

Joint Position¹ on the EP draft report on AgoraEU: Implications for the future of news media and journalism

We value the work of the European Parliament's rapporteurs on the [Draft Report](#) on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the 'AgoraEU' programme for the period 2028-2034.

In particular, we welcome the explicit objectives to "ensure an enabling environment" for journalists and news media to operate independently, freely and safely (point a), and the strong references to local journalism, editorial independence, professional standards, self-regulatory systems, and the proper functioning of the information ecosystem bringing the programme closer to the needs of the sector (point b, c and g).

Finally, we welcome the strengthened implementation provisions and value that among the requirements for funding, fair working conditions and adequate remuneration are included, as well as respect to editorial independence. Amongst those, we welcome the provisions on the use of AI, requiring subordination to human oversight, clear labelling on AI-generated or AI-altered content, and copyright protection for original journalistic work.

Overall the Draft Report provides a greater political recognition of journalism, media pluralism, information integrity and democratic resilience. Yet, **this recognition alone is not sufficient**. Following our [position from May 2025](#), achieving EP's vision on the role of free, independent and pluralistic media as a fundamental component of Europe's resilience, **requires both strong political commitment and a funding allocation capable of sustaining independent news media and journalism**.

In this position we are suggesting three main points to ensure this becomes a reality:

1. **[20% of AgoraEU must go to support news media and journalism](#)** (suggested amendment [#1](#))
2. **[An architecture that delivers](#)** (suggested amendments [#2a](#), [#2b](#), [#2c](#), [#2d](#); and [#4a](#), [#4b](#))
3. **[A non-prescriptive framework with editorial independence at its core](#)** (suggested amendments [#3a](#), [#3b](#), [#3c](#), and [#3d](#))

¹ This joint position reflects a collective drafting process and incorporates the comments, priorities, and positions of the organisations participating in the [EU Media Advocacy Group](#). The EU Media Advocacy Group is an informal network of organisations working across journalism support, media development, media freedom, digital rights, and the wider democracy and human-rights ecosystem. The consolidated version of this submission has been jointly prepared by the [Centre for Sustainable Media](#) (CSM), the [European Federation of Journalists](#) (EFJ), and the [Global Forum for Media Development](#) (GFMD).

Why does this matter?

- **Supporting journalism is vital in the face of emerging threats such as disinformation and misuse of AI**, which risk widening the epistemic gap, deepening inequalities, and fuelling political polarisation, tensions, and even violence within societies. Moreover, [journalism is at risk of being marginalised in the accelerated weaponisation of information](#), fuelled by powerful actors and amplified by dominant online platforms, leaving societies increasingly vulnerable to malicious influence and interference campaigns.
- **Public interest journalism delivers large financial and democratic returns**. Investigative reporting has not only spurred hundreds of arrests of criminals and corrupt officials, policy reforms, and civil society actions, but has also led to over **€5 billion in recovered assets by EU governments**, exposing dark-money flows, political corruption, and funding of extremism that too often go unchecked.
- Journalism isn't just a guardian of freedom of expression; the news industry is a significant shareholder of the European economy. About [1.1 million people work](#) in and around the publishing sector, [generating roughly 1% of the EU's GDP](#).
- In many European countries, journalists face harassment, intimidation, and physical attacks for simply carrying out their work. The sector has also been struggling financially for a long time, impeding the continuity and sustainability of essential work and with brutal consequences to media pluralism in Europe, as shown by [2025 Media Pluralism Monitor Report](#). Meanwhile, media institutions face increasing capture (examples include Hungary and Slovakia) and threats to its independence through the consolidation of media ownership or political interference in Europe's public service media/broadcasters.

What is needed?

1. 20% of AgoraEU must go to support news media and journalism

The most urgent concern with the EP draft report is the budgetary weight assigned to the Information and Journalism Strand. The current 2021–2027 Creative Europe programme, particularly its media and cross-sectoral strands, has proven insufficient to support journalism organisations or to ensure the continued existence of an independent, pluralistic, and sustainable media sector. For that reason, we foresee that an 11.7% allocation of the full AgoraEU budget is structurally inadequate given the scale of the crisis facing independent news media in Europe.

