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Growing threats to media pluralism and the independence of the media

Committee Opinion¹

Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Ms Gala VELDHOEN, Netherlands, Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group

A. Conclusions of the Committee

1. The Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights welcomes the report prepared for the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media by Ms Valentina Grippo (Italy, ALDE) and supports the proposals for the draft resolution and draft recommendation.
2. The report builds on previous work of the Parliamentary Assembly on media concentration and pluralism and the independence of the media. It identifies the mechanisms by which media capture by political and economic actors operates and provides detailed examples of such practices. In addition, it acknowledges new challenges to media pluralism posed by social media and artificial intelligence and highlights good practices to address the emergence of “news deserts”.
3. The draft resolution calls for effective regulation of media concentration, transparency of media ownership, and support for public service media. It emphasises that protecting editorial freedom and media pluralism are mutually reinforcing objectives and stresses the need to protect journalists from strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) and repression, including transnational repression. Referring to the ongoing aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the draft resolution rightly recalls that journalists are civilians protected under international law, and that intentionally targeting and killing journalists constitutes a war crime. In this regard, the Committee notes with deep concern that the conflict in Gaza has become the deadliest for journalists in decades,² and recalls that the Parliamentary Assembly has strongly condemned the deliberate targeting and killing of local journalists in Gaza by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).³
4. The committee also welcomes the draft recommendation inviting the Committee of Ministers to collaborate with the Council of Europe member States and the European Union towards the creation of a pan-European database of media ownership in Europe. This measure would help to provide the public with easy, swift and effective access to data about media ownership and control arrangements in Europe.
5. The committee shares the concerns and recommendations expressed in the excellent report, and proposes two amendments. First, the committee proposes to strengthen the draft resolution by adding a reference to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights developing and clarifying the standards on media pluralism. Secondly, the committee proposes to introduce a clear requirement for mandatory disclosure of beneficial ownership of the media, in accordance with the standards developed by the Council of Europe.

1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 15916](#), Reference 4798 of 15 April 2024. Reporting Committee: Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media. See [Doc. 16468](#). Opinion approved by the committee on 9 September 2026.

2. “In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, journalism is ‘both a battleground and a lifeline’” | UN News.

3. [Resolution 2657 \(2026\)](#) “Journalism in the context of the Israel–Gaza conflict”, 22 May 2026; [Resolution 2623 \(2025\)](#) “Urgent call to put an end to the devastating humanitarian catastrophe and the killing of journalists in Gaza”, 2 October 2025.



B. Proposed amendments

Amendment A (to the draft resolution)

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 2, insert the following paragraph:

“The Assembly recalls the case law of the European Court of Human Rights relating to freedom of expression and media pluralism, which has clarified that States Parties have a positive obligation to put in place an appropriate legislative and administrative framework to guarantee effective pluralism, in particular in the audiovisual sector. Both internal pluralism – within each media outlet – and external pluralism – across multiple outlets – should be considered together in order to guarantee diversity of overall programme content that reflects, as far as possible, the variety of opinions encountered in society.”

Amendment B (to the draft resolution)

In the draft resolution, in paragraph 22.3, replace the words “assess whether the disclosure of beneficial ownership of the media is mandatory in their legislation” with the following words:

“make the disclosure of beneficial ownership of the media mandatory”

C. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Gala Veldhoen, rapporteur for opinion⁴

1. Introduction

1. I would like to congratulate Ms Valentina Grippo (Italy, ALDE) for her report, which provides a thorough and balanced assessment of the threats to media pluralism and independence. The report addresses several concerns, including the phenomenon of media capture by political and economic actors, the mounting pressure against public service media, the emergence of news deserts, and the risks to independent and quality media due to the business practices and market dominance of online platforms. It therefore covers a wide range of risks highlighted by the 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM), which concluded that media pluralism continues to decline across Europe.⁵

2. The report recalls several recommendations of the Committee of Ministers and refers to legal instruments developed by the European Union, notably the Merger Regulation, the Digital Markets Act (DMA) and the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA). The EMFA entered into force on 7 May 2024 and most of its provisions have applied since 8 August 2025. An independent European Board for Media Services was set up and started operating in February 2025.⁶ As the EMFA is relatively recent, it will require further examination by the Parliamentary Assembly to assess whether it is being properly implemented and whether it effectively contributes to better protection of media freedom and pluralism within the European Union (EU). Particular attention should also be paid to the ongoing revision of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive by the European Commission, which aims to foster a stronger EU media sector and enhance the resilience of democracies.⁷

