



Ramona Strugariu
European Parliament,
WIB 05M047
1047, Brussels

Brussels, 29.04.2020

Dear Vice-President Jourova,
Dear Commissioner Reynders,
Dear Commissioner Breton,

We are writing to you to reiterate previous calls for a proposal establishing a permanent European fund for journalists under the framework of the next MFF (2021-2027), as the current situation imposes a redrafting of the upcoming EU budget, as well as an Emergency Media Fund to support independent journalism and media outlets deeply affected by the crisis.

It has long been time for the Commission to take the bold, courageous measures for safeguarding the freedom of the press and for establishing such a fund. The situation of the media had been very fragile for several years and with this exceptional context now, it has become more acute than ever and it rapidly continues to deteriorate. Local media is literally dying as we speak. Had such funding been available, the high toll this crisis is taking on the media sector would have been considerably less burdensome.

Over the course of the previous years, we have seen the successful implementation of several projects providing financial support to media outlets. However, in order for this support to be sustainable and consistent, a permanent dedicated fund with grants independently distributed by a dedicated EU body is now, more than ever, a necessity.

A free and independent press lays at the core of democracy, transparency, the protection of our fundamental values and our Union's fight against disinformation. Reporters Without Borders highlighted in the recently published 2020 World Press Freedom Index, that the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the threats to press freedom. Currently the media sector is facing multiple challenges, from intimidation and attacks disguised as emergency anti-COVID measures in Member States such as Hungary and Bulgaria, to a deep fall in revenues from the advertising sector, challenging the sustainability of several media outlets and threatening their existence.

It is absolutely vital that the Commission comes now to their help with a permanent fund, offering direct financial support for independent journalists and media outlets, freelancers and self-employed media workers, allowing them to continue to create quality fact-based content, so much needed during these times.

Media outlets have been reporting losses of up to 80% of their revenue from advertising during this period and thousands of media workers have already lost, or are at risk of losing their jobs, and while some face this risk temporarily, others may lose their jobs permanently. At this moment, small independent and local news media outlets are the most vulnerable and experiencing the most acute effects of the crisis in terms of collapsing revenues. The dramatic



collapse in advertising is quicker in their case, because of their dependence on local small advertisers. They need rapid support in order to survive.

While media outlets are switching and increasing their online presence, this process is challenging even for well-established papers and television channels, and while subscriptions for online outlets have seen a growth of 145% in Europe, the revenues from these activities cannot compensate for the losses. This increase in consumption shows the public interest in finding reliable, quality information sources, and it is therefore even more important that the Commission takes action to safeguard the right to information and prevent these media outlets from going bankrupt.

Finally, despite the fact that some member states provide funding and support to some of the media organisations, public funds for the media in member states with generalised deficiencies within the rule of law framework often come at the cost of sacrificing editorial independence. The only way to preserve media pluralism, protecting the rule of law, the values enshrined in our Treaties and enhance the fight against disinformation is the establishment of a permanent dedicated fund, offering direct financial support.

This is not a time for hesitation; this is a time for clear, strong and ambitious measures from the side of the Commission to support one of the main pillars of our democracy. Freedom of speech and freedom of information will not survive otherwise. Independent journalists should be reliable partners in countering disinformation, fake news and propaganda. If independent media outlets do not get support, they will die in silence and a whole democratic world, the way we know and treasure it, dies along. Help is needed today, now, as we speak.

Thank you for your cooperation and for your commitment to this cause.

Yours sincerely,

Ramona Strugariu, MEP Renew Europe

David Casa, MEP EPP

Klemen Grošelj, MEP Renew Europe

Olivier Chastel, MEP Renew Europe

Sophie in 't Veld, MEP Renew Europe

Dace Melbarde, MEP ECR

Irena Joveva, MEP Renew Europe

Alexis Georgoulis, MEP GUE/NGL

Lukasz Kohut, MEP S&D

Maite Pagazaurtundua, MEP Renew Europe

Monica Semedo, MEP Renew Europe

Dragos Pislaru, MEP Renew Europe

Alviina Alametsa, MEP Greens/EFA

Sylvie Guillaume, MEP S&D

Anna Donath, MEP Renew Europe

Javier Nart, MEP Renew Europe

Salima Yenbou, MEP Greens/EFA

Massimiliano Smeriglio, MEP S&D

Raphael Glucksmann, MEP S&D

Brando Benifei, MEP S&D

Krzysztof Hetman, MEP EPP
Daniel Freund, MEP Greens/EFA
Klara Dobrev, MEP S&D
Clotilde Armand, MEP Renew Europe
Lara Wolters, MEP S&D
Attila Ara-Kovacs, MEP S&D
Fabienne Keller, MEP Renew Europe
Sandor Ronai, MEP S&D
Agnes Jongerius, MEP S&D
Moritz Korner, MEP Renew Europe
Magdalena Adamovicz, MEP EPP
Morten Lokkegaard, MEP Renew Europe
Billy Kelleher, MEP Renew Europe
Charles Puigdemont i Casamajo, MEP Non-attached
Antoni Comin i Oliveres, MEP Non-attached
Carla Ponsati i Obiols, MEP Non-attached
Konstantinos Arvanitis, MEP GUE/NGL
Stelios Kouloglou, MEP GUE/NGL
Viola von Cramon Taubadel, MEP Greens/EFA
Vlad Botos, MEP Renew Europe
Cristian Ghinea, MEP Renew Europe
Dragos Tudorache, MEP Renew Europe
Nicolae Stefanuta, MEP Renew Europe
Vladimir Bilcik, MEP EPP
Urmas Paet, MEP Renew Europe
Ivars Ijabs, MEP Renew Europe