

A true whole-of-society approach, strengthened coordination and human rights and media freedom safeguards are key to the structure of the European Centre for Democratic Resilience

In follow-up to the [launch](#) of the [European Centre for Democratic Resilience \(ECDR\)](#) at the General Affairs Council of the Council of the European Union on 24 February 2026, we are writing to you to provide a Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR)¹ consortium perspective on its structure. While participation of EU Member States is on a voluntary basis, we call upon you to take a proactive role to ensure that the ECDR becomes a truly effective EU coordination and exchange mechanism grounded in the protection of fundamental rights, including media freedom, freedom of expression and access to plural and independent information.

The ECDR is one of the main deliverables within the package of policy measures to protect democracies as announced in the European Commission's EU Democracy Shield initiative. It is envisaged to be a dedicated hub for information exchange, operational cooperation and capacity building to withstand evolving common threats, in particular disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI). The ECDR will be rolled out progressively during this year, with a gradual phasing-in of functions and operations, including a gradual increase in Member State participation. At the General Affairs Council, the European Commission announced six priority areas for the first year: developing tools to support resilient elections, an EU blueprint to counter FIMI and disinformation, the launch of a dedicated stakeholder platform, fostering capacity building and mutual learning, cooperation with EU (potential) candidate countries and citizen involvement.

Our organisations welcome this initiative, which is timely and critical against the background of increased geopolitical tensions and rising authoritarianism. Strengthened coordination and cooperation at EU level are essential, given the impact and magnitude of disinformation and FIMI within and across the borders of EU Member States and candidate countries. At the same time, the ECDR should operate in full compliance with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and ensure that measures taken to address FIMI are lawful, necessary and proportionate. Resilience must not come at the expense of pluralism, media freedom, or political expression. In fact, they go hand in hand.

In shaping the mandate, governance and operational functions of the ECDR, it is crucial to ensure it is adequately equipped and structured to live up to its goals. For the ECDR to reach its full potential, to avoid duplication with already existing initiatives and truly break down silos, the following elements are key:

- The **whole-of-society approach** as announced by the Commission is essential. The challenges that the EU and its Member States face in the area of disinformation and FIMI are broad and interrelated, which necessitates an approach that leverages a broad set of expertise that is channelled through an **inclusive multi-stakeholder model**. We therefore encourage the development of a mechanism for transparent, regular and formal exchange between the exchange hub for EU Member States and EU institutions and the Platform for independent non-institutional stakeholders, including civil society organisations, independent media and media organisations. The creation of two parallel channels of policy-makers and non-institutional experts that do not engage meaningfully with each other should be avoided.
- Address the current fragmentation across EU Institutions by bringing **all EU instruments that contribute to the EU's democratic resilience** as mentioned in the Democracy Shield together under the umbrella of the ECDR, such as the European Digital Media Observatory, or mechanisms monitoring the implementation of the EU Code of Practice and the Digital Services Act, while respecting competency division.
- We welcome the intention to avoid duplication, and encourage the Centre to **scale up, bring together and build upon existing cross-border or national initiatives**, to ensure **collective, data gathering and cross-border analysis** to serve as a basis for comprehensive and coherent responses. In particular, the ECDR should support independent, evidence-based research and strengthen systemic risk assessment under the DSA rather than promoting ad hoc content interventions.

¹ The MFRR is an European Commission funded consortium of media freedom and freedom of expression organisations working in EU Member States and Candidate Countries, which are dedicated to ensuring a free, open, pluralistic and safe space for media and independent journalism.

- **Safeguarding fundamental rights, media freedom and democratic pluralism.** Democratic resilience is strengthened not only by countering manipulation, but by protecting open debate, pluralism and institutional trust. The effectiveness and legitimacy of the ECDR will depend on its clear anchoring in fundamental rights standards. The ECDR must ensure full transparency of its operational activities, and embed judicial and independent oversight mechanisms where appropriate, to prevent political instrumentalisation of disinformation against critical voices and to offer adequate transparency on the engagement between the ECDR and external stakeholders.

We call upon you to take a proactive role in the development of the ECDR and to take these considerations into account throughout the process towards its establishment in order to ensure it becomes a truly effective and strategic mechanism. In an increasingly polarised geopolitical world order, the EU simply cannot afford not to stand united in protecting and promoting its independent information ecosystems, democracies, human rights and media freedom.

Signed:

Free Press Unlimited (FPU)

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European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)

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European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)