Our case for a minimum 20% allocation to the Information and Journalism Strand rests on four converging realities:

First, the sector's revenue base has structurally deteriorated. The European Media Industry Outlook 2025 estimates that EU news media revenues fell from EUR 84.3bn in 2019 to EUR 77.2bn in 2023 — an annual loss of EUR 7.1bn. This loss of revenue is not reflected in the current MFF baseline, yet it directly affects the ability of independent news media to invest in journalism, innovation, digital transformation and resilience.

Secondly, **the [advertising ecosystem is funding misinformation, not journalism](#)**. The programmatic advertising market continues to direct billions of euros each year to low-quality and misinformation websites, systematically diverting revenue that would otherwise support independent editorial operations. This is not a marginal problem: it represents a structural subsidy to harmful content at the expense of the public-interest media the EU claims to protect.

In addition to that, **dominant tech companies have incentive structures that do not support the sustainability of journalism and accessibility of public interest information**. These [tech companies spend over €100 million per year lobbying in Brussels](#) to water down regulations affecting their platforms. These are the same platforms that dominate digital advertising, content distribution and algorithmic curation; and determine which content reaches audiences and which does not. EU funding for journalism is, in part, a counterweight to that influence that undermines democratic decision-making. Allocating less than 12% of AgoraEU to the sector suggests the EU is not serious about that counterweight and leveling the playing field.

In the meantime, **authoritarian actors are filling the vacuum**. According to [Debunk.org, Russia spent more than \\$1.5 billion \(USD\) per year on mass media](#) to support the Russian government's narrative and spread state propaganda. In a media environment where independent news outlets are under-resourced and struggling, that kind of investment does not go unnoticed by audiences. But this investment does not stop at Russia's borders: an investigation by [Forbidden Stories, Russia spent 7.3 million euros](#) in orchestrating disinformation campaigns to promote and defend its interests beyond its borders.

In an era of systemic disinformation, democratic backsliding, and rising authoritarianism, journalism must be treated not as a commercial commodity or a nice-to-have charitable cause but **as an essential public good, safeguarding the quality and security of our information supply, worthy of strategic investment and institutional protection**.

Against these backdrops, an allocation of 11.7% is indefensible. Whether the final architecture introduces a separate strand or stays with a unified Media+ framework, **the minimum allocation to journalism must be 20% of the total AgoraEU budget**. On Parliament's proposed AgoraEU envelope of €10.7bn, this would mean approximately €2.1bn, a figure that better reflects both the sector's needs and the democratic responsibilities the European Parliament itself assigns to it. Even under the Council Presidency's lower negotiating-box figure of €8.233bn for AgoraEU in current prices, the same 20% benchmark would still amount to approximately €1.65bn.

See our [suggested amendment #1](#).

2. An architecture that delivers

We acknowledge the political intent behind the creation of a dedicated Information and Journalism Strand. A separate strand can ensure that funding for journalism is clearly attributed and less vulnerable to reallocation within a broader programme. For that reason, we do not oppose the architecture suggested by the rapporteurs in principle, as it brings the sector more visibility and transparency on how much of the budget is directed to journalism and it also protects smaller organisations by ensuring them access to a budget without uneven competition with other sectors.

If the EP maintains a separate strand, its title and scope should clearly reflect the sector it is intended to support. The current formulation, “**Information and Journalism Strand**”, risks narrowing the objective to information policy. A formulation such as “**News Media and Journalism Strand**” would better capture journalism’s sectoral, editorial and democratic functions, while preserving its link with the wider media and CCI framework.

However, recognition without resources is not a policy. A dedicated strand placed between two much larger programme components, assigned sweeping democratic responsibilities, and allocated less than 12% of the overall budget is not a meaningful advance for the sector. It risks becoming a symbolic gesture that legitimises underfunding.

Whatever architecture is finally chosen must reflect the actual challenges the sector faces. That means:

First, the 20% allocation for news and journalism must be maintained regardless of structural decisions. Whether journalism is a distinct strand or clearly earmarked within a unified Media+ framework, the 20% allocation should remain the sector’s clear benchmark.

Second, the financial instruments available to the sector must go beyond grants. News media is structurally underinvested. The sector is expected to navigate AI disruption, shifting distribution models, platform dependency and digital transformation.. News media organisations need access not only to grants, but to guarantees, loans, equity instruments, blended finance, innovation finance, infrastructure support and business transformation tools. This requires News Media to remain recognised as part of the broader Cultural and Creative Industries ecosystem, with access to the full range of instruments available under the European Competitiveness Fund to help restructure, revitalise and place the sector on a more sustainable footing.

