

PRESS RELEASE

Journalists and publishers in Europe warn of the threat to press freedom following European Parliament vote on draft Data Protection Regulation

Rapporteur's statement that "nothing will change for journalists" is strongly refuted

Brussels, 12 March 2014 – A coalition of European organisations representing the interests of both journalists and press publishers¹ today criticised the vote in the European Parliament on the draft EU General Data Protection Regulation, which jeopardises press freedom and fails to properly protect journalistic sources. They vehemently refute claims from the author of the Parliament's report, MEP Jan Philipp Albrecht, that "nothing will change for journalists" following the vote.

The coalition is concerned that the Parliament's vote ignores proposals for amendments suggested by two Parliamentary Committees providing Opinions on the draft Regulation, which supported a strong, clear and directly binding exemption for journalistic data processing. The Parliament's approach also represents a weakening of the Commission's proposal - which was intended to at least maintain the level of protection for journalistic activities as set out in the current law - and therefore poses a severe threat to press and media freedom in many parts of Europe.

The coalition, which also launched a petition² last week on Article 80 – which already has the support of several hundred journalists, publishers and citizens from across Europe - also continues to raise concerns regarding the latest Council text on the draft General Data Protection Regulation, following a statement setting out its concerns³ last December.

"While we appreciate the assurance of MEPs to guarantee media freedom in the latest draft law, the lack of clear reference to an exemption for journalists to process data that is in the public interest will put media freedom under threat," said **Ricardo Gutiérrez, General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists**. "We fear that leaving Member States to decide on such an exemption, journalists and media organisations will be put under pressure to exercise self-censorship."

¹ EPC, EMMA, ENPA, EFJ

² Petition by EFJ, EMMA, ENPA and EPC: <https://www.change.org/petitions/art80>

³ <http://www.magazinemedi.eu/wp-content/uploads/Joint-publishers-and-journalists-statement-EU-draft-Regulation-on-Dat-.pdf>

EMMA President David Hanger added: “We now strongly urge the Council, together with those MEPs in the newly elected Parliament who will be involved in negotiating the final text of the Data Protection Regulation, to avoid any restrictions on the freedom of journalistic reporting.

ENPA President Ivar Rusdal said: “The European Parliament has so often been vocal on the importance of press freedom in democratic society, so it is particularly disappointing that a majority of MEPs have today voted for changes to the proposed Data Protection Regulation that would seriously undermine the ability of the press to report freely and without restrictions. It is vital that we find a solution to this situation in the forthcoming discussions among Member States.”

Angela Mills Wade, Executive Director of the European Publishers Council said: “I am surprised that Mr Albrecht told Parliament that he won’t be making life more difficult for journalists and the media. On the contrary, by adopting the wording in his report, Parliament has withdrawn fundamental protections for the media and journalists to carry out legitimate news reporting and investigative journalism by leaving Member States to apply derogations on an optional basis, and failing to maintain the 1995 Directive’s reference to journalistic purposes.”

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