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Liberties' Media Freedom Report 2024

Key Issues Regarding Media Freedom in Croatia are high media ownership concentration, growing concerns about government influence over public service media and abusive lawsuits (SLAPPs) against journalists

Media Freedom Further Eroded in 2023 across the EU

Media freedom continues to stand perilously close to breaking point in many EU countries and in some, it needs to be almost completely revived, [Liberties' Media Freedom Report 2024](#) finds.

In Croatia in 2023, in general, key issues were the rising number of physical attacks against journalists in addition to numerous threats and intimidation, abusive lawsuits known as strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) that were frequently used against journalists, high media ownership concentration and growing concerns about government influence over public service media. In addition, civil society organisations reported attempts to censor members of the press or otherwise restrict freedom of expression.

Based on findings from more than two dozen civil liberties organisations from across the EU, the Report reveals that the overarching trends observed in last year's report continued in 2023, a year when the media landscape was shaped not only by new legislation (Anti-SLAPP Directive, Digital Services Act, European Media Freedom Act) but also by elections (Poland, the Netherlands, Slovakia) and regional conflicts (Russia-Ukraine, Middle East). The Berlin-based Civil Liberties Union coordinated the report, and the Centre for Peace Studies from Croatia contributed.

Key detailed findings of the Report are:

- Journalists across Europe continue to face intimidation, surveillance, attacks and detention. Abusive lawsuits known as strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) are frequently used against journalists in Croatia, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden.
- The use of Pegasus and Predator spyware continues to be a problem in the EU. In 2023, journalists in Germany, Greece, the Netherlands and Poland were targets of spyware surveillance. Also, last year a European Parliament committee report found that national security had been used as a pretext for the use of surveillance software against journalists in several EU countries, including Greece, Hungary and Poland.
- Journalists who are critical of their government may find themselves excluded from press conferences or other official events, or denied access to documents that should be made available to them (Germany, Hungary, Lithuania and the Netherlands).

Sara Kekuš, Director of programs of the Centre for Peace Studies, said:

“A robust democracy depends on a free and diverse media. It's no coincidence that in nations where the rule of law is weakening, so too is the freedom of the press. This report monitors threats to media freedom and pluralism in the EU, highlighting their precarious state in many countries. It emphasizes the importance of the European Media Freedom Act in safeguarding the future of media in Europe and offers recommendations to support advocacy efforts.”



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Eva Simon, senior advocacy officer at the Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties), said:

“Media freedom is clearly in steady decline across the EU in many countries as a result of deliberate harm or neglect by national governments. The implementation and enforcement of the newly adopted European Media Freedom Act, along with the anti-SLAPPs Directive and the Digital Services Act could therefore be crucial for a free and plural media landscape in Europe. Media freedom and democracy are closely interconnected, they go hand in hand.”

Liberties Media Freedom Report 2024 is available [here](#).

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