Third, the scope of financial instruments must reflect the full range of the sector, not only its most local manifestations. The financial needs of the sector extend to regional, national, European and cross-border media organisations and networks that support the information ecosystem by providing assistance to journalists, fostering collaboration across the sector, sharing resources and information, mapping threats to media freedom, providing accessible and affordable infrastructure, among others. The instruments must be designed accordingly. You can [check our suggested amendments on the architecture here](#) as well [the ones related to definitions](#).

3. A non-prescriptive framework with editorial independence at its core.

Both the Commission proposal and the EP draft refer to certain content areas or priorities for journalistic support. The Commission proposal already referred to professional journalistic content, including coverage of Union affairs. The EP draft goes further by placing these questions within a broader disinformation and information-integrity framework, including references to combating specific narratives.

The concern is not that EU-funded journalism should avoid public-interest topics. Coverage of European affairs, local news, public-interest matters, disinformation and information integrity are all legitimate areas of support.

The concern is that a budget regulation should not prescribe editorial or thematic priorities. It should provide structural support for independent journalism, public-interest media, media pluralism and resilience against disinformation, without directing beneficiaries towards specific editorial lines, narratives or themes.

This is particularly sensitive in the context of disinformation. If the legal text singles out specific narratives, it opens the door to further attempts to insert other politically defined narratives into media funding objectives. That would weaken the principle that EU media support is independent, content-neutral and pluralism-based.

The reference to “**anti-gender narratives**” in Amendment 106 (f), for example, introduces a politically specific framing into a funding objective for media beneficiaries. In a programme intended to support independent journalism, such wording risks being perceived as editorial steering, especially on contested issues of public interest.

The preferable approach is therefore not to include such content-specific criteria in the Regulation. If MEPs insist on retaining some formulation, a broader and more neutral compromise such as “**combating harmful stereotypes**” could be considered, together with a general reference to compliance with human rights and EU values. But this should remain a fallback, not the preferred solution.

The **Regulation should support independent journalism, public-interest media and resilience against disinformation**, but it should **not prescribe editorial priorities or single out specific narratives**. The preferred option is to avoid content-specific criteria altogether; a neutral formulation such as “combating harmful stereotypes” should only be a compromise fallback. Our [suggested amendments on a non-prescriptive framework can be found here](#).

The consideration of these three points will determine whether the strong political ambitions in the Draft Report translate into a programme capable of safeguarding and strengthening the overall resilience of Europe’s information ecosystem.

The strong political commitment made in the Draft Report must now be matched by a funding allocation capable of sustaining independent news media and journalism.

Annex I: Suggested Amendments

1. 20% of AgoraEU must go to support news media and journalism

Reference	EP Draft Report AM 138	Suggested amendment	Justification
#1	<p>Article 11 - paragraph 1 a (new)</p> <p>1a. The distribution of the amount set out in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be as follows:</p> <p>(a) 46,4% of the financial envelope shall be allocated for the specific objectives set out in Chapters II, IIa and III (Culture - Creative Europe, Culture - Music and Culture -MEDIA strands);</p> <p>(b) 11,7% of the financial envelope shall be allocated for the specific objectives set out in Chapter IIIa (Information and Journalism strand);</p> <p>(c) 41,9% of the financial envelope shall be allocated for the specific objectives set out in Chapters IV, IVa and IVb (CERV+, Daphne and Union Values strands).</p>	<p>Article 11 - paragraph 1 a (new)</p> <p>1a. The distribution of the amount set out in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be as follows:</p> <p>(a) 42% of the financial envelope shall be allocated for the specific objectives set out in Chapters II, IIa and III (Culture - Creative Europe, Culture - Music and Culture -MEDIA strands);</p> <p>(b) 20% of the financial envelope shall be allocated for the specific objectives set out in Chapter IIIa (Information and Journalism strand);</p> <p>(c) 38% of the financial envelope shall be allocated for the specific objectives set out in Chapters IV, IVa and IVb (CERV+, Daphne and Union Values strands).</p>	<p>With this amendment, we are suggesting a potential redistribution where the relative proportional weight between the three strands within the overall envelope is preserved. However, we understand this is subject to political negotiations and hence, our priority stays with the suggestion of the 20% allocation for journalism and news.</p> <p>The 20% allocation reflects journalism's role as essential democratic infrastructure rather than a cultural good, and it better responds to the sector needs and the responsibilities that are assigned to it.</p>

