



VĚRA JOUROVÁ

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Rue de la Loi, 200
B-1049 Brussels
Tel. +32-2 295 51 44
cab-jourova-contact@ec.europa.eu

Brussels,
A(2021)4037348

06. 07. 2021

Dear Sir, / Dear Madam,

I would like to thank you, also on behalf of President von der Leyen, for your letter dated 27 April 2021 about the situation of journalists and the attacks they are facing in your country.

Media freedom and media pluralism are essential to our democracies, as highlighted in the European Democracy Action Plan¹.

As confirmed by the findings of the Commission's 2020 Rule of Law Report, journalists and other media actors face a number of threats and attacks in several EU Member States.

The EU-funded Mapping Media Freedom project reported that 873 journalists or media workers were attacked in 22 Member States in 2020. The related 'Media Freedom Rapid Response' strand of the project provides legal and practical support to protect journalists and media workers².

The Commission recalls that Member States have the obligation to guarantee an enabling environment for journalists, protect their safety and pro-actively ensure media freedom and media pluralism.

The European Commission has reacted to the risks faced by journalists with a comprehensive approach in December last year through a series of initiatives.

Strengthening media freedom and pluralism is a key objective of the European Democracy Action Plan, which includes two specific initiatives I would like to mention.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2250

² <https://www.mfrr.eu/>





First, we want to improve the safety of journalists. The Commission therefore intends to adopt a Recommendation to Member States aiming at enhancing journalists' safety in the EU. The Recommendation will aim to tackle physical and online threats and ensure better implementation by Member States of the standards in the 2016 Council of Europe Recommendation on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors.

In addition, we will present an initiative on abusive litigation. The so-called SLAPPs - strategic lawsuits against public participation - is another serious issue, and we need a common approach to it.

The Commission will continue monitoring closely the state of media freedom and pluralism in Greece and in all the Member States. The Commission's 2021 Rule of Law Report will analyse the developments in the Member States concerning media freedom and pluralism, and will pay particular attention to the developments pertaining to the protection of journalists.

On the specific case of Mr Kostas Vaxevanis, the Commission has been in contact with the Greek authorities and understands that the Prosecutor Office of the Athens First Instance Court has ordered a preliminary investigation, which is currently underway. We have also been informed that the Hellenic Police takes measures, according to the situation, in order to protect journalists from illegal actions against them.

Yours sincerely,



Věra Jourová