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LIMITE

**AUDIO 47
DISINFO 50
DIGIT 105
MI 356
FREMP 148
COMPET 454
EDPS 2
DATAPROTECT 104
JAI 730
SERVICES 31
POLGEN 59
INST 165**

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Draft Council conclusions on access to reliable news as part of the European Democracy Shield - <i>Presentation and first discussion</i>

With a view to the first meeting of the Audiovisual and Media Working Party (AVMWP) under the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU on 11 July 2025 (CM 3481/25), delegations will find attached a text of draft Council conclusions on access to reliable news as part of the European Democracy Shield, as prepared by the Presidency in consultation with the Member States, the Commission, the General Secretariat of the Council (GSC) and other relevant stakeholders.

The presentation of the text by the Presidency and the subsequent discussion will take place under agenda item 5 of the above-mentioned CAC meeting. In terms of follow-up, delegations are invited to send their possible comments and drafting suggestions to the Presidency (mavben@um.dk ; khre@kum.dk ; amjo@kum.dk) and the GSC (eycs@consilium.europa.eu) by Friday 18 July 2025 COB.

**Draft Council conclusions on access to reliable news
as part of the European Democracy Shield**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING THAT:

1. Access to reliable news is a fundamental prerequisite for our democracies to function. News media therefore play an important democratic role in safeguarding the information sphere, ensuring access to reliable news and upholding vibrant and resilient democracies.
2. The protection of media freedom and media pluralism pillars of democracy and of the rule of law plays an integral role in facilitating freedom of speech and open democratic discourse.
3. Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) and dis- and misinformation pose huge and widely recognised societal challenges¹ which need to be addressed by proactively creating a sustainable sphere of reliable, pluralistic and accessible media.
4. Increasing pressure is being placed on the news sector and the broader information sphere. This stems from two main and often interconnected areas:
 - a. Digital challenges – where the need to address the challenges and opportunities of new emerging technologies and to compete with Big Tech, online platforms, digital gatekeepers and algorithm-driven content weakens existing media business models.
 - b. Geopolitical challenges – where some foreign and other malign actors see growing potential for weakening and discrediting democratic discourse and the sense of shared trust within our societies.

¹ As recognised, for instance, at recent discussions at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day 2025 and the 20th edition of the World Global Risks Report 2025 of The World Economic Forum.

5. The impact of the digital challenges is particularly significant for small, local and regional news media service providers and news media services in smaller Member States and languages, as advertising revenues have increasingly moved to social media platforms, large search engines and digital gatekeepers. This causes difficulties for the news media ecosystem and has created increasing geographical news deserts and a lack of access to locally produced relevant news content.
6. Demographic, social and generational gaps in relation to access to and use of reliable news sources exists as well as increasing polarisation caused by opinion- and algorithm-driven content.
7. New actors have emerged in the media environment (such as influencers and online content creators) that may not be consistently subject to the same level of regulation and accountability as traditional media service providers and press publishers, even though they often have the same or a larger reach and impact on our citizens. This is also the case for the emergence of new digital services based on, for instance, artificial intelligence (AI) which play a growing role in creating and disseminating news content and societal information.

RECOGNISES THAT:

8. The European Union has, in recent years, taken a number of steps to develop the regulatory framework for present-day media services to better reflect the current challenges and to provide relevant tools in a digital context. This includes, in particular, the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA)² and the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD)³. It also includes the Digital Services Act (DSA)⁴, the Digital Markets Act (DMA)⁵ and the Artificial Intelligence Act⁶ as important instruments for regulating the broader digital sphere. This has very significant implications for the media sector and the information ecosystem. The Anti-SLAPP Directive⁷ further contributes to protecting journalists and media outlets from abusive litigation. The new Regulation⁸ on targeting and transparency of political advertising sets out the EU common standards on transparency and accountability for the dissemination of political advertising. Co-regulatory tools such as the DSA Code of Conduct on disinformation also play an important role in holding platforms accountable for the political spread of misleading and harmful content contributing to systematic risks, e.g. in the context of elections.

² Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act) (OJ L, 2024/1083, 17.4.2024).

³ Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in view of changing market realities (OJ L 303, 28.11.2018, p. 69).

⁴ Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market for Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act) (OJ L 277, 27.10.2022, p. 1).

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2022 on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector and amending Directives (EU) 2019/1937 and (EU) 2020/1828 (OJ L 265, 12.10.2022, p.1).

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828) (OJ L, 2024/1689, 12.7.2024).

⁷ Directive (EU) 2024/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings (OJ L, 2024/1069, 16.4.2024).

⁸ Regulation (EU) 2024/900 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 March 2024 on the transparency and targeting of political advertising (OJ L, 2024/900, 20.3.2024).

9. While the AVMSD introduced the concept of editorial responsibility, the EMFA has reaffirmed and further expanded it. Under the EMFA, media service providers are entrusted with both certain obligations and rights, including, in particular, new safeguards under Article 18 to protect editorial content from arbitrary or unjustified censorship of online platforms.
10. Editorial transparency and responsibility are defining characteristics of reliable news. Reference to reliable news does not entail any state-mandated definition or intervention in the independence of the news media service providers. Instead, this notion is to be understood as news media content produced in accordance with professional journalistic standards, in compliance with relevant law and by editorially responsible and liable media service providers.
11. The role of public service media in securing access for all citizens to reliable news content should be protected. Independent and broadly trusted public service media serve as a civic safeguard, especially in times of crises and instability.
12. The importance of recent work within the Council to address, for instance, the need for a sustainable media sector, coherent regulation and access to reliable information as part of the democratic infrastructure. The Council has adopted, for instance, conclusions on the assessment of the legal framework for audiovisual media services and video-sharing platform services (the AVMSD)⁹ and conclusions on safeguarding a free and pluralistic media system¹⁰.
13. The work done by the European Commission in relation to, for instance, Europe's Media in the Digital Decade: An Action Plan to Support Recovery and Transformation¹¹, the European Democracy Action Plan as well as other relevant Commission initiatives.

