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*Brussels,
Ares (2024) 3680265*

Dear Mr Fassoulas,

I would like to thank you and your co-signatories for your letter sharing your concerns regarding the situation of media freedom and media pluralism in Italy.

The Commission pays particular attention to media freedom and media pluralism, as part of a reinforced effort to uphold the fundamental rights and values on which the Union is founded, and which Member States must promote and guarantee. The Commission has stepped up its work in this area, placing media freedom and media pluralism at the heart of its rule of law reporting.

The 2023 Rule of Law report on Italy noted that safeguards for editorial and financial independence of public service media needed to be strengthened and recommended to continue the legislative process to reform and introduce safeguards for the regime on defamation, the protection of professional secrecy and journalistic sources, taking into account the European standards on the protection of journalists.

With the European Media Freedom Act, the Commission set up the relevant rules to better protect media professionals and media service providers, including public service media, across the Union. The Act entered into force in May 2024 and the bulk of its provisions will apply starting from August 2025.

The Anti-SLAPP Directive, adopted in April 2024, provides new rules aiming at addressing the growing number of abusive lawsuits against journalists, media outlets, and human rights defenders. The three key pillars of protection in the directive are early dismissal of manifestly unfounded claims, remedies against abusive court proceedings, and protection against third country SLAPP-judgements. Member States now have two years to transpose the rules into their national systems. The Commission is also ensuring the follow-up by Member States on its April 2022 Anti-SLAPP Recommendation

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concerning topics such as training, awareness-raising, support mechanisms, and data collection. The Commission is also monitoring how Member States implement its September 2021 Recommendation to improve the safety of journalists.

The Commission will continue to closely follow the situation on media freedom and media pluralism in all Member States, including Italy, in particular in the context of the preparation of the annual Rule of Law Report. As part of this process, the Commission welcomes the important contribution of civil society and media freedom organisations.

Yours sincerely,

Věra Jourová