states with a view to building local trust in the effectiveness of the process; strengthening it with more measurable and precise recommendations that can serve as benchmarks for progress in EU member states; and building trust with journalists that the process can meaningfully improve press freedom.

- Pressure the Council of the European Union to regularly report on, publicly debate, and draw attention to effective measures taken by member states regarding press freedom and journalist safety; and apply pressure on those states that continuously fail to muster the political will to take effective action at national level.