



Fundamental rights

Grondrechten
Derechos fundamentales
Основни права
Cearta bunúsacha
Grundläggande rättigheter
Direitos fundamentais
Temeljne pravice
Alapvető jogok
Pamattiesības
Základné práva
Prawa podstawowe
Pagrindinēs teisēs
Drepturile fun
Drittijiet f
Θεμελιώδ
Colloquium
Základní práva
Põhioigused
Perusoikeudet
Temeljna prava

BRUSSELS, 17 - 18 November 2016

Session IIc: Protecting journalists and new media actors from hate speech

If there is to be media freedom and pluralism, journalists must be free to report on any topic and engage on social media platforms without resorting to self-censorship because of fears of threats and hate speech.

The public consultation revealed that hate speech directed against journalists is a significant problem and a serious concern for media organisations and individual journalists alike. The public consultation and recent studies such as the survey carried out by the Guardian as part of the series 'the web we want'¹ also revealed that woman and ethnic and religious minorities are disproportionately affected. The need for action to counter online abuse of female journalists has also been identified by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)². The public consultation particularly underlined the connection between the activities of far-right groups and hate speech, including open threats to journalists.

The OSCE's findings are also mirrored by national studies suggesting that hate speech reactions are triggered in particular when journalists report about immigration, integration and feminism or gender issues³. The studies revealed that hate speech does not only affect the individual journalist targeted but also has an overall 'chilling effect' on the freedom of the press. One of the surveys⁴ found that up to one quarter of the journalists interviewed claimed to have refrained from reporting on certain subjects in order to avoid threats and intimidation. The perception that journalists are frequent targets of online hate speech is also confirmed in the 2016 Eurobarometer report "Media Pluralism and democracy" in which three quarters of the respondents who follow or participate in debates on social media responded that they had experienced cases where abuse, hate speech or threats were directed at journalists, bloggers, or people active on social media. Out of this group, nearly half also indicated that this made them hesitate to engage in such debates themselves showing that the chilling effect on freedom of expression is not limited to journalists but also to

¹ The Guardian, 12.4.2016 'The dark side of Guardian comments' by Becky Gardiner, Mahana Mansfield, Ian Anderson, Josh Holder, Daan Louter and Monica Ulmanu, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/12/the-dark-side-of-guardian-comments>.

² 2016 Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) 'New challenges to freedom of expression: Countering online abuse of female journalists' <http://www.osce.org/fom/220411?download=true> and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe — The Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović 'Recommendations following the Expert Meeting New Challenges to Freedom of Expression: Countering Online Abuse of Female Journalists' Vienna, 17 September 2015, <http://www.osce.org/fom/193556?download=true>.

³ Monica Löfgren Nilsson 'Hot och hat mot svenska journalister' NORDICOM-INFORMATION 37 (2015) 3-4: 51-56 http://www.nordicom.gu.se/sites/default/files/kapitel-pdf/nordicom-information_37_2015_3-4_51-56.pdf and Soumen Journalistiliitto 21.3.2016 'UJF demands end to hate speech targeting journalists' <http://www.journalistiliitto.fi/in-english/news/ujf-demands-end-to-hate-speech-targeting-journalists/>.

⁴ Monica Löfgren Nilsson 'Hot och hat mot svenska journalister' NORDICOM-INFORMATION 37 (2015) 3-4: p 54. http://www.nordicom.gu.se/sites/default/files/kapitel-pdf/nordicom-information_37_2015_3-4_51-56.pdf

the general public who follow or participate in debates on social media.

This session will examine the impact of hate speech on individual journalists and the potential impact on media freedom caused by fear of threats and self-censorship amongst journalists. The session will focus on what employers (publishers), journalists' associations, social networking platforms and the technology industry can do to ensure that journalists remain free to carry out their work. It will also look at possible responses to the problem at national and EU level.

Indicative questions to steer the discussions:

1 – Is the current response to hate speech against journalists by the different actors sufficient to address the problem?

2 – If not, what more could be done:

a) at EU level (such as coordination and support measures);

b) at Member State level (such as better data collection and strengthened law enforcement);

c) by the media industry and journalists' associations (such as through legal assistance and support, mentorship programmes, data collection and measures to foster media literacy);

d) by social networking sites and stakeholders in cooperation with the technology industry.
