

OPEN LETTER

Belgrade, 9th April 2024

On the establishment of the Special Parliamentary Committee on Disinformation

Dear Mrs. Nikolla,

The [SafeJournalists Network](#), representing over 8,200 members from the Western Balkans is committed to advocating for the rights and safety of journalists, as well as upholding media freedoms in the region. Our organization closely monitors the media landscape in Albania and is deeply invested in the developments that affect the journalistic community.

While we acknowledge the intent to address the pressing issue of disinformation and foreign interference, behind the establishment of a special parliamentary committee on disinformation, it is imperative to consider the broader implications that this initiative might have on media freedom and freedom of expression. The urgency in the committee's formation, marked by the absence of a consultative process with relevant stakeholders, lack of consensus by the opposition and the rapid approval on April 3, 2024, at the Albanian Assembly's Conference of Chairmen raises concerns regarding the committee's scope and objectives.

Moreover, the existing mechanisms within Albania's legislative framework such as other parliamentary committees, or the Audiovisual Broadcasting Code, approved only last year, already provide avenues to address issues related to disinformation. The necessity of establishing a new entity with potentially broad and undefined powers warrants a thorough deliberation to prevent any infringement on journalistic freedoms.

Given that the establishment of the Special Committee on Disinformation is now a completed fact, we urge the Albanian Assembly and the newly formed committee to adopt a framework that prioritizes transparency, inclusiveness, accountability and effectiveness in its operations. It is imperative that the committee's decisions and strategies are anchored in rigorous research and data analysis. Engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, including media professionals, civil society, media freedom organisations, local and international experts, is also key to safeguarding democratic values. The committee should undertake a thorough process to clearly define its scope and objectives. This clarity is essential to avoid any duplication of roles with existing structures and to ensure that the committee's efforts are precisely targeted and yield tangible results. A well-defined mandate will also prevent potential overreach and ensure that the committee's activities are focused on addressing disinformation without infringing upon media freedom and freedom of expression.

As Albania progresses in its EU accession journey, approximating the standards set by the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the upcoming Media Freedom Act (MFA) becomes not just a matter of alignment but a crucial step in harmonizing with the European legal and regulatory framework. The Special Committee on Disinformation's focus should be on the adherence of Albanian legal framework to these standards to ensure that Albania's approach to combating disinformation aligns with the EU's broader objectives and best practices.

The role of independent and quality journalism is indispensable in Albanian democratic developments, serving as a pillar for informed citizenship and accountability. Any measures taken to combat disinformation should enhance, not hinder, the Albanian media's ability to fulfill this role. We look forward to a constructive dialogue and are eager to see the Albanian Assembly adopt an approach that balances the fight against disinformation with the imperative to uphold media freedom and freedom of expression.

We are attentive to your actions and decisions in this matter and remain at your disposal for any dialogue or contribution that can aid in achieving these shared objectives.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Tamara Filipovic Stevanovic
On behalf of
BH Journalists Association
Trade Union of Media of Montenegro
Croatian Journalists Association
Association of Journalists of Kosovo
Association of Journalists of Macedonia
Independent Journalists Association of Serbia