



Consultation on the priorities of the European Union's support to the media sector in Serbia

As raised in the Serbia annual report 2023, “Serbia has some level of preparation concerning freedom of expression (...) and, overall, limited progress was made on the recommendations from last year.” In particular, cases of threats, intimidation, hate speech and violence against journalists remain a concern, especially at local level. The increase in strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP), notably launched by members of national and local authorities may produce a chilling effect including self-censorship. As highlighted in the annual report, “Serbia should implement its media strategy and action plan without further delay”, focusing on implementing last year's recommendations:

- strengthening the security and safety of journalists
- strengthening media pluralism (including REM's functioning, mandate and independence, and public broadcasters)
- ensuring transparent and equitable co-funding for media content

The EU has been supporting the media sector in Serbia and in the Western Balkans for many years through funding to projects and programmes implemented by local, national or international organisations, be it from a bilateral perspective, a regional one or through its Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI). The overall aim of this support is to strengthen freedom of expression and to ensure media quality and plurality, in order to implement the Media Strategy, as well as to facilitate public awareness about dis-information and fake news. The EU grants have helped in tackling specific needs, including the safety of journalists, self-regulation and the Code of ethics, innovative business models, local networking and joint production, quality and digital content, media literacy and support to the improvement and implementation of legislation and policies.

In that context and given the current challenges still faced by media and journalists in Serbia, the EU Delegation to Serbia will continue its bilateral support to the implementation of the Media strategy and the freedom of expression, the quality and plurality of media and the fight against disinformation. In particular, some specific priorities have been identified as ongoing needs of the sector and/or areas that still need to be developed and fostered. The EU could bring an added value to these areas of support. These are:

1. Improve the safety of journalists
2. Reinforce the self-regulation and the promotion of the Code of ethics
3. Support professional standards and quality of reporting, as well as digital capacity (in line with the EU Digital services act)
4. Improve the image and narratives on discriminated groups
5. *Specific support to gender equality in journalism (including improving the image and narratives of women in media and gender equality in the sector - with security of female journalists/same salary for same work etc)*
6. Improve outreach to neglected groups including minorities
7. Support to the implementation or improvement of legislations and policies
8. Support to media literacy
9. Countering and addressing the impact of SLAPPs

Hence you are invited to provide your feedback on these priority areas, to suggest other areas of concern for the media sector and/or to come up with the best ways to implement these priority areas. This consultation will help the EU Delegation to fine-tune its approach in support to the media sector in Serbia.

Please send your feedback to delegation-serbia-media-consulting@eeas.europa.eu by **25 January 2024**.

Thank you!