⁹ C/2025/2954.

¹⁰ 2020/C 422/08.

¹¹ COM (2020) 784 final.

WELCOMES:

14. The initiative of the European Commission to launch a European Democracy Shield aiming to promote citizens' participation and engagement in democratic life; to support the integrity of the information space; to strengthen democratic resilience, in particular through the fairness and integrity of elections; and to contribute to a sustainable, free, independent and pluralistic media sector, in full respect of fundamental rights and democratic values.
15. The focus laid out in the priorities of the European Commission for the period 2024-2029 to build on, ensure and enhance a reliable, independent, pluralistic and sustainable media sector within the European Union.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS OF COMPETENCES, TO:

16. Explore ways to clarify the applicability of the notion of editorial responsibility. The aim is to ensure reliable news information and, where relevant, to expand the use of such systems to encompass new media-like actors.
17. Examine whether the current accountability systems, are always sufficient for new digital services curating news content (such as large language models, AI systems, search engines and online platforms). Such platforms and services might not be directly involved in or responsible for the production of news and media content and their content is often generated by users and algorithms. However, they remain central gatekeepers and play an increasingly important role in content distribution.
18. Bring forward efforts to simplify or streamline legislation to reduce unnecessary, disproportionate or uneven burdens for the media sector as a whole. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring fair regulatory treatment of editorially responsible media services and press publishers, on the one hand, and online platforms, on the other hand in order to avoid creating competitive disadvantages for providers of editorially responsible news. The objectives of simplifying and ensuring a coherent enforcement approach should remain central in connection with upcoming evaluations of the relevant legislative framework, e.g., the AVMSD.

19. Consider and map ways to exempt editorial news media, where relevant, from burdensome regulatory requirements. This applies especially in cases where editorial responsibility or other relevant content liability mechanisms can already be seen as achieving the goal of the requirement. By associating the notion of editorial responsibility with obligations, rights and safeguards, regulation can help create a positive incentive structure for new media-like actors to attain more liable and responsible production and distribution patterns.
20. Continue assessing the effects on media pluralism and the editorial independence of media service providers when proposing new legislative, regulatory or administrative measures, taking into account the provisions of Article 21 of the EMFA.
21. Regularly follow up on the above legal acts, action plans, Council conclusions and other relevant documents and policy decisions in order to continuously assess the need for further action, and where needed, streamlining and simplification. In this regard, attention must be paid to the role of clear, effective and coherent implementation and enforcement to ensure that rules and other measures remain as simple and transparent as possible.
22. Consider ways to ensure a more level playing field between online platforms and new media-like actors on the one hand and editorially responsible news media services on the other hand to create a more sustainable, independent, pluralistic and free media sector.
23. Enhance availability and access to media support funds, at both EU and MS level, and to make these especially accessible for editorially responsible news media, the production of reliable journalistic content and local news entities.
24. Explore how to secure the best possible conditions for a free, independent and pluralistic media environment so that media service providers are able to establish sustainable business models, as Big Tech platforms are gaining an increasingly larger share of advertising revenue and benefiting from news content from European media services without contributing to the creation of such content.

25. Find innovative ways to strengthen the advertisement-driven business models of editorially responsible media services and press publishers, and examine how this interacts with broader EU law, for instance, by looking at how competition rules can be mobilised to affect the advertisement market and make it more competitive and accessible for editorial media.
26. Further safeguard and enhance the independence and relevance of public service media and ensure that such media outlets are able to remain digitally relevant and present. This can be brought about, for instance, by recognising the importance of public service media in publishing digitally and in written form within and in compliance with European state aid and competition law.
27. Allow for appropriate prominence and visibility of media services of general interest and content produced in line with journalistic standards, from editorially responsible news media services as one of the tools in the fight against disinformation and FIMI.
28. Carefully examine ways in which prominence regimes, as envisioned in Article 7a of the AVMSD, can be effectively implemented in an increasingly digitalised and cross-border context without unnecessary fragmentation of the internal market. This can be done, for instance, by exploring ways to harmonise technical requirements for providers of digital user interfaces and other relevant gatekeepers.
29. Examine ways and support the development of standardised tools for citizens to easily recognise content from trustworthy and editorially responsible news media outlets. This can be done, for instance, by raising media and digital literacy, and awareness of the benefits of operating under editorial responsibility and ownership transparency and in line with professional journalistic standards.

30. Continue to follow up on and exchange views on the political commitments of the 2020 Council conclusions¹² and the 2024 Council conclusions¹³ to promote media literacy actions that combat mis- and disinformation, strengthen citizens' resilience and target all groups of citizens, including all age groups and vulnerable groups.
31. Ensure that media policy is an integrated part of broader geopolitical security and digital policies in order to safeguard our democracies and further empower citizens and strengthen their resilience as access to reliable news is a fundamental prerequisite for our democracies to function. This can be done, for instance, by taking into account the role of and consequences for media and editorial press in the formulation of broader policy objectives and strategies.
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¹² Council conclusions on media literacy in an ever-changing world, OJ C 193, 9.6.2020, p. 23.

¹³ Council conclusions on democratic resilience: safeguarding electoral processes from foreign interference, 10119/24.