3. The report also highlights risks associated with gatekeeping by TVs and Virtual Assistants and the exploitation of dominant positions by providers of artificial intelligence (AI) services. This is of significant importance in the context of an increasingly polarised and constantly evolving digital environment, to which young people are particularly exposed. I consider that further work will need to be undertaken to address the risks to media pluralism and the quality of the media, posed by online platforms and AI services.⁸ In particular, I would like to underline the potential of competition law, including EU standards, to serve as an effective tool in addressing issues arising from media concentration. Effective competition within the media sector, especially among platforms, should be promoted through practical approaches. In this regard, the

4. The explanatory memorandum is drawn up under the responsibility of the rapporteur.

5. [Monitoring media pluralism in the European Union: results of the MPM2026](#), June 2026. The MPM2026 covers the EU member States and candidate countries.

6. [European Media Freedom Act – European Commission](#).

7. [Revision of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive – AVMSD | Shaping Europe's digital future](#).

8. See also [Resolution 2454 \(2022\)](#) “The control of online communication: a threat to media pluralism, freedom of information and human dignity”.

development of digital platform infrastructures capable of competing with dominant global platforms could be useful in reducing systemic dependency, improving media autonomy, and contributing to a more resilient and diverse information system.⁹

4. The report also addresses various threats, pressures, and constraints faced by journalists. These include the phenomenon of transnational repression, which has been the subject of recent Assembly resolutions and recommendations – [Resolution 2669 \(2026\)](#) and [Recommendation 2309 \(2026\)](#) “Fighting back against transnational repression”, as well as [Resolution 2509 \(2023\)](#) and [Recommendation 2257 \(2023\)](#) “Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and human rights”. [Resolution 2531 \(2024\)](#) and [Recommendation 2267 \(2024\)](#) “Countering strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs): an imperative for a democratic society” are also relevant. In this regard, it is worth noting that, in addition to the recommendation by the Committee of Ministers referenced in the draft resolution, the European Union also adopted an anti-SLAPP Directive on 11 April 2024. The deadline for transposition expired on 7 May 2026. On 15 July 2026, the European Commission initiated infringement proceedings against fourteen EU member States for their failure or delay in transposing this directive, underscoring the need for further action in this area.¹⁰

5. My first proposed amendment to the draft resolution recalls the case law of the European Court of Human Rights on media pluralism, thereby promoting a human rights-based approach grounded in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5), which guarantees the freedom of expression. The second amendment serves to clarify and strengthen the initial proposal regarding the disclosure of beneficial ownership of the media, thereby enhancing transparency.

2. Explanatory notes

2.1. Amendment A (to the draft resolution)

The amendment anchors the draft resolution more firmly in the legal framework provided by the European Convention on Human Rights, in particular its Article 10, which guarantees the right to freedom of expression, including the right to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers. According to the European Court of Human Rights’ case law, States have a “positive obligation to put in place an appropriate legislative and administrative framework to guarantee effective pluralism” in the audiovisual sector.¹¹ The amendment emphasises that this obligation encompasses both external pluralism (pluralism across multiple outlets) and internal pluralism (pluralism within a single media outlet) and that these two dimensions are complementary and have to be considered together when assessing whether the overall media environment guarantees diversity of overall programme content and safeguards democratic debate.¹²

2.2. Amendment B (to the draft resolution)

The amendment calls on the Council of Europe member States to make the disclosure of beneficial ownership of the media mandatory. This is in line with the standards developed by the Council of Europe, including Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2018\)1](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership, which encourages States to develop regulatory frameworks to promote transparency of media ownership.

9. Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Safeguarding Media Pluralism in the Online Environment, Background study on “[Safeguarding media pluralism in the online environment](#)”, February 2026, p. 22-23.

10. “[Commission takes action to ensure complete and timely transposition of EU directives](#)”.

11. European Court of Human Rights, [NIT S.R.L. v. the Republic of Moldova](#), application no. 28470/12, judgment of 5 April 2022, §186.

12. *Ibid.*, § 190.