



July 19, 2019

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen
 European Commission
 Rue de la Loi 200
 1049 Brussels
 Belgium

Dear President von der Leyen,

We are writing as members of the press freedom community to congratulate you on your appointment as President of the European Commission, and to urge you to ensure that media freedom, the protection of journalists, and EU citizens' access to information are top political priorities over the coming term of your Commission.

The last Commission took important steps to address media freedom. But given the rapidly changing media environment, increasingly severe threats and restrictions to press freedom, and the recent murders of journalists, more must be done. We, the undersigned organizations, strongly urge you to appoint a Vice-President of the new Commission with a clear and robust mandate to use all available EU mechanisms, including policy, legislation, and budget, to defend press freedom and the safety of journalists. In particular, we urge you to explicitly list this mandate in your mission letter to one of the Vice-Presidents establishing it as a political priority over the next five-year term.

We ask that the Vice-President have a sufficiently robust and far-ranging mandate to address the following areas of reform:

- Creating an enabling legal and regulatory environment for free, independent, pluralistic, and diverse media and the safety of journalists, whether staff, freelancers, or bloggers. Journalists need to be protected from judicial harassment, arbitrary surveillance, defamation, overly broad national security and anti-terrorist legislation, as well as SLAPP and tax laws.
- Protecting journalists, freelancers, and bloggers from physical, legal, psychological, and digital threats, and ensuring access to effective protection and prevention measures and mechanisms, with specific attention to the risks facing female journalists.

- Combating impunity for all attacks against journalists, freelancers, and bloggers, including support and capacity-building for law enforcement, prosecutors, and the judiciary and the development of specialized protocols for investigations.
- Continuing to combat disinformation through robust public defense of independent journalism and its critical importance in democracy. This should accompany efforts to increase public understanding of media freedoms, supporting social media self-regulation, and building media literacy.
- Supporting sustainable models for independent journalism in promoting media independence, pluralism, and diversity, as well as allowing for effective self-regulation, capacity building, and training.

Media freedom and pluralism are pillars of modern democracy. For the next Commission to guarantee European citizens their right to access to information, it must use the coming term to address the numerous threats to journalism. We hope you will take steps to ensure it does.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and thank you in advance for taking our concerns into consideration. We look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

Alliance Internationale de Journalistes
Article 19
Association of European Journalists
Committee to Protect Journalists
European Federation of Journalists
European Journalism Centre
European Media Initiative
European Centre for Press and Media Freedom
Free Press Unlimited
Global Forum for Media Development
IFEX
Index on Censorship
International Press Institute
Media Diversity Institute
PEN International
English PEN
Reporters Without Borders
Rory Peck Trust
South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)
World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)