



Joint statement on the EMFA: European democracies, quality journalism and the creative ecosystem need strong and independent public service media

Brussels, 08 November 2023

Honorable members of the inter-institutional negotiating teams on the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA),

We, the undersigned organisations representing public service media, journalists, media workers, civil society, cultural and creative industries, call on you to **effectively protect the independence of public service media in the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA).**

The EU has always been a stronghold of media freedom and pluralism, but today these central values are in decline. Where the rule of law is undermined, media freedom is often the first casualty. Since governments are usually responsible for setting their remit and funding, public service media are particularly exposed to threats to their independence and ability to fund activities.

Public service media's role is to provide high-quality, diverse and impartial information, education and entertainment to all citizens. They are thus essential for democratic participation and opinion-forming. They drive healthy competition and innovation in the media market. They are important partners for Europe's cultural and creative sectors. If their independence is undermined, the threats are clear.

This is why we urge you to ensure that the EMFA establishes clear and robust safeguards shielding public service media from any form of political or economic pressure.

The European Parliament has done outstanding work in strengthening the provisions on public service media (Article 5). Their proposed changes would effectively shield them from interference by governments, both in law and in practice. Importantly, they ensure adequate, predictable, and sustainable funding for public service media on a multi-annual basis, also with a view to enabling them to develop and adapt to audience needs and technological advancements. **If EU decision-makers want to protect the independence of public service media, they should settle for nothing less than the Parliament's position during the inter-institutional trilogue negotiations.**

In any event, we call on EU institutions not to undermine or weaken public service media. Vague wording, such as “seek to” as proposed in the Council’s negotiating mandate, leaves the door open for abuse by certain Member States. Misleading arguments on potential distortions of competition by public service media in the Recitals are not helpful either. The EMFA’s objective must be to strengthen and protect public service media, not the opposite.

We stand ready to work with the EU institutions to ensure that public service media can continue to serve the public interest and to enrich the European media landscape.

Yours sincerely,

Access Info Europe

Association of European Journalists (AEJ)

CEPI

Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties)

Eurocadres

Eurocinema

Europa Distribution

Europa International

European Broadcasting Union (EBU)

European Coalitions for Cultural Diversity (ECCD)

European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)

Federation of European Screen Directors (FERA)

Free Press Unlimited

Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)

International Press Institute (IPI)

Public Media Alliance

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)

Media, Entertainment & Arts sector of UNI Europa (UNIMEI)