# European Commission: Public consultation on media pluralism and democracy

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The European Commission has opened a public consultation on media pluralism and democracy. The objective of the consultation is to prepare the second Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights. Annual colloquia are organised by the European Commission to achieve greater political engagement for the protection of fundamental rights in Europe. They bring together a variety of interest groups who discuss concrete actions to improve the fundamental rights situation in the European Union.

This year's colloquium will discuss the key role of a free and pluralist media, in particular digital media, in democratic societies.. As part of the general right to freedom of expression and information, Article 11(2) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union provides that "[t]he freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected." The two values are at the core of the basic democratic values upon which the European Union is founded.

During the second colloquium, EU institutions, Member States, media representatives, civil society, and academics will reflect in a roundtable discussion on topics such as: how to protect media independence from state intervention and undue political or commercial pressures; how to empower journalists and protect them from threats; the role of the media in promoting fundamental rights; and how a pluralistic media environment can encourage political debate on issues for democratic societies.

With the current public consultation, the Commission aims to gather feedback on current challenges and opportunities for media pluralism and democracy, and use this as input for the colloquium. The consultation consists of a questionnaire, which begins with questions about general issues of media freedom and pluralism, such as what the role of the state in the regulation of media should be. In addition, the consultation contains questions on journalists and new media players. It asks, for example, if contributors are aware of limitations to privacy and data protection imposed on journalistic activities, and whether they are aware of censorship in the European Union. Furthermore, the consultation covers hate speech online, e.g. by questioning how a better-informed use of modern media could contribute to the promotion of tolerance. Finally, the consultation addresses the role of free and pluralistic media in a democratic society. It asks whether

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contributors consider the role of platforms and social media to posespecific risks to the quality of the democratic debate.

The public consultation will run over eight weeks and closes on 14 July 2016. Anyone can submit a contribution. The Commission expressly invites public bodies of Member States, civil society, , members of the judicial branch, academics, and media representatives, including publishers, journalists and reporters to participate. Those interested can complete the questionnaire online.

***European Commission, Public consultation - 2016 Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights on 'Media Pluralism and Democracy', 19 May 2016***

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/fundamental-rights/opinion/160519_en.htm

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