EU lawmakers are divided on whether industry-specific provisions on illegal online content should be included in the upcoming law on media freedom.

As social media platforms have rewritten traditional media’s operating playbook, the balance of power has shifted, leading to an imbalance, argues Maria Luisa Stasi.

With the introduction of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), EU institutions are set to debate binding legislation on media freedom for the first time. Yet there is a heated timeline ahead, as the European Parliament’s plenary session on 3-4 October before entering interinstitutional negotiations, also known as trilogues.

In line with this point of view, Renate Schroeder, director of the European Federation of Journalists, said progressive MEP Christel Schaldemose at a European Parliament event on Tuesday, 26 September.

“It’s not up to Elon Musk or Mark Zuckerberg to decide what kind of content a newspaper or a television station should publish online. MEPs have to define a clear definition of who qualifies as a media service provider,” said Schaldemose.

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The European Commission wants to call on industry-specific provisions in the upcoming EMFA to limit the power of social media platforms over content.

In her view, leaving Big Tech the power to take down content is a dangerous loophole for media freedom and EU democracy.

Aurore Raoux, policy manager at News Media Europe, an organisation representing publishers’ interests, called the EC’s position “hysterical”, and said CCIA Europe had marched into MEPs to improve the definition of “media service providers” for better protection of EU publishers.

CCIA Europe also summoned MEPs to improve the definition of ‘media service providers’ for better protection of EU publishers.

As a first step, the European Parliament’s compromised text should be agreed upon during this next plenary session on 3-4 October before entering interinstitutional negotiations, also known as trilogues.

Experts split on creation of industry-specific rules on illegal online content.

Disinformation loopholes

With social media platforms rewriting traditional media’s operating playbook, the balance of power has shifted, leading to an imbalance, argues Maria Luisa Stasi.

Brussels has only the last line of defence and risk will only benefit from this linear approach, Stasi said.

Media organisations may need back-door entry as a complaint is upheld, an independent information service that includes editors and publishers is exempted from recharacterising activity and companies with “independently operated regulatory oversight” are excluded.

A media organisation could still work through a “black box” from the EMFA obligations, Stasi added.

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