

European Commission: Launch of European Charter on Freedom of the Press

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Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media, welcomed on 9 June 2009 the adoption of the new European Charter on Freedom of the Press, in a meeting with Hans-Ulrich Jörges, editor-in-chief of the German magazine Stern and initiator of the Charter. The Charter, which was launched on 25 May and has since been signed by some 150 journalists from 28 different European countries, consists of ten epigrammatic articles promoting such principles as journalistic freedom from government interference, prohibition of restrictions on the entry into the profession of journalism and the impermissibility of censorship.

The Charter has no legal teeth and is therefore in essence only of symbolic value. As Commissioner Reding explained: “[The Commission does] not have a direct competence to make the charter legally binding”. Nevertheless, according to Mr Jörges, the Charter’s initiators “assume that the Commission will itself comply with this Charter and will contribute actively to ensuring its recognition throughout Europe.” The Charter is therefore expected to be held as a benchmark for journalistic rights against which States aspiring to EU ascension will be measured.

The editors-in-chief of major European newspapers meet with the Commission on an annual basis to discuss sectoral concerns. The idea for the Charter first emerged during one such high-level dialogue in 2007.

“Commissioner Reding welcomes New European Charter on Freedom of the Press”, IP/09/891, Brussels, 9 June 2009

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