

Member of the European Parliament

**Frans Timmermans**  
**Vice President of the European Commission**  
**European Commission**  
**B-1049 Brussels, Belgium**

Brussels, 11 April 2018

**Dear Vice-President Timmermans,**

Earlier this year you were called on by the undersigned to propose legislation that will address and end “SLAPPs” - lawsuits intended to intimidate and silence investigative journalists and independent media by burdening them with exorbitant legal expenses until they abandon their opposition. This practice is abusive, poses a threat to media freedom and has no place in the European Union.

SLAPPs have been used in Malta to intimidate investigative journalists and media houses by the now notorious Pilatus Bank as well as Henley & Partners, the concessionaires of citizenship-for-cash scheme. The practice was used against assassinated investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia with the complicity of the Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, his Chief of Staff Keith Schembri and Minister for Justice and Culture Owen Bonnici.

In parallel to our efforts in Brussels, anti-SLAPP legislation was proposed in the Maltese Parliament. This week, the Minister for Justice and Culture indicated the Maltese government was opposed to this legislation on the basis of it being incompatible with EU law. As a consequence the relevant amendment was rejected.

The Maltese government’s complicity in the use of these practices makes this development unsurprising albeit disappointing. And while the justification provided for this decision is poor and unconvincing it further highlights the need for EU legislation on this crucial issue.

We welcome your announcement in the LIBE committee in March where you indicated that the Commission was actively assessing the feasibility of proposals put forward to you by the undersigned. We believe that EU anti-SLAPP legislation is indispensable for the protection of media freedom in the European Union and we strongly encourage the Commission to propose this legislation before the self-imposed May deadline.

David Casa (EPP)

Ana Gomes (S&D)

Monica Macovei (ECR)

Maite Pagazaurtundúa (ALDE)

Stelios Kouloglou (GUE)

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