

MAKING EU DEMOCRACIES STRONGER: BETTER PROTECTION FOR JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



27 April 2022
#antiSLAPP

Strong and healthy democracies rely on public participation and accountability. Journalists, human rights defenders and civil society are essential in this process. Their job is to inform citizens about issues of public interest and keep those in power in check. They are key for the functioning of our democracies.

EU actions to defend journalists and rights defenders:

- European Democracy Action Plan (December 2020)
- EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for 2020-2024 (March 2020)
- Recommendation to strengthen the safety of journalists (September 2021)
- Strategy on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (December 2020)
- Annual Rule of Law Report, covering also media pluralism and media freedom, and including recommendations to Member States on rule of law-relevant matters as of 2022
- Proposal for EU law and Recommendation on strategic lawsuits against public participation 'SLAPP' (April 2022)
- **Upcoming: Media Freedom Act**



EU funding and programmes:

- **€1.55 billion** available under [Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values \(CERV\) programme](#)
- EU programme Protect Defenders supported around **550 journalists** and media around the world
- [Funding for news media projects in the EU](#), including at least **€75 million** under the Creative Europe programme



EU actions against SLAPPs

Journalists and human rights defenders are increasingly facing intimidation, harassment and threats. This includes legal threats and abusive litigation, also called SLAPP. SLAPPs are a serious threat to democracy and fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression and information. On 27 April, the Commission proposed a Directive and adopted a Recommendation to improve protection of journalists and human rights defenders from abusive court proceedings.

Proposed EU anti-SLAPP law for cross-border cases:

- Early dismissal of manifestly unfounded court proceedings
- Full compensation to victims and dissuasive penalties for claimants
- Protection against third-country judgments

Recommendation to Member States:

- Similar level of safeguards for domestic cases of SLAPPs
- Training for legal professionals, journalists and human rights defenders and awareness raising
- Systematic monitoring and data collection



439 physical and legal attacks

against journalists and media workers in 24 EU Member States in 2021

Daphne Caruana Galizia, a Maltese journalist, faced

more than 40 lawsuits

when she was killed



Human rights defenders, including on environmental matters, are amongst the most targeted in Europe,

42 SLAPPs

brought against them since 2015