Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 2111 (2017)[1]

Political influence over independent media and journalists

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly highly values the increasing efforts of the Council of Europe intergovernmental sector to enhance journalists' security and strengthen media freedom. In this respect, the Assembly welcomes the joint work with the partner organisations of the Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and appreciates the relevance of ongoing work by the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) concerning the preparation of a draft recommendation to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership.

2. However, the number and gravity of attacks against independent journalism continues to increase and the situation in many European countries is deteriorating. Not only are trends alarming with regard to physical attacks against journalists and the direct takeover or closure of media outlets which express dissent, but it also appears that strategies to silence critical journalism increasingly use psychological violence and intimidation, which erode the right to freedom of information and force journalists to use self-censorship, including judicial intimidation through a range of laws such as (but not only) those on national security, terrorism and defamation.

3. In this respect, recalling its Resolution 2179 (2017) on political influence over independent media and journalists, the Assembly considers that proper follow-up must be given to the recent study conducted by the Council of Europe entitled *Journalists under pressure – Unwarranted interference, fear and self-censorship in Europe*.

4. Moreover, the independence of public service media is not always properly guaranteed: there is a need to promote sound model legal provisions and good administrative practice in the domain of public service media, with a view to strengthening their independence and their capability to fulfil their mission in the general public interest.

5. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

5.1. call for a stronger commitment of Council of Europe member States to constructive dialogue in order to counter all serious threats to media freedom reported on the Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists;

5.2. entrust the CDMSI and/or other relevant intergovernmental bodies with:

5.2.1. resuming work on public service media with the aim of developing in operational terms the principles enshrined in its Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)1 on public service media governance, in particular with regard to appointment procedures, and propose model provisions respectful of the independence of public service media;

5.2.2. designing and supporting the implementation of targeted co-operation programmes aimed at promoting good practice in the governance of public service media;

5.2.3. starting a comprehensive study on national laws and practices which are misused to smother critical independent journalists and media, starting with those on national security, terrorism and defamation, with a view to providing guidance for their review.

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1. *Assembly debate* on 29 June 2017 (26th Sitting) (see Doc. 14339, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Mr Stefan Schennach). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 29 June 2017 (26th Sitting).