

European Media Freedom Act and Digital Services Act: protecting media freedom in a safe online world

In collaboration with EuropeanNewsRoom - Brussels

Tuesday, 26 September 2023 - 10:15-11:15

[European Parliament, Anna Politkovskaya press conference room \(SPAAK 0A50\)](#)

Interpretation: EN, DE, FR, DK

10:15 Press Seminar

The European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) - protecting media

- Sabine [VERHEYEN](#) (EPP, DE), Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) and Rapporteur of the European Media Freedom Act

The Digital Services Act (DSA) - What changed after its entry into force? How do rules affect media providers?

- Christel [SCHALDEMOSE](#) (S&D, DK), Member of the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) and Rapporteur on Digital Services Act

Q&A Session

11:15 End

Interested in attending either in-presence or online? Please register:

https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/Registration_EMFA_briefing

BACKGROUND

Digital Services Act

The [Digital Services Act](#) (DSA) puts in place new measures to **tackle the spread of illegal content online** and obligations on platforms to react quickly, while respecting the freedom of expression. It gives **new rights to online users** and makes online platforms more transparent and accountable.

Under the DSA, Very Large Online Platforms and Search Engines (VLOPs and VLOSEs) there will face more stringent obligations, including on **preventing systemic risks** (such as those related to the spread of disinformation, illegal content, adverse effects on elections etc.).

The briefing takes place one month after the [DSA took effect for](#) the largest platforms (including Google, Amazon, TikTok). This is a good opportunity to discuss what these rules mean.

European Media Freedom Act

The Commission presented the European Media Freedom Act on 16 September 2022. The proposed regulation seeks to set rules to protect media pluralism and independence in the EU, including safeguards against political interference in editorial decisions, in the context of the [European Democracy Action Plan](#) and given the deteriorating state of media freedom in the member states, with ongoing attempts to undermine [the European Union's values](#).

The proposal aims to safeguard against unjustified, disproportionate and discriminatory national measures. It is consistent with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union on freedom of expression, as well as EU policies on fighting disinformation and foreign interference.

The Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) on 7 September 2023 voted to amend the Commission's proposal by expanding the scope, strengthening transparency requirements and banning all forms of pressure on journalists and editors.

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), as an associated committee, has exclusive powers over rules that tackle protecting journalists from surveillance, notably specifying that authorities are banned from forcing journalists to disclose their sources.

The new proposal also includes an obligation to media service providers to disclose their direct, indirect and beneficial owners (Commission had only proposed that to apply to direct owners). MEPs want media to make that information accessible to the public and add it first to a national and then to an EU-wide transparency database. Other requests include:

- Capping public advertising allocated to a single media provider, online platform or a search engine to 15% of the total advertising budget allocated by that authority in a given EU country;
- Guaranteeing editorial independence and economic viability of public service media by financing them adequately and over several years;
- Making audience measurement systems more transparent and objective, as they have an impact on media advertising revenues;
- Building on the Digital Services Act, MEPs propose that EMFA includes a mediation mechanism that protects independent media from arbitrary decisions made by Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs);
- The new European Board for Media Services, comprised of national media authorities and tasked with ensuring consistent application of EU media law, should be legally and functionally independent from the Commission and able to act on its own, not only at the Commission's request. They want an independent "expert group", representing the views of the media sector and including civil society, to feed into the work of the Board.

Next steps

The European Parliament's mandate is still in the making; the text adopted by the Culture Committee needs to be confirmed by the full Parliament, with a vote scheduled during the 2-5 October plenary, before MEPs can begin discussions with the Council on the final shape of the law.

The aim of the Commission, Council and Parliament is to conclude the negotiations on the EMFA regulation before the upcoming European Parliament elections.

Links

- [CULT Committee Vote - Press release 7 Sept](#)
- [Draft text \(for mandate\) after adoption in CULT Committee](#)
- [European Parliament Research Service Briefing on EMFA](#)
- [European Parliament Research Service Legislative Train on EMFA](#)
- [Legislative Observatory on EMFA](#)
- [Rules on DSA](#)
- [Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act - EP Press release 5 July](#)