

Il Presidente

Ms Dace MELBĀRDE, MEP
Wiertz 04U033
Brussels

D 305222 05.05.2020

Dear Ms Melbārde,
Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your email of 20 April 2020 in which you appeal for support for the media industry in the difficult context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In these exceptional times we rely more than ever on free and unbiased journalism, as well as on the flow of information on the COVID-19 pandemic and all its many ramifications. Media diversity and pluralism are vital to our democracies and need the strongest possible support, as the European Parliament underlined in its 17 April 2020 resolution on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences.

I am well aware that the media industry and freelance journalists are severely affected by the economic impact of the essential public health measures put in place across the European Union. As companies are restricted from selling their products and services, they are no longer investing in advertising and advertising revenue is vital to the very existence of most media outlets. The Committee on Culture and Education of which you some of you are standing members has been monitoring the situation carefully and has observed a severe hit on advertising, as well as challenging situations for news media in some smaller Member States and for regional media.

The failure to support the sector now could lead to a loss of media diversity and pluralism and particularly a loss of smaller market players. As you know, since the outbreak of the crisis, many major initiatives have already been presented by the European institutions, in addition to policy initiatives urgently undertaken by national governments, through the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative and the CRII+ adopted by Parliament on 17 April, as well as derogations from state aid rules.

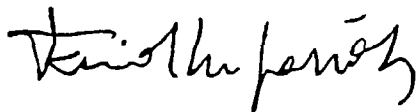
The Commission proposal for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) could also further support the media sector by unlocking substantial funds for Member States to protect jobs, businesses and the self-employed as well as fund temporary furlough schemes for employees.

All these schemes are important parts of the broader response but are probably insufficient to address the specificities of the media sector. I am aware that the Committee on Culture and Education has requested Commissioner Breton and Commissioner Gabriel to explore all possible avenues to deliver tailored support for the media sector as soon as possible, notably through an Emergency support fund for media and I strongly support this initiative.

Beyond the necessary short-term responses, the European Parliament recognises that the economic and social fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic will necessitate a huge medium- and long-term response. That is why the Parliament called for a massive reconstruction and recovery package to invest in the European economy and, as Parliament, we will have a responsibility in ensuring that future proposals will encompass all critical and vulnerable sectors.

I will remain very attentive to this particular issue and I thank you again for your appeal for support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Maria SASSOLI', written in a cursive style.

David Maria SASSOLI