[ES] The Council of Ministers approves the Action Plan for Democracy, which includes the creation of a media register

IRIS 2024-9:1/25

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On 17 September, the Spanish government presented its Action Plan for Democracy after it had been approved by the Council of Ministers. This Action Plan for Democracy, announced by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez last July, consists of 31 measures to be implemented over the next three years. It is structured around three main axes: 1) improving government information; 2) strengthening transparency, plurality and responsibility in the media; and 3) reinforcing the transparency of the legislative branch and the electoral system.

The measures announced under the second axis are in line with the European Media Freedom Act. Their main objective is to strengthen the transparency and independence of the media. The measures are based on the premise that the public should know the sources of media funding, their ownership structure, the institutional advertising they receive and their audience.

The most important measure to promote transparency is the creation of a register of media outlets in which public information on their ownership and the advertising investment they receive will be published. In this way, the aim is to define what a media outlet is, in order to differentiate it from other platforms whose purpose is not to inform. The National Commission for Markets and Competition (CNMC – the body that assumes the powers of the audiovisual authority in Spain) will be in charge of developing and managing this register.

At the same time, transparency measures are also established in the field of institutional advertising. All public administrations will have to be accountable for their advertising investment through the publication of annual reports. Furthermore, the reform of the Law on Institutional Advertising is envisaged in order to integrate criteria of transparency, proportionality and non-discrimination in its distribution. These criteria will be drawn up by experts in the sector, in collaboration with the parliamentary groups. In order to guarantee the objectivity of these criteria, the use of audience measurement systems that also comply with the principles of transparency, impartiality, inclusiveness, proportionality, non-discrimination, comparability and verifiability will also be guaranteed. A final measure linked to institutional advertising provides for the support of media that are entirely in co-official languages other than Spanish (Catalan, Basque, Valencian and Galician).

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With the aim of bolstering the guarantees of independence of the media, the Action Plan for Democracy also envisages limiting the funding of the media by public administrations, so that there will be no media that depend entirely on this type of public funding. Furthermore, it provides for a reinforcement of professional secrecy, greater protection for media professionals against harassment and the elimination of sanctions for the use of images of the State Security Forces and Corps.

Following the announcement of the Action Plan for Democracy, the country's main association of journalists, the Federation of Spanish Journalists' Associations (FAPE), has expressed its hope that these measures will contribute to the fight against disinformation and protect quality and ethical journalism. At the same time, the FAPE urges the government to implement the plan rigorously in order to safeguard the right to information.

Plan de Acción por la Democracia

https://www.mpr.gob.es/prencom/notas/Documents/2024/2024-3002_Plan_de_accion.pdf

Action Plan for Democracy

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