2. An architecture that delivers

Ref.	EP Draft Report Amendment 106	Suggested amendment
	<p>Chapter III a (new)</p> <p>Information and Journalism strand</p> <p>Article 6</p> <p>Democratic News Ecosystem</p> <p>Within the ‘Information and Journalism’ strand, the ‘Democratic News Ecosystem’ specific objective shall focus on:</p>	<p>Chapter III a (new)</p> <p>News Media and Journalism strand</p> <p>Article 6</p> <p>Journalism Democratic News Ecosystem</p> <p>Within the ‘News Media and Journalism’ strand, the ‘Journalism Democratic News Ecosystem’ specific objective shall focus on:</p>
#2a	<p>(a) protecting and supporting news media outlets, journalists, <i>and civil society organisations</i>, especially where they face threats, <i>economic precarity, surveillance, harassment or violence, including online, ensuring an enabling environment for them to operate independently, freely, safely, and effectively;</i></p>	<p>(a) protecting and supporting public interest news media outlets, journalists, <i>and media civil society organisations, in particular</i> where they face threats, legal pressure, economic precarity, surveillance, harassment or violence, including online, ensuring an enabling environment for them to operate independently, freely, safely, and effectively, and supporting initiatives that contribute to monitoring, assessing and addressing risks to media freedom and pluralism in the internal market;</p>
#2b	<p>(d) supporting the digital transformation of news media outlets and safeguarding their sustainability, competitiveness and innovation in the digital media market, including through innovative practices, technological tools and digital infrastructure, new methods for the</p>	<p>d) supporting the digital transformation and innovation of news organisations, and other media service providers of diverse sizes and geographical scope, including innovative practices, in the news production, distribution and business models to contributing to long-term viability and resilience,</p>

	distribution of news, development of innovative business models, upskilling, reskilling and training opportunities for news media professionals ;	facilitating access to finance and encouraging cross-border activities and supporting the reskilling and upskilling of media service providers, including freelancers; while ensuring inclusive access to training and promoting the human-rights respecting, trustworthy and responsible use of digital tools, including artificial intelligence;
#2c	(e) ensuring the sustainability of local news media, including through facilitating access to finance, supporting media operating in minority languages and media of minority communities and reinforcing the media infrastructure at local level;	(e) ensuring the sustainability of local news media outlets by including through facilitating access to finance, including supporting local news media, and supporting media operating in minority languages and media of minority communities, and reinforcing the media infrastructure at local level.
#2d	(g) contributing to ensuring the proper functioning and the protection and promotion of a safe, viable, independent and diverse information ecosystem, including through monitoring, assessing and addressing risks to media freedom and pluralism in the internal market, reinforcing policy and dialogue, data collection and analysis and development of common standards and tools, including through supporting the work of the European Board for Media Services;	(g) reinforcing policy dialogue, data collection and analysis and the development of common standards relevant to media freedom and pluralism, including through support for cooperation and activities contributing to the implementation of the European Media Freedom Act notably in relation to by supporting the work of the European Board for Media Services.

3. A non-prescriptive framework with editorial independence at its core

Ref.	EP Draft Report AM 106 (cont)	Suggested amendment	Justification
#3a	<p>(c) <i>supporting the production, distribution and accessibility of journalistic content produced in line with professional European and international standards, including coverage of European, regional and local independent news, in particular in areas with limited access to independent news coverage, investigative journalism, the provision of information on matters of public interest, and crossborder activities aimed at enhancing the prominence, discoverability and accessibility of such content, cooperation of news media outlets, provided that the supported content is produced by news media outlets that demonstrate editorial independence from political parties, undue commercial influence and third country actors, and demonstrating editorial oversight ensuring transparency, accuracy, fairness and accountability;</i></p>	<p>(c) enhancing the production, distribution and accessibility of professional and public interest journalistic content, in a manner that promotes diversity of sources and viewpoints, including coverage of Union affairs, including investigative journalism, coverage of European, regional, local and community news as well as other forms of, and independent public interest journalism media including in the digital environment;</p>	
#3b	<p>(f) enhancing cooperation and promoting measures aimed at monitoring and safeguarding a safe, robust, viable, independent, diverse and</p>	<p>(f) enhancing cooperation and promoting measures aimed at monitoring and safeguarding a safe, robust, viable, independent, diverse and</p>	<p>Including these terms imposes a particular framing on media attempting to cover these complex and highly contested issues who benefit from Agora</p>

