

PRESS RELEASE

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World Press Freedom Day 2023

Shaping a Future of Rights: Freedom of Expression as a Driver for All Other Human Rights

On the occasion of the 2023 World Press Freedom Day, European press publishers appreciate the recognition in this year's theme of freedom of expression, the very foundation and key driver of press freedom, a basis for a healthy, inclusive and pluralistic democracy and a precondition for the exercise of other fundamental human rights by allowing everyone to have a voice.

Journalists, press publishers and all other media professionals in their daily activities uphold and promote freedom of expression. Historically, this fundamental right enabled the press sector to keep the political power accountable and even boost major changes in society. Press content is bound to respect the limits of freedom of expression, meaning that on the other hand any content that is not illegal can be published. This is an essential component of an open and critical debate and a guarantee for democracy.

We appreciate the intention to protect press and media freedom by the EU as an acknowledgement of the democratic importance of free media, especially when we are confronted with authoritarian states and their attempts to control and weaponise information. Nonetheless, good intentions may have unintended consequences. That is why we call on the co-legislators in the European Media Freedom Act ongoing discussions to avoid rushed agreements and consider, among other issues, the need to adequately protect media from political interferences, to protect journalists and journalistic sources from attacks and forced disclosure, and guarantee the free editorial decisions of publishers, that in several Member States protect journalists' freedom of expression by shielding them against abusive lawsuits and retaliation.

It is also important to enable freedom of expression by ensuring dissemination without interferences by political actors or private companies arbitrarily deleting or downgrading legal editorial press. The increasing importance of online distribution for the press, as well as the role of large online platforms as virtual spaces to exchange and build opinions, must not be ignored. Allowing large platforms to unilaterally restrict editorial content means allowing them to shape the information available to citizens. Lastly, it is also important to enable the media's freedom of expression by creating suitable conditions for media companies to be financially sustainable, as this would promote pluralism and strengthen the media against external economic pressure, allowing them to continue their work.

Ilias Konteas, Executive Director of EMMA – ENPA, said: "It is crucial to uphold freedom of expression, as ultimately nobody can truly tell where the truth lies. Many ideas that turned out to be true were once deemed as incorrect or subversive. As press publishers, we work to ensure that all legal editorial content can find a space in the democratic debate and contribute to its diversity."

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***EMMA**, the European Magazine Media Association, is the unique and complete representation of Europe's magazine media, which is today enjoyed by millions of consumers on various platforms, encompassing both paper and digital formats. See: www.magazinemedi.eu/*

***ENPA**, the European Newspaper Publishers' Association is the largest representative body of newspaper publishers across Europe. ENPA advocates for 16 national associations across 13 European countries, and is a principal interlocutor to the EU institutions and a key driver of media policy debates in the European Union. See: www.enpa.eu/*