	<p><i>democratic</i> online information <i>ecosystem</i>, including detecting, analysing and combating disinformation, <i>such as gendered disinformation and anti-gender narratives</i>, and information manipulation and interference, thereby contributing to ensure greater democratic resilience across the Union;</p>	<p><i>democratic</i> online information <i>ecosystem</i>, including detecting, analysing and combating disinformation, <i>while respecting media pluralism and editorial independence, such as gendered disinformation and anti-gender narratives, and information manipulation and interference</i>, thereby contributing to ensure greater democratic resilience across the Union;</p>	<p>EU funds. This undermines editorial independence and conflicts with the EU's commitment to defending editorial independence. The central principles of any public funding of media must be the guarantee that the funds are politically neutral, support a wide diversity of voices and views and fully respect editorial independence.</p>
#3c	<p>(h) promoting digital and media literacy, <i>critical thinking, in particular among young people, elderly people, and vulnerable groups, as a tool to better understand the information ecosystem and better detect information manipulation, and to combat gender stereotypes and other harmful stereotypes and gender-based disinformation and violence online.</i></p>	<p>h) promoting digital and media literacy activities in order to enable <i>citizens people residing in the Union of all ages</i>, to use and develop a <i>critical thinking and</i> understanding of the information ecosystem <i>across digital environments and media channels, and to identify and assess the reliability of information sources</i>;</p>	
#3d		<p>new) <i>strengthening the professional ecosystem for journalism by supporting the enabling environment, including joint initiatives by relevant stakeholders, with a view to promoting professional standards, access to training and safety resources and conditions conducive to editorial independence and sustainable professional practice</i>;</p>	<p>The existing objectives under Article 6 focus principally on supporting journalism through funding for content production, media pluralism and access to information. However, they do not sufficiently address the structural and professional conditions that make quality, independent journalism possible in the first place. This amendment fills that gap by targeting the enabling environment for the journalism profession itself.</p>

4. Definitions

Ref.	EP Draft Report: AMs 58, 70	Suggested amendment	Justification
#4a	(1b) “news media outlet” means a natural or legal person that, on a professional basis, exercises editorial responsibility for the production, selection, and organisation of content, and whose primary activity consists of providing the public with news and information of general interest through any means of communication, including audiovisual services, print media or online services;	(1b) “news media outlet” means a natural or legal person that, on a professional basis, exercises editorial responsibility for the production, selection, and organisation of content, and whose primary activity consists of providing the public with professional editorial content news and information of public general interest through any means of communication, including audiovisual services, print media or online services;	The repeated use of the terms “news media outlet” appears either unnecessarily restrictive or legally unclear and does not fully reflect the diversity of the European editorial media ecosystem. As such, it must be clarified that the press sector in its entirety is covered. The definition of “news media outlet” should therefore be defined as providing the public with professional editorial content and information, whether of general or specialised interest.
#4b	(ba) the ‘Information and Journalism’ strand shall contribute to safeguarding and fostering a free, pluralistic, viable, resilient and diverse information ecosystem in the Union, in particular by supporting independent journalism, news media outlets and civil society organisations, enhancing access to trustworthy information, tackling disinformation and promoting digital and media literacy (‘Democratic News Ecosystem’);	(ba) the ‘ News Media and Journalism Information and Journalism ’ strand shall contribute to safeguarding and fostering a free, pluralistic, viable, resilient and diverse information ecosystem in the Union, in particular by supporting independent journalism; news media outlets and media civil society organisations, enhancing access to trustworthy information, tackling disinformation and promoting digital and media literacy (‘ Journalism Democratic News Ecosystem ’);	We believe that references to the term “news media and journalism” in the dedicated chapter heading as well as a revised definition of news media outlet would provide a more accurate and inclusive basis for the programme, one that meets the intended objective of preserving and fostering media pluralism.